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Trustee Line for October 2014

A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 10/31/14.

Thoughts From The Trustees - Current and Past

The subjects listed below are themes that have been submitted by other Trustees. You may respond to any of them, or start an entirely new subject

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They Used To Be Called Anniversaries - Continued

10/1/14 - 12:01 AM

David,

Re: Your posting from last month

As distasteful as all of the things are that you mention, sadly they don't just pertain to anniversaries. It is my experience that many GA members place a ridiculous amount of emphasis on abstinence versus recovery. Clearly, I understand a person needs to be abstinent before they can truly recover. That said, I have seen all of the following:

- *People with significant amounts of "time" (ego) wielding it as a shield or to place themselves in a higher class or echelon of the program.
- *These same people making harsh comments to a new member who watched a sporting event or read the sports section of a newspaper while at the same time making no comment if a longer standing member says the same or talks about going on a cruise with a casino on the boat.
- *Not following room suggestions or guidelines (ie making cross comments) in as much as they think they only apply to newer members (and shutting them down when they try to).
- *The formation of Breakfast Clubs for members with over certain amounts of abstinence.

I am sure there are many others but sadly these practices go on. I bring them out because for me it is important for me to always remember where I came from. I know that any effort to separate myself or consider myself any better than anyone in this program will only bring me that much closer to a bet.

Many people think the Trustee Line is negative. Positive dialogues do happen, too. But by bringing these items out on the Trustee Line, awareness will be created which will hopefully lead to dialogue, correction and a better program for all of us.

Your Brother in Recovery,
Steve T. - Area 14, Long Island

10/6/14 - 8:59 AM

I think we can all sense or even spot a rant a mile away. It's within us all so when it comes at us we recognize it easily.

It takes a little more effort to make the leap of faith over our egos and deep seated prejudices, to look for the positive meaning and spot at first glance something that is a bit deeper, profound even.

I am delighted this topic has been re-visited, because the real strength of the topic can be missed without careful reading, I believe.

That laziness of dismissing at first glance without considering with an open mind is usually just another brick in the wall that haunts every one of us, the wall with the deepest seated foundations that you will ever find, the wall that has no limits in height or width, the wall that no Earth -Mover can break down and no trampoline can help us to scale, the wall that humbles the Great wall of China and makes the Iron Curtain look like child's play. The great Wall of Denial itself.

So it was with this topic when I read it first, I thought it maybe a little harsh but then I thought about it with an open mind. Who could be offended or see the topic as negative unless it cut to the bone and was something they wished to deny or avoid ?

This is clearly a well thought out, profound topic that we dare not dismiss.

The profound questions I believe we are being by this topic include not just whether we have a propensity, even after some significant time in the program, to believe we are immune from the equivalent of the " Dry drunk syndrome " the equally devastating and destructive " Clean Gambler syndrome " but also whether we have the negative capacity to so fool ourselves into thinking that is what we should pass on.

It is ironic that, in falling prey to this destructive " Clean gambler syndrome " wherein life seems so beautiful just as a result of stopping gambling, we forget or neglect to keep on working on our recovery. We are straight away consumed by the absolute fallacy that, by achieving the only perfection known in recovery, the perfection of refraining from gambling for one moment in time, we think that is all there is to it.

Time usually tells that there is more to it than that, our program is full of direction and suggestion that there is more to it than that, but therein lies one of the greatest challenges our fellowship faces.

Another question this topic asks, I believe, is whether, intentionally or not, some of us who really would know better if we thought about it, use our time in the program as a misdirected platform to pass on not the G. A. program but our program, the ultimate act of false pride, self justification and ego.

This is the deadly centre I believe this topic exposes. Even clearly dedicated members of the fellowship can, without thinking or realizing it, use their supposed "time free" status to pass on not the G. A. program but something else. We don't have the right to do that.

It's another topic entirely to get too deep into the equivalent of the Dry drunk syndrome, but the link is clear. Let me close out my response to the above posters with one more point.

When David asks about the lack of recovery or unity at times in the way some presentations or anniversaries are handled or in the message passed on by fulfilling our need for self glorification and succumbing to our egos and false pride, neglecting principles over personalities and feeding our egos, should we not at least consider this "What if it's really happening " What does that explain and what can we do about it ?

When Juan suggests we replace egos and self gratification with Gratitude and Humility should we not at the very least acknowledge how this is also part of the program that we should pass on and that we can not do this through extravagant shows of ego boosting activity ?

When Steve mentions just some of the ways that the false pride and ego characteristics we battle against come up regularly almost everywhere should we not take his lead and ask ourselves what we can do to make our program better for all of us ?

The starting point for any improvement is to stop adding to the damage. I hope we are strong enough as a fellowship to get over our egos and read this topic carefully, it's profound and packed with the greatest truth of all, the reality of what actually is.

Odie B. - Area 36, Ireland South - East

10/24/14 - 3:44 PM

There is a difference between abstinence and recovery. They are two different things. Humility is what that person doesn't have. If that person had recovery, they would not have that over inflated ego. People need to understand that just because they have all that time doesn't mean you have recovery. I feel that true recovery doesn't act like that at all. I feel you should never call any one to make

sure they are coming to your birthday. That act right there of calling people, tells me no recovery only abstinence. I feel that is the same as taking the basket around.

People need to understand that no matter how much time you have does mean you have recovery. They may have more knowledge of how things were done before now. However, things are changing everyday. If every room would write up procedures on how their meeting is ran. Step by step, guidelines there would be less problems, including addressing all the issues in the room.

I personally feel that is a great thing to celebrate a member with 30 years because if people like me don't see people with a lot of years, how much faith and hope can I have. If no one has any time, people would think that this program doesn't work. There is less than 10% of the people that come to GA stay.

I believe that you should never feel like you have to go to a celebration. People need to understand that each one of us is here for ourselves not the 30-year person or the one-day person. We all should be here for ourselves. Your recovery is your own and you should never forget that.

I feel that if that person wanted to call people for their birthday that's not my business. I believe that person with 30 years is very insecure because people should come because they want to come not because you called them. It is already posted on the calendar so why should you call people. On the other hand, people need to say no I'm not coming. If you let people guilt you into things that you don't want to do, than you are people pleasing and that is never a good thing. There is no rule or guidelines that said they couldn't do it.

We need to understand that we have no control over no one and nothing. Once I learned that I could let everyone do whatever they want as long as it is not breaking any rules or guidelines. I just worry about me and me alone. I go to milestone when I want too not because someone called me, if they did I probably would not go if I felt that they were pressuring me to go.

If you really feel this is the case than that room needs to assess the situation and add a guideline to address the problem. The last thing I want to say is; that you can't change people, places or things. The only thing you can change is yourself.
Karen T. - Area 3A, San Diego

A Word of Caution on Agenda Item #27

10/11/14 - 9:58 AM

I feel compelled to humbly ask all trustees to consider item # 27 very carefully, particularly any trustee who is going to send an absentee ballot between now and the deadline, as they will not have the opportunity to hear any discussion on the floor.

The caution I urge is this, if we vote to change the name to Bill.D. we are, in effect, voting not just to change the way the name is listed but also to effectively say we agree with the original decision !

The danger, I feel, is that, in using our hearts, thinking we are doing a good thing by changing the way the name is written, we would, in fact, be doing the injustice of actually recording a vote in favor of an item passed many years ago which would not be passed now.

The only real thing we can do about the original decision is have it rescinded, it should never have happened and it should not be the case now that we mistakenly support it

Please give consideration to this before you vote, do we really want to effectively support an unfortunate error from the past, now that we know better ?

I feel sure this would not be the intent of the Author or presenter, so please have caution and use heads not hearts.

Odie B. - Area 36, Ireland South - East

Gamblers Anonymous UK

10/13/14 - 12:48 AM

Hello fellowship,

I stumbled across the website for Gamblers Anonymous UK and noticed some literature available for download. One that stuck out to me was "How it works"

taken right of the Big Book of AA. Are we affiliated with Gamblers Anonymous UK? My assumption is we are not because I know how strongly GA North America strongly oppose the 12 steps and AA literature as a solution to compulsive gambling. Does anyone have facts to answer my question? I am very interested to hear the answer.

Joe T. - Area 2, Northern California

10/22/14 - 2:20 AM

Hello Joe and all readers,

I'm not sure I can give you any dispositive facts but I can supply a couple of facts that are most definitely taken by me as dispositive and therefore are the basis for the further assumptions and opinions I also express here. Other than the clear and unambiguous facts that speak for themselves, the rest is a matter of opinion and interpretation.

Some clear facts to start.

The website you have referenced provides information that would immediately raise a number of red flags, thereby effectively making any other information at least suspect.

The following red flags stand out clearly.

1 As you pointed out, Joe, the site contains non G. A. material

2 The three main types of G. A. meetings listed by that site include an open meeting which is defined by them as a celebration of milestones for those with years of recovery and the third main type of " G. A " meeting listed is A GAM – ANON meeting.

3 The site states that G.A.started in 1964, over there.

So far we have non G. A. material, open meetings that have nothing to do with recovery, unity or the Gamblers Anonymous message, material stolen from another fellowship, yet another fellowship again having their meetings described as G. A. meetings, seven or so years wiped out from the history of the Fellowship of Gamblers Anonymous and the location of the birth of Gamblers Anonymous altered.

It's not for me to see what other ways the local area website guidelines are ignored, it's quite enough the harm that is caused already to send me running as far as I can from this type of website and I suspect not too many current or former members of the B. O. T. will find much credibility with the website you referenced, as I hope is now the case for you.

The bottom line is that what is represented by that site is not any Democratic or spiritual program but a complete show of misguided anarchy by a handful of people who have never even sought or received the permission of the people they claim to represent.

These are probably some of the reasons that Gamblers Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues and does not endorse nor oppose any cause etc.

Unfortunately, it is not so easy for newer, more vulnerable members to see the absolute lunacy at play here and they usually don't see it, so at least by getting it on the trustee line, Joe, you may help one or more people, who knows, I hope it does and I'm sure that was your intention, as it is mine.

I'd like to give my opinion on a couple of other points you made, Joe, but it is just that, my opinion.

I believe you are correct that we are not affiliated with the U. K. however I don't think it has anything to do with any particular section or sector of G.A. which by rights don't exist anyway, we are an International organization with an International B.O. T.

Leaving that aside I will say this, I really think it would be accurate to state that no particular outside entity or organization has been specifically targeted, not A. A. nor anyone else.

A. A. has never put its program forward as as a solution for gambling, therefore it can not be rejected as such, it just isn't, it's for another purpose which has nothing to do with G. A.

To put that point into perspective, if The Oxford Group had found a successful way to help Alcoholics there would have been no need for A. A. but the members found there was a need and so A. A. had it's real beginning and the

program was adapted accordingly.

Likewise, if the A. A. program had been successful in helping some initial members of A. A. who had a Gambling problem, with their gambling problem, there would not have been a need for G. A. but those same members found that there was a need for G. A.

Nobody in recovery is accusing A. A. of stealing The Oxford Groups program and it has generally been shown over the years that only people who appoint themselves as gatekeepers of a program, without any request from the fellowship involved, mischievously accuse this fellowship or that fellowship of misbehavior.

On an earlier point, It is really nothing to do with any individual member or collection of members that we are not affiliated with any outside organization. It's in our program and therefore is the will of the ultimate Group Conscience, the entire membership, as expressed through their respective votes.

A word of caution to anyone who espouses the old lines " Sure what harm does it do " and " I don't care where they get help as long as they get it "

The word of caution is this, care now or you will care when the harm that comes from those type of sources comes to your door, day in day out, relentlessly, you will care very much, for yourself and your fellow members.

Peace, Brothers and Sisters.
Odie B. - Trustee, Area 36, Republic of Ireland Sth East

10/22/14 - 8:46 PM

As someone who has more than a passing familiarity with this issue I feel the need to jump into this discussion.

The United Kingdom Gamblers Anonymous fellowship is a separate fellowship in England, Wales & Northern Ireland. The Scottish fellowship is actually another separate entity.

Unfortunately, the UK fellowship and ISO parted ways many years ago and I believe that was a great loss for both groups. Early on the British arm of GA made some great contributions to our fellowship, the most lasting of which are the 90 Days pamphlets (Actually these booklets came from Scotland but as they had not divorced from the UK at that time I'm lumping them in with the UK).

That said, the damage has been done and each separate fellowship has evolved into their own version of the recovery program based on what came out of that meeting in 1957. As a separate fellowship they are not beholden to the ISO guidelines but instead have their own Handbook and Guidance Code. As they are not represented at the ISO with no Areas presently assigned to them provisions such as the local area website guidelines cannot apply to them. Or any other ISO decisions for that matter.

Yes, the website does have a section about 1964 being the 50th Anniversary of GA and for their fellowship that is true. However, in the literature distributed to members at every meeting there, (the Orange Book, the rough equivalent of the Yellow Combo Book) specifically talks about GA starting in Los Angeles in 1957 before going on to present the beginning of Gamblers Anonymous in the UK. At their Basildon 50th Anniversary Conference there was a long presentation on the early days of the program that primarily focused on the beginnings in California. I don't believe that there was any intentional decision to wipe out seven years of the history of the Fellowship of Gamblers Anonymous, just an unfortunate oversight in the presentation of the upcoming conference on the website.

I cannot speak to the AA material being presented, I have no idea if AA was asked for permission to use How It Works or not. To say it was "stolen" without this information seems premature without the facts.

I do take umbrage with the incendiary state by Odie that: **"The bottom line is that what is represented by that site is not any Democratic or spiritual program but a complete show of misguided anarchy by a handful of people who have never even sought or received the permission of the people they claim to represent".**

1. Whom are the people you say they claim to represent? If you mean compulsive gamblers, members of the UK fellowship, then I have to say you are wrong. If you mean the ISO, then I also have to say you are wrong as they are a separate fellowship.

2. Not Democratic and Spiritual. As for spiritual, I think you need to check yourself and not their their spiritual inventory. GA is not a democracy, if anything it is more like a republic with representatives (Trustees) elected to represent their Areas and members. As for spiritual, I think you need to check yourself and not their their spiritual inventory.

3. Your phrase "anarchy by a handful of people" insinuated that there is no structure, just a handful of dictators running things as they want in the UK fellowship. Once again, I have to say you are wrong. Every group in the UK has representatives the national level who make decisions in a similar fashion to our BOT.

Do I agree with what all that the UK GA Fellowship does? No, I am not comfortable with a number of things they do (esp. the GamAnon meetings and links but we also have a lot of GamAnon in in our own literature and website) but it isn't my fellowship. I do choose to work closely with some aspects of their program and have attended quite a few meetings and a conference in Great Britain but that doesn't mean that my heart and soul is not with the ISO Gamblers Anonymous Fellowship - that is MY program. I make no attempt to bring UK literature or philosophies into my local Area or meetings.

I think the bottom line here is that United Kingdom fellowship is NOT the ISO and hasn't been for a long long time. It is an outside entity and as such is free to do as their Group Consciousness dictates. The only way I can see this changing is if a monumental effort is made to bring them back into our fold or somehow we shut them down by legal means. The former would be my choice, the later would be reprehensible.

Your Brother in Recovery,
Kent C. - Former Trustee Area 7C, Oklahoma

10/23/14 - 12:07 PM

Hello all readers,

Kent, thank you for the invitation to concentrate on taking my own inventory, always a good suggestion.

Likewise, perhaps I should have been more careful with the use of the word STOLEN, I could have said plagiarised or, a concept we all know about from the old days, borrowed without permission.

You will not object if I clarify that I did not make any statement about Gamblers Anonymous U. K. I clearly referred to the website.

In attributing incorrectly to me a derogatory statement about the U. K. focussing on 3 points from the excerpt you highlighted you left out a fourth, the first line "...What is represented by that site..."

Kent, I believe we first spoke when I attended San Diego as a new trustee, and again, briefly, at Vancouver. You approached me and revealed you were, at that time, a moderator for the CHAT forum for the website in the U. K. referred to, I believe.

I admit I found it disconcerting given you were a trustee and the committee you were involved in. I also was aware that my feelings were influenced by the fact that I was under threat of extreme violence from people who used the misguided approach of " That website " among other things, for backup.

Did I take your inventory ? No, I did not. Did I criticise you in any way ? No, I did not.

Did I do or say anything to make you feel judged or uncomfortable ? No, I did not.

The bottom line is this, I do not believe that compulsive gamblers in the U. K. or anywhere else were asked or gave permission for a small number of people to run that website as their own personal misguided agenda. Just look at the ADVICE given in the chat rooms, no evidence of Recovery, unity or above all, guidance. Look further at the stark contrast you yourself provide in what you experienced at the 50th anniversary you attended and what is on the website, two different programs.

Again, I am grateful that Gamblers Anonymous has no opinion on outside organisations, as such.

I have no issue with any outside organisation or anybody that chooses to support them totally or partially. However, If the actions of those organisations or people impact on the attempts of members and groups in my area to carry the message of Gamblers Anonymous, I am obliged, as a trustee, to do my best to deal with that as best I can.

The stark contrast to the way we seek do things is also remarkable. My points were simply a caution against being influenced by the website referred to, in response to Joe's questions. I made no comment whatsoever about Gamblers Anonymous U. K. and I submit you are incorrect to attribute my comments

about a website as being about anything or anyone else.

As far as the issues raised by this topic go, I have no desire to influence the opinion of anybody on their approach to any outside organisation, I would, however, strongly caution against the website referenced being a reference point for anyone, personally preferring the approach of Gamblers Anonymous and the ISO.

A small point I make just so those who know me and what I am about on behalf of the members who elected me are not confused further, there should be no confusion between the website referenced here and the website gamblersanonymous.ie. another I would caution against being used as a reference point.

That is a completely different website which chooses to use the emblem of the ISO to give the appearance of being supported by this fellowship, which it is not. A brief look at the contacts page of that site will reveal a particularly devious and misguided listing of meetings in my area, area 36. These meetings listed on the contacts page, the only meetings in the whole of Ireland given that high profile, are the home of those who instill fear into anyone who chooses to follow the guidance code and are listed there in an effort to close down the meetings in my area who comply with the guidance code.

I submit I am taking my own inventory at all times but, first and foremost I am attempting to serve those who elected me. I don't have to be good at it to succeed, I just have to try my best, and I will.

Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to wake up free of the threats I am under, although I do like going to the International conferences and Trustee meetings, it would be nice to have the choice instead of just hopping on a one hour \$ 50 return flight to closer pastures, However, as long as the approaches to the program of Gamblers Anonymous remain as they are, there is only one choice.

Any current or former trustee who wishes for any clarification on my views on this confusing subject, please feel free to ask on the Trustee line or even by emailing me via CTL listing.

Peace, Brothers and sisters.
Odie B. - Trustee Area 36, Republic of Ireland, South East

GA Blue Book - 3rd Edition

10/13/14 - 1:05 AM
Hello trusted servants,

I finally got my hands on the 3rd edition of the Gamblers Anonymous Blue Book. I immediately noticed that it is vastly different than our current Blue Book. Does anyone know why such drastic changes were made from one edition to the next? Is the 3rd edition of the Blue Book approved GA literature? If anyone can answer those 2 questions with concrete facts I would greatly appreciate it.

Joe T. - Area 2, Northern California

10/14/14 - 5:50 AM
Joe asks a great question and it is one subject we had to deal with in our area. For any remaining copies of the third edition, there should be a disclaimer inside the front cover that states much of the material was taken from AA literature and that you need AA World Services permission to copy or reproduce the text from that edition. (I have a copy of the disclaimer if you would like to see it)

Area 17 had one group that had made copies of all the recovery steps for their meeting. I had to point out this disclaimer and ask them to do one of two things – either get rid of the copies or write to AAWWS and request permission to reproduce those pages. Since the book is GA approved literature, any group can use the book if they choose to, they just cannot make copies of it.

Paul S. - Area 17 Trustee, Connecticut

10/16/3:31 PM
Since Joe submitted on Monday, I was hoping that someone would step up and give him the facts that he is requesting. Alas, that has not yet happened.

I have done some research about this mysterious 3rd Edition GA Blue Book. Here is what I can tell everyone. The book has material that was plagiarized from the AA Big Book. This publication was written by one person and at the time of

its approval, nobody bothered to ask if the material was all original content.

Someone in GA knew of this and reported the incident to AA, which resulted in AA issuing a Cease and Desist letter. An attorney from Washington DC was hired and the resulting outcome was that GA was prohibited from printing any more books. GA was allowed to keep the approximate 5,000 copies it had and was allowed to deplete the inventory in lieu of destroying them and not allowing GA to recoup its investment.

The condition that those books would be allowed to be sold, as the last of the printing, was to have a sticker placed within each book with a specific set of acknowledgements. This is an important distinction, because it addressed some issues that seem to be recurring throughout GA.

So the removal of this once approved piece of literature is due to the agreement struck with AA. The document is illegal to be distributed, which also means that it can't be copied for use in any GA rooms, contrary to what appears to be happening in a number of rooms. The book has never been officially deemed as non-approved by the Board of Trustees, but through the definition of GA approved literature in the Guidance Code under Article VII, Section 7, the item is no longer deemed approved.

Joe's observation that the current GA Blue Book is vastly different from the book in question is due to the fact that it is not what might be thought of as the next edition. It is a totally separate publication that just happens to have a blue cover. With the removal of the 3rd edition, the follow up publication was the Red Book.

As to Paul's assertion to one of the rooms in his area that they either get rid of the copies or get permission from AA to make copies, that would be allowing non-GA approved literature to be used in the room, directly violating the Guidance Code, Article VII, Section 1.

This research is bolstered with corroborating opinion from our Intellectual Property attorney, who also takes care of all the corporation of GA's copyright issues.

There will be an agenda item in Cherry Hill to officially mark the status of this book as having its prior approval revoked, so the questions and apparent ambiguities will then become a small issue of trivia and not a platform for use of non-GA approved literature in any room.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

10/22/14 - 5:53 PM

David, I am not sure what you guys are talking about with the old edition of the blue book. In my area, I am having problems with a few groups still using the older long versions of the steps. All of these groups are using copies of these steps, as the original versions are no longer available. These groups have been told to stop using this literature, but have so far refused. Our trustees brought this issue to the board, and were advised that this was still approved literature, as long as it wasn't reproduced or copied. I think that it is very confusing for a member especially new ones to go to two meetings that have to different versions of the steps. I understand that old timers got recovery through the older steps but things change and they should accept change. The steps should be standard and no matter what meeting a member attends the step literature should be the same. I would appreciate any feedback that you guys have to help with this situation.

Thank you
Joe L. - Area 11, New England
