

The Twelve Steps of Recovery

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GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS

www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk

THE TWELVE STEPS OF RECOVERY

This booklet is reproduced from Chapter 4 of the Third Edition of the American Blue Book, published over 30 years ago.

All references to male gamblers are, of course, equally true for female gamblers.

In most Steps Meetings, one of these steps is read at each meeting as a starting point for those present to give their own interpretations for the benefit of all those present.

To get the most out of the GA Recovery Programme everyone is encouraged to attend Steps Meetings.

STEP ONE: We admitted we were powerless over gambling, that our lives had become unmanageable.

Who likes to admit defeat? Almost no one. Every instinct we have says we will make it tomorrow; we are not powerless. It is very difficult to admit weakness. We have a mind obsession that says, “Not true! Not true!” Yet, something is always reminding us of the destructiveness of our gambling. No other kind of destruction is quite like this emotional illness. Once this fact is accepted, our human concerns are complete.

Upon entering GA, we take another view of this absolute humiliation. We come to believe that only through utter defeat are we able to take our first steps toward sanity and strength. Our admission of personal defeat turns out to be the foundation upon which happy and purposeful lives may be built.

When first challenged to admit defeat, most of us revolted. We had approached GA expecting to be taught self-confidence and willpower. Then we were told that insofar as gambling is concerned, self-confidence was not an asset; in fact, it was a distinct liability. We were then told that we were the victims of a mental obsession, so subtly powerful that no amount of human willpower could break it. There was no such thing as a personal conquest of this compulsion. Few, indeed, were those so afflicted who ever conquered their illness through single-handed efforts. Under the lash of gambling, we are driven to GA and there we discover the fatal nature of our situation

Then, and only then, do we become open-minded to conviction and willing to listen, as only the dying can be. We stand ready to do anything that will lift the merciless obsession from us.

STEP TWO: We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to a normal way of thinking and living.

Newcomers, their minds in turmoil after reading Step Two, ask, “What have we here?” We are told in Step One that we have an emotional obsession with gambling, that our lives are unmanageable. Now we are told that only a Higher Power can restore us to a normal way of thinking and living. Some do not believe that God exists; some have no faith He will perform this miracle. Yes, you have us confused. Where do we go from here?

Let’s look at the belligerent compulsive gambler. He is now thinking about everything he is faced with, something really impossible. His sponsor should say, “Take it easy. The road you should travel is very wide; it will not crowd you. There are many people

in GA today who, when they first came to the Fellowship, believed as you do, and they have *made it*. How, under the circumstances, does a person take it easy? Gamblers Anonymous does not demand that you believe anything. All of the Twelve Steps are but suggestions. There is no one telling you that you must accept all of Step Two right here and now.”The only thing we suggest is that you *keep an open mind*.

Take, for example, the athlete. To become professional, he must train continuously; practise time and again. When I first looked at GA, I thought as most newcomers: “I simply won’t consider such nonsense. My willpower will be enough!” But when I woke up, I had to admit that GA showed results. Here were many men and women with years of abstinence to prove this. The minute I stopped arguing with myself and others, I could begin to feel Step Two. I can’t say upon what occasion or upon what day, for

the change was gentle and very gradual, but I came to believe in a Power greater than myself. Certainly, I have this conviction now. To acquire this, I had only to stop fighting and begin to practise the rest of the GA Recovery Programme to the best of my ability.

Defiance and lying are the outstanding characteristics of many gamblers, so it is not uncommon that many of us have had days of defying God. This is especially true when He did not deliver a winner, or when He *did* deliver a winner and we did not do as we had promised. Many of us have prayed to get even, for a job promotion, or to be prosperous. We have said, “God has not delivered us the good things of life!”, which we, as greedy people, specified. Then we went to gamble.

The fact is: we really hadn't cleaned house so that the work of God could enter and expel the obsession with gambling. We had not taken a moral and financial inventory of

ourselves. We had not made amends to those we had harmed, had not given freely to another human being without demands for reciprocation, and had not prayed correctly. We were always asking for our wishes to be granted. We did not understand the love of God and man, so how could we return to a normal way of life?

How many practising GA members have a full understanding of areas in which they are irrational; or, seeing their irrationality, can face it? Step Two is the turning point for all. Whether agnostic, atheist, or nonbelievers, we can stand together in Step Two. True humility and an open mind can lead us to a Power greater than ourselves and will, in time, take us to God, love of man, and a normal way of life.

STEP THREE: We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of this Power of our own understanding.

Here is where the door to the GA Recovery Programme is starting to open. The first two steps asked you to believe and accept. Step Three calls for willingness to do something, and to turn away from self-will. This is the way to faith in GA that works. The conclusions of Step One and Step Two require acceptance. Step Three requires positive action. Like all the remaining steps, Step Three calls for affirmative action; for, only by action is the self-will, which has always blocked the entry of God or a Higher Power into our lives, cut away.

Faith alone cannot accomplish this step. Therefore, our problem now becomes just how and by what means we shall be able

to let this Power in. The effectiveness of the whole GA Recovery Programme rests upon how well and earnestly we have tried to come to the decision of turning our will and lives over to the care of God, as we understand Him. This step is extremely difficult. No matter how much one desires, how can a person turn his will and his life over to the care of a God of his understanding? Fortunately, those who have tried with equal misgivings can affirm that anyone can begin to do it. A beginning, even the slightest, is all that is needed. Once we have acted with willingness, results will happen. Self-will may attempt to assert itself from time to time, but we can persist in our new attitude. Perhaps this sounds ridiculous, but let us examine how practical it really is.

Every man and woman who joins GA and intends to remain in the Fellowship has, without realising it, made a beginning to Step Three. Is it not true that in all matters of

gambling, each has decided to turn his or her life over to the care, protection, and guidance of GA? A willingness has been shown to cast out one's own will and one's own wishes about the gambling problem in favour of those suggested by GA. All willing new members feel that GA is the only safe way to restore sanity and a normal way of life. This is turning your will and life over to a Power greater than yourself.

Suppose the urge to gamble cries out, as it certainly will? Do you not depend upon GA and its meetings to arrest this urge? Yes, of course. Many of us have the idea we can handle all other problems and maintain our great egos. Thus our spiritual development is handicapped. This kind of thinking takes no real account of the facts. The more we become willing to depend upon a Higher Power, the more independent we actually become. Many, perhaps all of us, have been slaves to gambling. To free ourselves, we practise the

Twelve Steps of Recovery. It is really a means of gaining independence through the love of God and man.

Let's examine, for a moment, this tale of dependence at the level of everyday living; every modern house has electric wiring carrying power and light to the interior. We are delighted with this and accept this dependence. We trust nothing will ever cut off the supply of current. This makes us feel comfortable and secure.

Consider, too, the person with breathing difficulties, using a medical ventilator, dependent on it to keep him alive. Yet, the moment our mental or emotional independence is questioned, how differently we behave. We all claim the right to decide for ourselves what we shall think and just how we shall act. When problems arise, we'll listen politely to those who advise us, but all the decisions are to be ours alone. No one is going

to meddle with our personal independence in such matters. There is no one we trust. We are certain that our intelligence and willpower will be sufficient and guarantee us success in the world we live in.

This type of thinking sounds good, but how well does it work? Take a good, long look in a mirror. This should be the answer for a compulsive gambler. Each compulsive gambler has had his or her own fatal encounter with self-will. They have suffered enough under its weight to be willing to look for something better; otherwise, they would not be in GA, having admitted defeat, acquired faith, or made the decision to turn their will and lives over to a Higher Power.

Once the willingness has been acquired, he or she is the only one who can make the decision to exert themselves. Trying to do this is an act of their own will. All the steps, in order to conform to their principles,

require sustained and personal exertion; so, we trust to God's will. It is when we try to make *our* will conform to God's will that we begin to use it correctly. Once we have come into agreement with these ideas, it is really easy to begin to practise Step Three. During times of emotional disturbance or indecision, we can pause, ask for quiet, and in calmness simply say, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

STEP FOUR: We make a searching and fearless moral and financial inventory of ourselves.

If men and women made no effort to exert themselves, to be secure in their persons, to create or produce food and shelter, there would be no survival. It there were no social instincts, if men care nothing for society or

one another, there would be no society. So these desires for the sex relation, for material and emotional security, and for companionship are perfectly right and necessary and surely God-given.

These instincts, so essential for our existence, often exceed their proper functions. They drive us, dominate us, and insist upon ruling our lives. No human being, however near perfect, is exempt from these drives. Nearly every serious emotional problem can be seen as a case of misdirected instincts. When that happens, our great natural assets turn to liabilities, physical and mental. We should look squarely at the unhappiness this has caused others as well as ourselves. By discovering what our emotional deformities are, we can move toward their correction.

Let's have a closer look at our basic problem, gambling. Examples take on world meaning when we think about them. Our

financial problem must be examined. Make a budget that can meet your means of support and your obligations, which must be repaid in time. Some develop an obsession for financial security and hoard their money. Some deny themselves family and friends. Some members go *power mad* and attempt to rule their fellow members. These people throw away all chances of legitimate security and a happy family life. Whenever a human becomes a battleground for the instincts, there can be no peace; he becomes a slave to instincts.

We have gambled to get away from responsibility, fears, frustrations, and depressions. We have envisioned great dreams of wealth and position when we would repay those we harmed through gambling. All this leads to loss of self-respect and peace of mind. We must take a mature look at all of our problems, for this is pride in reverse; so, logically, we should reverse ourselves.

Many of us believe that the good characters we had before gambling became an obsession in our lives, will be revived the moment we quit gambling. If we were average, trustworthy, kind, and truthful people, except for our gambling weakness, what need is there for a moral inventory now that we are not gambling?

Have we not blamed all of our troubles on others, never ourselves? Have we not believed we were different in the things we did to secure money to gamble? Yet, when we come to GA, we find there are others with whom we can identify and agree that we are gripped by a mental obsession with gambling. We are told that is in the past. The future can be different, if we change certain principles in our daily affairs.

It is much better to face your defects fearlessly. Most of our egos have built up a great wall of resistance around us. We

invented excuses for ourselves and told lies to excuse our gambling weakness. So, if we are to arrest the obsession of gambling, our defects must be corrected.

In GA, we slowly learn that something has to be done about our vengeful resentments, self-pity, and unwarranted pride. We must be made to see that every time we play the *big shot* we turn people against us. We must see that when we harbour grudges and plan revenge, we defeat ourselves instead of others. We learned that if we are seriously disturbed, our first need is to quiet that disturbance, regardless of who or what we think caused it.

Did we see faults in others much more quickly than in ourselves? First, we had to admit we had many of these defects, even though such disclosures were painful and humiliating. Where other people were concerned, we had to drop the word *blame*

from our speech and thoughts. This requires willingness to change. Once over the first two or three times, it becomes easier, for we have started to get a true perspective of ourselves and are gaining in humility.

Let us mention common defects of character, such as: greed, lust, anger, envy and pride. Pride can lead to self-justification, unconscious fears, and many human difficulties. Pride lures us into making demands upon others or ourselves, which cannot be met without perverting or misusing our instincts, or justifying our excesses. Therefore, the watchword when taking inventory is thoroughness. In this connection, it is wise to write out our questions and answers. It will serve as an aid to clear thinking and honest appraisal. It will be the first tangible evidence of our complete willingness to move forward.

STEP FIVE: We admitted to ourselves and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

This step will deflate your ego. In considering the ego, this step will be more difficult than the others, but it is necessary for long and complete arrest of compulsive gambling and for complete peace of mind. Experience has taught us that we cannot live alone with our pressing problems and the character defects which aggravate them. If we have gone over Step Four and it has revealed experiences we'd rather not remember, we should come to know how wrong thinking and action have hurt us and others. If we want to get rid of yesterday's guilt and torments, then we must talk with someone about them.

Many search for an easier way to try to skip Step Five, which usually consists of the general and painful admission that, when

gambling, we were sometimes bad performers. Then, for good measure, we add dramatic descriptions of part of our gambling behaviour, but the things that really bother us, we say nothing about. This we justify with the excuse that humiliating memories ought not be shared with anyone.

If the GA experiences mean anything, this is very unwise. Some people are unable to stop gambling at all; others will relapse periodically until they really *clean house*. Many reveal how they tried to carry the burden alone; how they suffered with remorse and depression. Everyone has to confess their own defects. Most of us would admit that without a fearless admission of our defects to another human being, we could not have stopped gambling. It seems plain that the grace of God will not enter to expel our destructive obsession with gambling until we are willing to try this.

This step will tend to drive away loneliness. When we first came to GA and for the first time in our lives stood among people who understood our problems, had suggestions to offer, and were willing to share experiences, we thought our problems had all been solved. But it was not until we had disclosed our defects and listened to others do the same that our burden was actually lightened. Step Five was the answer. It was the beginning of true fellowship with man and God. This step is the means of learning the art of forgiveness. We feel, in practising Step Five, that there is a chance of our being forgiven, and that we, in turn, can forgive others.

This step is where true humility comes. Humility, in this step, means to recognise what we were and what we really can become. Our humility must consist of recognising our defects. No defect can be corrected unless we clearly see what it is. All of us have realised

the need for honesty and tolerance; the need to do away with self-pity. Our next problem will be to discover the person in whom we are to confide.

It should be someone with experience. It could be your sponsor, or it could be someone you feel has had experiences close to yours. This individual can be entirely outside of GA: a doctor, clergyman, rabbi, priest, etc. Once this decision is made, you will have a very pleasant surprise. The conversation will start easily and soon you will become eager. Provided you hold back nothing, your sense of relief will mount from minute to minute. The rock in the pit of your stomach will gradually leave. It will vanish as soon as your wrongs are exposed. When humility and serenity are so combined, something else of great moment is apt to occur: your first actual feeling of the presence of God. Even those who had faith before, often become conscious of God, as they never experienced before.

This feeling of being one with God and man, through the open and honest sharing of our terrible burden of guilt, brings us rest and peace of mind where we may prepare ourselves for the following steps, toward a full and meaningful life free of gambling.

STEP SIX: We were entirely ready to have these defects of character removed.

Any person, capable of enough willingness and honesty to try repeatedly Step Six on all his faults, without any reservations, had indeed come a long way spiritually. None of us will ever be perfect; but, through Step Six, we establish a willingness to become mature men and women, sincerely trying to grow.

Sure, we were beaten, absolutely defeated. My own willpower just would not

work to stop gambling. Change of location, the efforts of a wonderful family, friends, doctors, and clergymen were no help to stop me from gambling. No human being could help me stop gambling. But when I became willing to *clean house*, remove all the garbage down to the finest detail, and then ask a Higher Power, God, as I understand Him, to give me strength for this day to live free of gambling, I found the help I needed. Tomorrow I shall repeat this, for one day at a time becomes a lifetime.

All of us are born with an abundance of natural desires. It isn't strange that we often let these desires far exceed their intended purpose. When the gambling impulse drives us blindly, we wilfully demand, and in some way obtain, the means with which to gamble. As time goes on, our acts or measures to secure money to gamble increase: bad cheques, illegal loans, etc. None of these are due us. That is the point at which we depart from the

degree of perfection that God wishes for us here on earth. That is a good measure of our character defects. If we ask, God will surely forgive, but, in no case, does He render us white as snow and keep us that way without our cooperation or willingness to work toward a better way of life, to the best of our ability.

This does not mean that all of our character defects will be removed. A few of them may be, but with most of them we shall have to be content with gradual improvement. The key words in Step Six are *entirely ready*. They underline the fact that we want to aim at the very best we know or can learn. How many of us have this degree of readiness? In an absolute sense, practically no one has it. The best we can do, with all the honesty we can muster, is to *try* to have it. All of us will find to our dismay that there are stumbling blocks at which we say, “No, I cannot give this up just yet!” or, “This I will never give up!” No matter how much we have progressed,

desires will always be found that oppose, but for the grace of God they may remain.

No one really wants to be labelled a thief, liar, or be angry enough to murder. No one wants to be agonised by this pain or envy many of us have felt. Most human beings suffer these defects at rock bottom.

There is no spiritual effort involved in avoiding excesses that bring punishment. But when we face up to the less violent aspects of these very same defects, where do we stand? Who, for example, does not like to feel just a little superior to the next fellow; or perhaps, a lot superior to someone else? Isn't it true that we may let greed masquerade as ambition? Or, how many men and women speak love with their lips and believe what they say, so that they can hide lust in a corner of their minds?

We live in a world riddled with envy, to a greater or lesser degree. Everyone seems

to be infected with it. From this defect, we must surely get a warped, yet definite, satisfaction. Otherwise, why would we consume such great amounts of time wishing for what we do not have, rather than working for it; or, angrily look for attributes we probably shall never have, instead of adjusting to the fact and accepting it? How often do we work hard and long only to gamble it away?

Consider, too, our talent for procrastination. Nearly anyone could submit a long list of such defects. Yet, we were living with these, not wanting to give them up; at least, not until they caused us excessive misery. How many of us, even if we list just the minor defects, still want to hang on to some of them? It seems plain, therefore, that few of us can quickly or easily become ready to aim at spiritual and moral perfection, but most want to settle for only as much perfection as will get us by in life. So, there is a difference between striving for self-

determined objectives and for the perfect objective which is through the grace of God.

How can we accept the entire implication of Step Six? That is perfection. This is a goal we may strive for, but never quite reach; however, it is urgent that we make a beginning and keep trying. The moment we say *no*, our minds close against the grace of God. Delay is dangerous; rebellion may be fatal. This is the exact point at which we abandon limited objectives and move toward God's will for us.

STEP SEVEN: We humbly asked God (of our understanding) to remove our shortcomings.

Here, we should stop and take a long look, consider just what humility is, and what the practice of it can mean to us. The attainment of greater humility is the founding

principle of each of the GA Twelve Steps. For without some degree of humility, no compulsive gambler can stop gambling for long. Almost all GA members have found that unless they develop much more of this precious quality than may be required just to stop gambling, they still have little chance of becoming truly happy. Without it, they cannot live to much useful purpose; or in adversity, be able to summon the faith that can meet any emergency, of which there will be many.

Humility, as a word and as an ideal, has a very bad time of it in our world. Not only is the idea misunderstood; the word itself is often intensely disliked. Many people haven't even a nodding acquaintance with humility as a way of life.

With great intelligence, men of science have been forcing nature to disclose her secrets. The immense resources harnessed promise such a quantity of material blessings

that many have come to believe that a man-made millennium lies just ahead. Poverty will disappear and there will be such abundance that everyone can have all the security and personal satisfaction he desires.

Certainly, no compulsive gambler and no member of GA wants to downplay material achievements. Nor do we debate with the many who so passionately cling to the belief that to satisfy our basic natural desires is the main object of life. But we are sure that no class of people in the world ever made a worse mess of trying to live by this formula than the compulsive gambler.

For thousands of years, we have been demanding more than our fair share of security and prestige, so we thought. When we seemed to be succeeding, we gambled. We dreamed of yet greater achievements and of the high scores. When we were frustrated, even in part, we gambled. Never was there enough of what

we thought we wanted. In all of these strivings, so many of them well intentioned, our compulsive gambling was our lack of humility. We had lacked the perspective to see that character-building and spiritual values had to come first, and that material satisfaction was not the purpose of living. But, whenever we had to choose between character and gambling, the character-building was lost in the dust of our chase after what we thought was true happiness and a love for gambling. We never thought to make honesty, tolerance, and true love of man and God the daily basis for living.

For just as long as we were convinced that we could live exclusively by our own individual strength and intelligence, for just as long was a working faith in a Higher Power impossible. This was true even when we believed that God existed. These earnest beliefs remained barren because we were still trying to play God ourselves. As long as we

placed self-reliance first, a genuine reliance upon a Higher Power was out of the question. That basic ingredient of all humility, a desire to seek and do God's will, was missing. Every new member of GA is told, and soon realises for himself, that his humble admission of powerlessness over gambling is his first step toward liberation from its obsession.

So, it is that we first see humility as a necessity. But this is the barest beginning. To get completely away from our aversion to the idea of being humble, to gain a vision of humility as the road to true freedom of the human spirit, to be willing to work for humility as something to be desired for itself, takes most of us a long time. A whole lifetime geared to self-centredness cannot be set in reverse all at once. Complacency dogs our every step at first.

When we have taken a square look at some of these defects, have discussed them

with another, and have become willing to have them removed, our thinking about humility commences to have a wider meaning. By this time, in all probability, we have gained some measure of release from compulsive gambling. We enjoy moments in which there is something like real peace of mind.

To those of us who have hitherto known only excitement, depression, or anxiety, in other words, all of us, this newfound peace is a priceless gift. Something new indeed has been added. Where humility had formerly stood for a forced-feeding of humble pie, it now begins to mean the nourishing ingredient, which can give us serenity. Up until now, our lives have been largely devoted to gambling, running from anything painful and away from our problems. We never wanted to deal with the facts.

You may hear the poor excuse of some about working the steps: "That would make

me a saint. Who wants to be a saint?" Then at the GA meeting we listened. Everywhere, we saw failure and misery transformed by humility, into priceless assets. We heard story after story of how humility had brought strength out of weakness.

As we approach the actual taking of Step Seven, it might be well if we, in GA, inquire once more just what our deeper objectives are. Each of us would like to live at peace with himself or herself and their fellows. We would like to be assured that the grace of God can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

We have seen that character defects, based upon shortsighted or unworthy desires, are the obstacles that block our path toward these objectives. We now see clearly that we have been making unreasonable demands upon ourselves, upon others, and upon God. The Seventh Step is where we make the

change in our attitude, which permits us, with humility as our guide, to move out from ourselves towards others and towards God.

STEP EIGHT: We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

Step Eight is concerned with personal relations. We must first take a look backwards and try to discover where we were at fault. Next, we make an honest attempt to repair the damage we have done. With our newfound knowledge of ourselves, we may develop the best possible relations with every human being we know.

This is a very tall order. It is a task we may perform with increasing skill but never really finish. Learning how to live in the greatest peace, partnership, and brotherhood with all men and women, of whatever

description, is a moving and fascinating adventure. Every GA member has found that he can make little headway in the new adventure of living until he first backtracks and really makes an accurate and unsparing survey of the human wreckage he has left behind from compulsive gambling.

When we first look at emotional wounds, some old, some perhaps forgotten, and some still festering, it will at first look like a purposeless and pointless piece of work. But if a willing start is made, the great satisfaction of doing this will quickly reveal itself and the pain will be lessened as one obstacle after another melts away.

Right here, our emotions go on the defensive. To escape looking at the wrongs they have done to others, we focus resentfully on the wrongs they have done to us. This is especially true if they have, in fact, behaved

badly at all. This is the perfect excuse for minimising or forgetting our own.

At this point, we need to look for the key to Step Eight, *forgiveness*. Let's remember that compulsive gamblers are not the only ones bedevilled by sick emotions. Moreover, it is usually a fact that our behaviour, when gambling, has aggravated the defects of others. Did we not strain the patience of our best friends to breaking point and brought out the very worst in those who didn't think much of us to begin with? We are really dealing with people whose woes we have increased. If we are now about to ask forgiveness for ourselves, why shouldn't we start by forgiving them, one and all?

When listing the people we have harmed, most of us hit another solid obstacle. We got a pretty severe shock when we realised that we were preparing to make a face to face admission of our wretched conduct to those

we had hurt. It had been embarrassing enough when, in confidence, we had admitted these things to God, to ourselves, and to another human being. But the prospect of actually visiting or even writing to the people concerned now overwhelmed us, especially when we remembered in what poor favour we stood with most of them. There were cases, too, where we had damaged others who still were happily unaware of being hurt. We cried, “Why? Why shouldn’t bygones be bygones? Why do we have to think of these people at all?” These were some of the ways in which fear conspired with pride to hinder our making a list of all the people we had harmed.

Some of us think differently. We cling to the claim, that, when gambling, we never hurt anyone but ourselves. It was *our* money, we gave the family plenty, we always stayed on the job, and our reputation hadn’t suffered because we were certain few knew of our gambling. Those who did would assure us

that; after all, a little gambling was only a good man's sport and recreation. What real harm, therefore, had we done? No more, surely, than we could easily mend with a few casual apologies. This attitude, of course, is the end result of purposeful forgetting. It is an attitude that may be changed only by a deep and honest search of our motives and actions.

We might next ask ourselves what we mean when we say that we have *harmed* other people. What kind of harm do people do one another? To define the word *harm* in a practical way, we might call it the result of instincts in collision, which cause physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual damage to people. If our tempers are consistently bad, we arouse anger in others. If we lie or cheat, we deprive others; not only of their worldly goods, but of their emotional security and peace of mind. We really issue them an invitation to become contemptuous and vengeful.

Let us think of some of the more subtle ones, which can sometimes be quite as damaging. Suppose that in our family lives, we happen to be irresponsible, irritable, critical, and impatient. Suppose we pay no attention to any member of the family. With this neglect, what happens when we try to dominate the whole family? What happens when we wallow in depression and self-pity, and then inflict that upon those about us? This makes living with us, as compulsive gamblers, difficult and often unbearable. When we take such personality traits as these into shop, office, and the society of our fellows, they can do as much damage as that we have caused at home.

Having carefully surveyed this whole area of human relations and having decided exactly what personality traits in us injured and disturbed others, we can now commence ransacking memory for the people to whom we have given offence. To put a finger on the

closest and most deeply damaged people shouldn't be hard to do. Then, year by year, we shall be bound to construct a long list of people who have, to some extent or other, been affected.

We should avoid extreme judgements of ourselves and of others involved. We must not exaggerate our defects or theirs. A quiet, objective view will be our steadfast aim. Remembering what GA experience in this step has meant to others: it is the beginning of the end of isolation from our fellows and from God.

STEP NINE: We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Good judgement, a careful sense of timing, courage, and prudence are the qualities we shall need when we take Step Nine.

After we have made the list of people we have harmed, have reflected carefully upon each instance, and have tried to possess ourselves of the right attitude in which to proceed, we will see that the making of direct amends divides those we should approach into several classes. There are some who should be dealt with as soon as we become reasonably confident that we can refrain from gambling. There will be those to whom we can make only partial restitution, lest complete disclosures do them or others more harm than good. There will be instances where disclosure

should be deferred. There will be other cases where, by the very nature of the situation, we shall never be able to make direct, personal contact at all.

Most of us began making direct amends from the day we first came to Gamblers Anonymous. The moment we tell our families that we are going to really try the programme, the process has begun. In this area, there are seldom any questions of timing or caution. After coming from our first meeting or reading the Questions and Answers booklet, we usually sit down with some member of the family and readily admit the damage we have done by our compulsive gambling. Almost always, we want to go further and admit other defects that have made us difficult to live with. This will be a very different occasion; in sharp contrast with those pangs of utter despair on Monday morning when we are to pay off our past week's

encounters, sometimes blaming the family and everyone else for our troubles.

First, we will wish to be reasonably certain that we are making the GA Recovery Programme. Then, we are ready to go to these people, telling them what GA is and what we are trying to do. With this background, we can admit freely the damage we have done and make our apologies. We can pay or promise to pay whatever obligations, financial or otherwise, we owe. The response of most people to such quiet sincerity will often astonish you. Even our severest and most justified critics will frequently meet us more than halfway on the first trial. If we have prepared ourselves well, any reversals will not deflect us from our steady and even purpose. After taking this preliminary trial at making amends, we may enjoy such a sense of relief that we conclude our task is finished. The temptation to skip the more humiliating and dreaded meetings that still remain may be

great. We will often think of excuses for dodging these issues entirely. We may also procrastinate, telling ourselves the time is not right; when, in reality, we have already passed up many chances to right a serious wrong. Let's not take a negative approach when the right one is just before us.

As soon as we have begun to feel confident in our new way of life and have begun, by our behaviour and examples, to convince those about us that we are indeed changing for the better, it is usually safe to talk in complete frankness with those who have been seriously affected. The only exception we will make will be cases where our disclosure would cause actual harm. But if the opportunity does not come easily, head straight for the person concerned and lay all your cards on the table. Amends at this level should always be forthright and generous. For instance, gambling a good chunk of our firm's money, whether by borrowing or just plain

stealing. Suppose this may continue to go undetected, if we say nothing. Do we instantly confess our irregularities to the firm, when to do so would mean being fired, and becoming unemployable? Are we going to be so rigidly righteous about making amends that we do not care what happens to the family or home? Or do we first consult those who are to be gravely affected? Do we lay the matter before our sponsor or spiritually ask for God's help and guidance; meanwhile resolving to do the right thing when it becomes clear, cost what it may?

There is no pat answer fitting all such dilemmas, but all of them *do* require a complete willingness to make amends as fast and as far as may be possible in a given set of conditions. Above all, we should be sure that we are not delaying because we are afraid. For the readiness to take the full consequences of our past acts and, at the same time, to take responsibility for the wellbeing of others is the very spirit of Step Nine.

STEP TEN: We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

As we work the first nine steps, we prepare ourselves for the adventure of a new life, but when we approach Step Ten, we begin to put our GA way of life to practical use, day by day. Then comes the rigid test: can we stay away from gambling, and in emotional balance live a normal, happy life with meaning, under all circumstances? The desire to learn and grow by this means is a necessity for the compulsive gambler, for we have learned this the hard way.

Wise people have always known that no one can make much of his life until self-searching becomes a regular habit, until he is able to admit and accept what he finds, and until he patiently and persistently tries to correct what is wrong. When we have

gambled far beyond our means, we must admit it was the direct result of yesterday's excesses of negative emotions. Do not linger in the past for long. It requires an admission and correction of errors now. Our inventory enables us to settle with the past. We are really able to leave it behind us. When we have made peace with ourselves, we can meet tomorrow's challenges as they come.

The mental clock or inventory is required because many of us have never really acquired the habit of self-appraisal. Once this healthy practice has been acquired, it will be so interesting and profitable that the time it takes won't be missed. For these minutes, and sometimes hours, spent in self-examination, are bound to make all the other hours of our day better and happier. And surely, our inventories will become a regular part of everyday living, rather than something unusual or set apart.

Few people have been more victimised by resentment than the compulsive gambler. It does not matter whether our resentments were justified or not. A burst of temper could spoil a day, and a well-nursed grudge could make us miserably ineffective. What we think is justified anger can lead us to gambling. Other disturbances, such as envy, self-pity, and hurt pride, will do the same thing. A mental spot-check inventory, taken when disturbed, can quieten your emotions. The quick inventory is aimed at our daily ups and downs, lest we be tempted to make mistakes. This takes a willingness to admit when the fault is ours and an equal willingness to forgive when the fault is elsewhere. Do not be unduly disturbed when your thinking falls back to the compulsive gambling days, for these disciplines are not easy. We shall look for progress, not for perfection. Our first objective will be the development of self-restraint. This should rate top priority. When we speak or act hastily or rashly, the ability to be fair-minded and

tolerant leaves us at once. One unkind word, one snap judgement, can ruin our relations with another person for a day or maybe a whole year. Nothing pays off like restraint of tongue and action. We must avoid quick-tempered criticism and furious, power-driven arguments. The same goes for sulking or silent scorn. These emotional pitfalls, baited with pride and vengefulness, can trip us up. When we are tempted, we should train ourselves to step back and think; for we can neither think nor act to good purpose until the habit of self-restraint has become automatic.

Disagreeable or unexpected problems are not the only ones that call for self-control. We must be just as careful when we begin to achieve some measure of importance and material success. For no group of people has ever loved personal triumphs more than compulsive gamblers, as they then feel elated. When temporary good fortune came our way, we indulged ourselves in fantasies of still

greater victories over people and circumstances. Thus, blinded by prideful self-confidence, we were prone to play the *big shot*. Of course, people turned away from us, either bored or hurt.

Now that we are in GA and not gambling, now that we are winning back the esteem of our friends and family and business associates, we find that we still need to exercise special vigilance. As an insurance against *big shotism*, we can often check ourselves by remembering that we are today not gambling only by the grace of God, and that any success we may have is far more His success than ours.

Finally, we begin to see that all people, including ourselves, are, to some extent, emotionally ill as well as frequently wrong. It will become more and more evident as we go forward that it is pointless to become angry or

get hurt by people whom, like us, are suffering from the pain of growing up.

A change in our outlook will take time; perhaps, a great deal of time. How many people love everybody? Most of us admit that we have loved but a few. We were indifferent to all, except the ones that kept bailing us out of jams, and even to those people when they finally refused to help us further.

Although these attitudes are common with the compulsive gambler, in GA we find we need something much better in order to keep our balance. The fear and hate for others has to be abandoned, if only a little at a time.

We can try to stop making unreasonable demands upon those we love. We can show kindness where we had shown none. With those we dislike, we can begin to practise justice and courtesy, perhaps going out of our way to understand and help them.

Whenever we fail any of these people, we can promptly admit it to ourselves always and to them, also, when the admission would be helpful.

Courtesy, kindness, justice and love are the keynotes by which we may come into harmony with practically anyone. We can often ask ourselves, “Am I doing to others as I would have them do to me today?” This is a good time to see if your inventory is red or black for the day. It is a poor day when we have not done something right. Your waking hours should be filled with good intentions, good thoughts, and good acts. They are there for us to see. Even when we have tried hard and failed, we may consider this a credit overall. Under these conditions, the pains of failures are converted into assets. Out of them we receive the stimulation we need to go forward.

Someone who knew what he was talking about once said that the pains of compulsive gambling had to come before wanting to stop gambling, and emotional turmoil before serenity. As we look at the debit side of today's ledger, carefully examine our motives in each thought or act that appears to be wrong; our motives won't be hard to see and understand. When prideful, angry, anxious or fearful, we acted accordingly, and that was that. Here, we need only recognise that we did act or think badly. Try to visualise how we might have done better and resolve, with God's help, to carry these lessons over into tomorrow, making amends still neglected.

But in other instances, a close look will reveal what our true motives were. Our enemy, rationalisation, has stepped in, justifying conduct that was really wrong. The temptation here is to imagine that we had good motives and reasons when we really did not. Is it truly important to win a useless argument?

We sometimes hurt those we love because they need to be taught a lesson, when we really want to punish ourselves. We were depressed and complained we felt bad when, in fact, we wanted sympathy and attention.

This old trait of mind and emotion, this perverse wish to hide a bad motive underneath a good one, permeates human affairs from top to bottom. Learning daily to stop, admit, and correct these flaws is the essence of character-building and good living. An honest regret for harms done, a genuine gratitude for blessings received, and a willingness to try for better things tomorrow, will be the permanent assets we should seek.

Having so considered our day, not omitting to take due note of things well-done, and having searched our hearts with neither fear nor favour, we can truly thank God for the “Serenity to accept the things I cannot change,

courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

STEP ELEVEN: We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

Prayer and meditation are our principal means of conscious contact with God.

We in GA are active folk, enjoying the satisfaction of dealing with the realities of life for the first time in our lives, and we strenuously try to help the next compulsive gambler who comes along. So, it isn't surprising that we often tend to slight serious meditation and prayer as something not really

necessary. To be sure, we feel it is something that might help us to meet an occasional emergency, but at first, many of us are apt to regard it as a somewhat mysterious skill of clergymen from which we may hope to get a second-hand benefit. Or, perhaps we don't believe in these things at all.

To certain newcomers and to those one-time agnostics who still cling to the GA group as their Higher Power, claims for the power of prayer may, despite all the logic and experience in proof of it, still be unconvincing or quite objectionable. Those of us who once felt this way can certainly understand and sympathise.

We well remember how something deep inside of us kept rebelling against the idea of bowing before any God. Many of us had strong logic, too, that *proved* there was no God whatsoever. What about all the accidents? What about sickness, cruelty, and injustice in

the world? What about all the unhappy lives which were the direct result of unfortunate birth and uncontrollable circumstances? Surely, there could be no justice in this scheme of things; therefore, no God at all. Certainly there was no evidence of a God who knew and cared about human beings. We liked GA and were quick to admit that it had done miracles, but we recoiled from meditation and prayer as obstinately as the scientist who refused to perform a certain experiment lest it prove his pet theory wrong.

Of course, we finally did experiment. When unexpected results followed, we felt different. In fact, we knew differently; so, we were sold on meditation and prayer, and that, we have found, can happen to anyone who tries. It has been well said that almost the only people who mock prayer are those who never tried it enough.

Those of us who have come to make regular use of prayer would no more do without it than we would refuse air, food, or sunshine, and for the same reason. When we refuse air, light, or food, the body suffers; when we turn away from meditation and prayer, we likewise deprive our minds, emotions, and our spirits of vitally needed support. As the body can fail its purpose for lack of nourishment, so can the soul. We all need the light of God's reality, the nourishment of His strength, and the atmosphere of His grace. To an amazing extent, the facts of GA life confirm this ageless truth. There is a direct link between self-examination, meditation, and prayer. Taken separately, these practices can bring much relief and benefit. When they are logically related or interwoven, the result is an unshakeable foundation for life, for as long as we try, however falteringly, to find and do the will of God.

As we have seen, self-searching is the means by which we bring new vision, action, and grace to bear upon the dark and negative side of our natures. It is a step in the development of the kind of humility that makes it possible for us to receive God's help. Yet, it is only a step. We will want to go further. We will want the good that is in all of us, even in the worst of us, to flower and to grow. Most certainly, we shall need air and an abundance of food. But first of all, we shall want sunlight. Nothing much can grow in the dark. Meditation is our step out into the sun. How then shall we meditate? The actual experience of meditation and prayer across the centuries is, of course, immense. The world's libraries and places of worship are treasure-troves for all seekers. It is hoped that every GA member who has a faith connection emphasising meditation, will return to the practice of that devotion as never before. But what about the rest of us who, less fortunate, don't even know how to begin?

Well, we might start like this. First, let's look at a really good prayer. We don't have to look far. The great men and women of all faiths have left us a wonderful supply. Let us consider one that is a classic. This prayer was an expression of what we could feel, see, and wish to become:

God make me a channel of peace, that where there is hatred, I may bring love. That where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness. That where there is discord, I may bring harmony. That where there is error, I may bring truth. That where there is doubt, I may bring hope. That where there are shadows, I may bring light. That where there is sadness, I may bring joy. God grant that I may seek rather to comfort, than to be comforted, to understand than to be understood, to love, than to be loved. For it is by self-forgetting that one finds selflessness. It is by forgiving that one is forgiven. It is by

letting the gambling urge die that one awakens to the GA way of life.

As beginners in meditation, we might now reread this prayer several times very slowly, savouring every word and trying to take in the deep meaning of each phrase and idea. It will help if we can drop all resistance to what our friend says; for, in meditation, debate has no place.

We rest quietly with the thoughts of someone who knows so that we may experience and learn. Let us relax and breathe deeply of the spiritual atmosphere with which the grace of prayer surrounds us. Let us become willing to partake and be strengthened by the spiritual prayer.

Let us look now at the mystery of it. Some are sure to say, "This is nonsense. It isn't practical." Let us recall that, when we were gambling, we had great imaginations.

Yes, we revelled in that sort of thinking. Now that we have stopped gambling, don't we often try to do much the same thing? Perhaps our trouble was not that we used our imagination. Perhaps the real trouble was our almost complete inability to point imagination toward the right objectives.

There is nothing wrong with constructive imagination; all sound achievements rest upon it. After all, no man can build a house until he first envisions a plan for it. Meditation is like that, too. It helps to envision our spiritual objectives before we try to move toward them.

Once more, we look at our prayer and again we try to see its inner essence. We asked God to bring love, forgiveness, harmony, truth, faith, hope, light, and joy to every human being. Next comes an expression of aspiration and a hope for oneself. We hoped that, God willing, we might be able to find

some of these treasures too. This we would try to do by what we called self-forgetting. What did we mean by self-forgetting and how do we propose to accomplish that? We thought it better to give comfort than to receive it; better to understand, than to be understood, better to forgive, than to be forgiven.

Meditation is something that can always be further developed. It has no boundaries. Aided by such instruction and examples as we can find, it is essentially an individual adventure; something that each one of us works out in his own way. But its object is always the same: to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understand Him, knowledge of His will for us, and the power to carry that out.

A request for this fits into any part of our day. In the morning, we think of the hours to come, of our day's work and the chances it may afford us to be useful and helpful, or of

some special problem that it may bring. Possibly, today will see a continuation of a serious, and as yet, unresolved problem left over from yesterday. Our immediate temptation will be to ask for specific solutions to specific problems and for the ability to help other people as we have already thought they should be helped.

In that case, we find we are asking God to do it our way. Therefore, we might consider each request carefully to see what its real merit is. Even so, when making specific requests, it will be well to add to each one of them this qualification: "If it be Your will." We ask simply that throughout the day, God place in us the best understanding of His will that we can have for that day and that we be given the grace by which we may carry it out.

At these critical moments of every day, if we remind ourselves that it is better to comfort than to be comforted, to understand,

than to be understood, to love, than to be loved, we will be following the intent of Step Eleven.

Perhaps one of the greatest rewards of meditation and prayer is the sense of belonging that comes to us. We no longer live in a completely hostile world. We are no longer loners, frightened and purposeless. The moment we catch even a glimpse of God's will, the moment we began to see truth, justice, and love as the real things in life, we are no longer disturbed by all the seeming evidence to the contrary that surrounds us in purely human affairs.

STEP TWELVE: Having made an effort to practise these principles in all our affairs we tried to carry this message to other compulsive gamblers.

Action is the keyword of GA's Twelfth Step. Here, we turn toward our fellow compulsive gambler who is still gambling. Here, we experience the kind of giving that asks no rewards. Here, we begin to practise all Twelve Steps of the programme in our daily lives so that we, and those about us, may find a life free of gambling.

When the Twelfth Step is seen in its full implication, it is really talking about the kind of love that has no price tag. When a man or woman has practised these Twelve Steps of Recovery, the most important meaning of it is that he has now become able to do, feel, and believe that which he could not do before,

relying on his unaided strength and resources alone. He has been granted a gift, which amounts to a new state of consciousness and being. He has been set on a path that tells him that he is really going somewhere, that life is not a dead-end, not something to be endured or mastered.

In a very real sense, he has been transformed because he has taken hold of a source of strength, which in one way or another, he had hitherto denied himself. He finds himself in possession of a degree of honesty, tolerance, unselfishness, peace of mind, and love, of which he had thought himself quite incapable. What he has received is a free gift; yet, at least in some small part, he has made himself ready to receive it.

GA's manner of making ready to receive this gift lies in the practice of the Twelve Steps in our programme. So, let's

consider briefly what we have been trying to do up to this point:

In Step One, we found that we were totally unable to rid ourselves of compulsive gambling until we first admitted that we were powerless over this obsession.

In Step Two, we saw that since we could not restore ourselves, some Higher Power must necessarily do so, if we were to survive.

In Step Three, we turned our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him. For the time being, we who were atheist or agnostic discovered that our own group or GA as a whole would suffice as a Higher Power.

Beginning with Step Four, we commenced searching out the things in ourselves that had brought us to physical, moral, and financial bankruptcy. We made a

searching and fearless inventory, moral and financial.

Looking at Step Five, we decided that an inventory, taken alone, would not be enough. We knew we would have to quit the deadly business of living alone with our conflicts and, in honesty, confide to God and another human being.

At Step Six, many of us baulked for the practical reason that we did not wish to have all our defects of character removed, as we still loved some of these too much. Yet, we knew we had to make a settlement with the fundamental principle of Step Six.

Then, in Step Seven, we humbly ask God to remove our shortcomings.

In Step Eight, we continued our house-cleaning for we saw that we were not only in conflict with ourselves but also with people

and situations in the world in which we lived. We had to begin to make our peace; so, we listed the people we had harmed and became willing to set things right.

We followed this up in Step Nine by making direct amends to those concerned, except when it would injure them or other people.

By this time, at Step Ten, we began to get a basis for daily living. We keenly realised that we would need to continue taking personal inventory and when we were wrong, we should admit it promptly.

In Step Eleven, we saw that if a Higher Power had restored us to a normal way of living and had enabled us to live with some peace of mind in a sorely troubled world, then such a Higher Power was worth knowing better and by as direct a contact as possible,

through the persistent use of meditation and prayer.

So, by practising these steps and by looking at those who were only beginning and still doubted themselves, the rest of us were able to see the change emerging. From any number of such experiences, we could predict that the doubter, who still considered the group his Higher Power, would presently love God and call Him by name.

Now, what about the rest of the Twelfth Step? The wonderful energy it releases, and the eager action by which it carries our message to the next compulsive gambler, and which finally translates the Twelve Steps into action upon all our affairs, are the benefits, the magnificent reality of Gamblers Anonymous.

Even the newest of newcomers finds undreamed rewards as he tries to help another

compulsive gambler, the one who is even newer than he. This is indeed the kind of giving that actually demands nothing. He does not expect the new member to pay him or even to love him. Then he discovers that, by this kind of giving, he has found his own reward, whether the new member has yet received anything or not. His own character may still be greatly defective, but somehow he knows that God has enabled him to make a mighty beginning. He senses that he stands at the edge of new mysteries, joys, and experiences of which he had never even dreamed.

Practically every GA member declares that no satisfaction has been deeper, no joy greater, than in a Twelfth Step job well-done. To watch the eyes of men and women open with wonder as they move from one stage to another; to see their lives quickly fill with new purpose and meaning; to see whole families reassembled; to see the compulsive gambler received back into his community in full

citizenship; and above all, to watch these people awaken to the presence of God in their lives, these are the substances of what we receive as we carry GA's message to the next compulsive gambler.

There are many opportunities, even for those of us who feel unable to speak at meetings or who are so situated that we cannot do much face to face Twelfth Step work. We can be the ones who take on the less spectacular but important work that makes good Twelfth Step work possible; perhaps, in the arranging for coffee and cake after the meetings where so many sceptical, suspicious newcomers have found confidence and comfort in the laughter and talk. This is Twelfth Step work in its best form. If you have received freely, give freely is the core of this part of Step Twelve.

We may often pass through Twelfth Step work where we will seem to be

temporarily off course. These will appear as setbacks at the time. For example, we may set our hearts on getting a particular person on the GA Recovery Programme; and, after doing all we can for months, he goes back to gambling. Perhaps this will happen several times. We may be discouraged at our ability to carry the GA message or we may encounter the reverse situation in which we are highly elated because we seem to have been successful. Here, the temptation is to become rather possessive of the new members. Perhaps, we try to give advice about affairs which we really are not competent to give or ought not to give at all. Then, we are hurt and confused when the advice is not accepted.

There are many temptations to try to over manage things; sometimes resulting in rebuffs and other consequences which are hard to take. But in the longer run, we clearly realise that these are only the pains of growing up, and that nothing but good can come from

them if we turn more and more to the entire Twelve Steps for the answers.

What about the practise of these principles in all our affairs? Can we love the whole pattern of living as eagerly as we do the small segment of it we discover when we try to help other compulsive gamblers stop gambling? Can we bring the same spirit of love and tolerance into our sometimes deranged family lives that we bring to our GA group? Can we have the same kind of confidence in these people who have been infected, and sometimes crippled, by their own illness?

Can we actually carry the GA spirit into our daily work? Can we meet our newly recognised responsibilities to the world at large? And can we bring new purpose and devotion to the faith of our choice? Can we find a new joy of living in trying to do something about all these things? Can we now

accept and adjust to either failure or success? Can we now accept and adjust to either without despair or pride? Can we accept poverty, sickness, loneliness, and bereavement with courage and serenity? Can we steadfastly content ourselves with the humbler, yet sometimes more durable, satisfaction when the brighter, more glittering achievements are denied us?

The GA answer to these questions of living is *yes!* All of these things are possible. We know this because we see monotony, pain, and even calamity turned to good use by those who keep trying to practise GA's Twelve Steps. If these are facts of life, then, for many compulsive gamblers who have recovered under the GA Recovery Programme, they can become the facts of life for many more. Even the best fall short of such achievements as a consistent thing without gambling.

We go off course. Our troubles sometimes begin with indifference. We are not gambling and happy in our GA work. Things go well at home and at work. We naturally congratulate ourselves on what later prove to be far too easy and superficial points of view. We temporarily cease to grow because we feel satisfied that there is no need for all of GA's Twelve Steps for us. We are doing fine on a few of them. Maybe we are doing fine on only two of them; the First Step and part of the Twelfth Step where we carry the message. In GA slang, this is known as *two-stepping*, and it can go on for years.

Some of the best of us *two-step*. Sooner or later, this wears off and things go dull. We begin to think that GA doesn't pay off, after all. We become puzzled and discouraged. Then, perhaps life, as it has a way of doing, suddenly hands us a great big lump that we can't begin to swallow, let alone digest. We fail to get a promotion at work, we

lose that good job, serious domestic or other difficulties arise, or perhaps that boy we thought God was looking after becomes a military casualty. What then? Have we compulsive gamblers in GA got, or can we get, the resources to meet these calamities that come to so many?

These were problems of life we could never face. Can we now, with the help of God, as we understand Him, handle them as well and as bravely as the non-compulsive gambler often does? We surely have a chance if we switch from *two-stepping* to twelve-stepping, and if we are willing to receive the grace of God, which can sustain and strengthen us in any catastrophe.

Our basic troubles are the same as everyone's but when an honest effort is made to practise these principles in all our affairs, GA seems to have the ability, by God's grace, to take these troubles in stride and turn them into demonstrations of faith. We have

sometimes seen families broken apart by misunderstandings, who are reunited by the GA way of life.

With each passing day of our lives, may every one of us sense more deeply the inner meaning of the GA's simple prayer...

*God grant me the serenity to
accept the things I cannot
change...*

*Courage to change the things I
can...*

*and Wisdom to know the
difference.*

What is the Unity Programme?

In maintaining unity, we have begun to traditionally practise the following principles:

1. Our common welfare should come first, personal recovery depends upon GA unity.
2. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.
3. The only requirements for GA membership is a desire to stop gambling.
4. Each group shall be self-governing except in matters affecting other groups or GA as a whole.
5. GA has but one primary purpose - to carry the message to the compulsive gambler who still suffers.
6. GA should never endorse, finance, or lend the GA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

7. Every GA group ought to be self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. GA should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centres may employ special workers.
9. GA as such ought never to be organised, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. GA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the GA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion, we must always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films and television.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of the GA Recovery Programme, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

*God grant me the serenity
to accept the things
I cannot change...*

*Courage to change
the things I can...*

*and Wisdom
to know the difference.*

www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk