

**Living With**



**The  
Compulsive Gambler**

**Approved by the Gam-Anon Board of Delegates, May 2002**  
**© May 3, 2002 Gam-Anon International Service Office, Inc.**  
**Revised May 2016, May 2017**

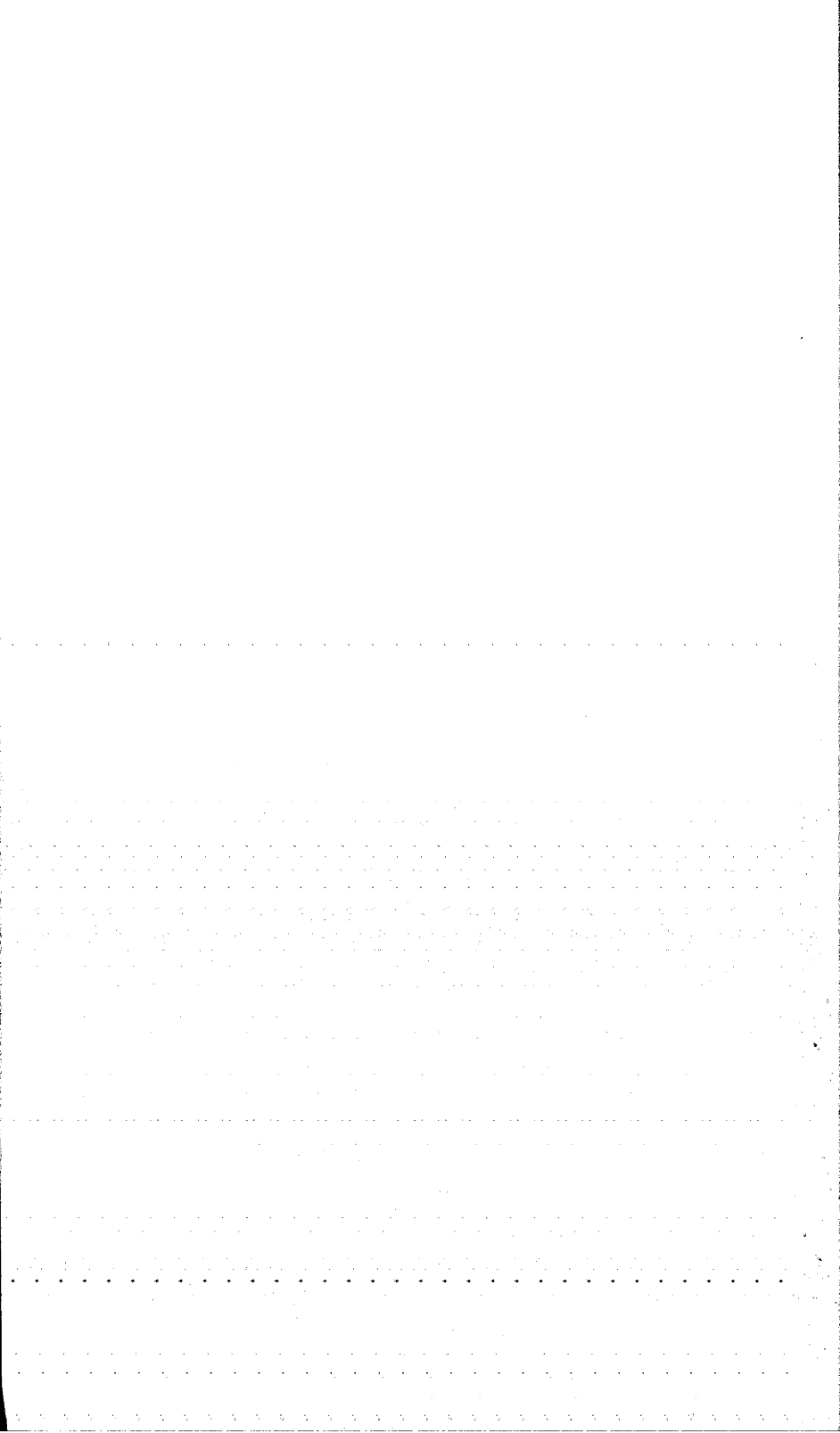
**Published by the**  
**Gam-Anon International Service Office, Inc.**  
**PO Box 307**  
**Massapequa Park, NY 11762**  
**Phone: (718) 352-1671**  
**Web Site: [www.gam-anon.org](http://www.gam-anon.org)**  
**E-mail: [gamanonoffice@gam-anon.org](mailto:gamanonoffice@gam-anon.org)**

## **LIVING WITH THE COMPULSIVE GAMBLER**

We offer this book with the hope that you will find in it added strength to carry you through your Gam-Anon day. We need all the strength we can gather from any available resource. Our lives are not easy ones, for we must be the buffer and often-times a source of strength and inspiration for the entire family. Our responsibility to ourselves and our families can prove to be a great burden, but we can learn to make it a burden of joy if we are willing to make the effort.

### **THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO THE CONCEPT THAT:**

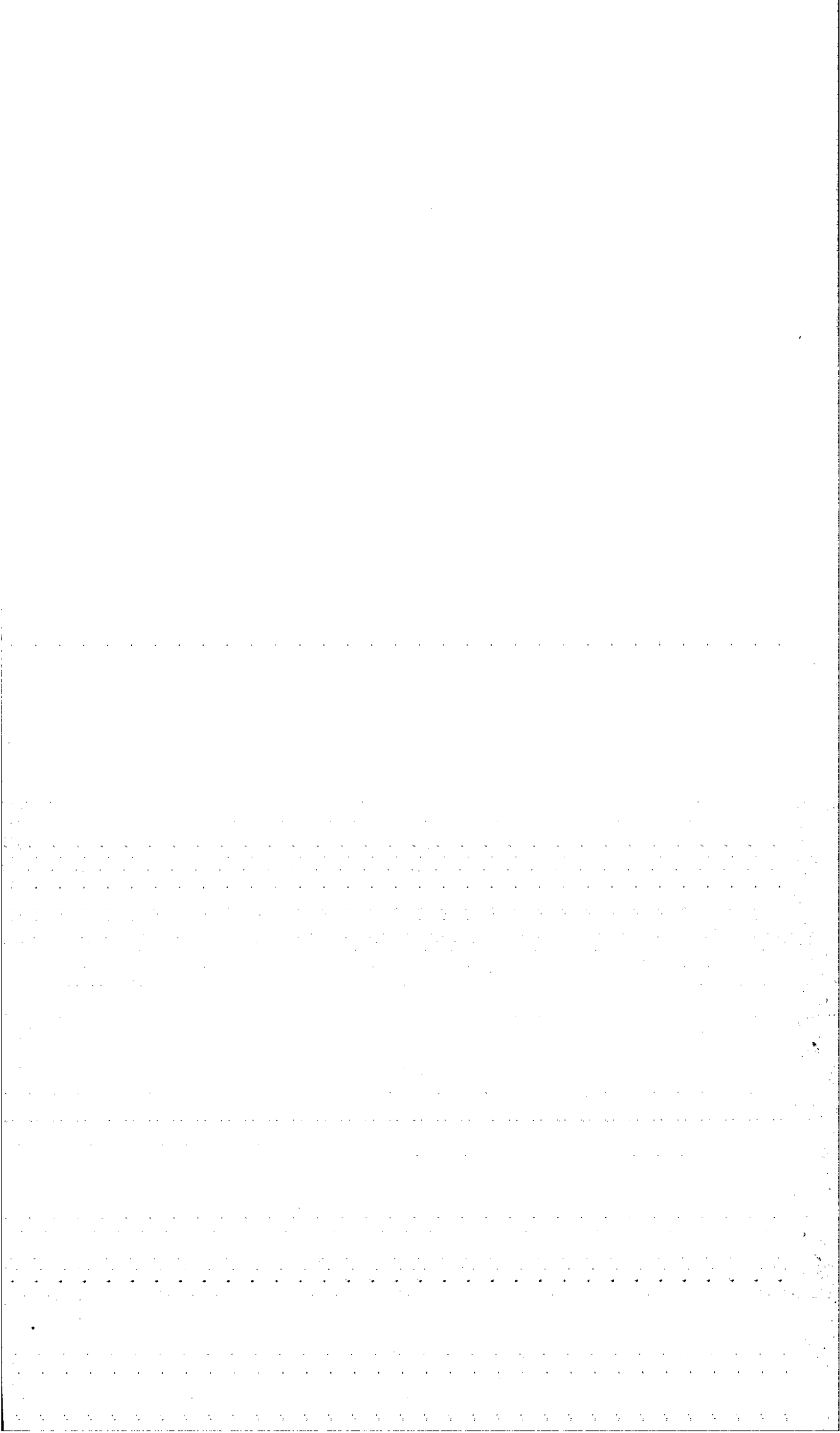
*"There's a destiny that makes us brothers,  
None goes his way alone.  
What we send into the lives of others,  
Comes back into our own."*



**LIVING WITH  
THE  
COMPULSIVE GAMBLER**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- I. About the Problem - About the Program
- II. The 12 Steps of Recovery
- III. Thoughts to Build on ...
- IV. Prayers, Meditations, Affirmations, Inspiration
- V. Personal Experiences
- VI. Unity Program and History



**I**

**ABOUT THE PROBLEM -**

**ABOUT THE PROGRAM**

## AIMS AND PURPOSES OF GAM-ANON

Gam-Anon is a fellowship of men and women who have been affected by the gambling problem. If you are seeking a solution for living with this problem, we would like you to feel that we understand as perhaps few can. We, too, are familiar with worry and sleepless nights and promises made only to be broken. Our thinking had become confused and many of us had become nervous, irritable, bitter, and unreasonable.

Just as G.A. can offer a new way of life to the compulsive gambler, so can we in Gam-Anon offer the adventure of a new way of life to you.

1. To welcome and give assistance and comfort to those affected by someone else's gambling problem.
2. To communicate Gam-Anon's understanding of compulsive gambling and its impact on our lives.
3. To share our experience, strength, and hope in coping with the gambling problem.
4. To use the Steps and Tools of the Gam-Anon program which nurture our spiritual and emotional growth and recovery.

## THE GAM-ANON ROOM

Where strangers gather to share their deepest personal secrets.

Where stories of change and strength are heard by open ears.

Where words are read which offer direction, guidance and strategies.

Where anniversaries, as well as birthdays, are joyously celebrated.

Where those who have walked the path guide those taking the first step.

Where tears and smiles are mixed to form faces with open eyes.

Where love abounds; love for others remains and love of self grows.

Where lessons are taught, tried, learned and utilized.

Where each, individually and collectively, struggles for strength.

Where living, laughing and loving fill the space.

Carole D.

## THE GAM-ANON WAY

The day the compulsive gambler finds G.A. is, for most of us, one of the happiest days of our lives. We do not know what lies ahead for us, but we have reason to believe that we have found the answer to a happier way of living.

In Gam-Anon we learn the answer to many of our questions. Through identifying with other members, we gain insight. We - if we are willing - begin to see ourselves as we really are. We accept our failures of the past and gain new faith in ourselves.

We know a sense of relief when we come to believe the compulsive gambler suffers from an emotional disorder, when for so long we considered the gambler only as a very poor excuse for a person. With the help of our fellowship, we soon find it easy to forgive. This is the Gam-Anon way!

"AFTER WE HAVE GATHERED IN OUR HARVEST OF BITTER EXPERIENCES, WE CAN USE THEM EITHER FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH OR FOR SELF-DESTRUCTION, SELF PITY AND RESENTMENT."

We in Gam-Anon have all gathered our harvest of bitter experiences ... Because of the simple way of life that Gam-Anon teaches us, we have learned how not to allow our bitterness to destroy us. How fortunate we are! For years many of us felt that God had forsaken us. Now we know God does hear our prayers. We come into our first meeting usually with much bitterness, feeling that we can never learn to trust again. We come so filled with self-pity and resentment that we are a sorry sight to behold. Then the miracle of Gam-Anon begins its work on us; that is, if we are willing to be honest with ourselves and with others. Gam-Anon teaches us to

forget the past and look to the future with faith and courage. Are you allowing Gam-Anon to help you to make the most of your bitter harvest?

### COMPULSIVE GAMBLING

Compulsive gambling is the obvious symptom of an emotional disorder. The emotional factors involved are: inability or unwillingness to accept reality, emotional insecurity, basic immaturity, and lack of self-esteem. Gamblers seem to be most comfortable when gambling. To us they seem like they are on a course of self-destruction.

Compulsive gambling brings despair and humiliation into the lives of countless thousands of men, women, and children. The compulsive gambler is a person who is dominated by an irresistible urge to gamble. Coupled with this is the obsessive idea that a way will be found not only to control the gambling but to "make it pay" and enjoy it besides. This disease causes deterioration in almost all areas of the person's life.

Some compulsive gamblers attempt to create images of themselves as philanthropists and all-around "good fellows." Much of the time they live in dream worlds which satisfy their emotional needs. The gamblers dream of lives filled with friends, new cars, furs, and other riches beyond their means. Pathetically, there seems never to be big enough winnings to make even the smallest dream come true, probably because whatever monies won are, to them, sacred. They must always return to win more. No amount is sufficient. Ultimately, they gamble in reckless desperation and the dream world brings them no relief. They destroy themselves and everyone they touch.

When compulsive gamblers reach the point where they are willing to admit the problem and have a desire to stop gambling, they will find help through Gamblers Anonymous.

## SEEKING HELP

Most compulsive gamblers will not admit a need for help until their compulsion has made their lives intolerable. Each must find his own depth; they speak of this, as their "bottom." Each gambler's bottom is different. It may be the loss or the threatened loss of the person or thing most important to them. It may be the loss of family; loss of freedom because of threatened incarceration, or a realization of their complete loss of self-respect. We usually realize their need for help long before the gamblers do. This realization may cause us to have a feeling of utter helplessness and loss of hope. There is nothing so devastating as to sit with hands tied and watch those we love destroy themselves. It is important for us to know that we can make our gamblers aware that help is available and that it may be found in Gamblers Anonymous.

Experience teaches us that it is seldom helpful to give the gamblers financial assistance when they are gambling, despite the fact that they will demand it, make promises that they will not keep, beg, and plead piteously. Neither does it help to nag, threaten, or plead with them. It is important to point out to them, when in the throes of gambling episodes, that they are not fooling us. They need to be made aware of the reality of the situation. Lying for them gets the same result as lying does for children who lie to keep out of trouble. We need to examine our actions in dealing with them to be sure we are not aiding them and making it possible for them to continue to destroy themselves.

If we are to live with this problem without complete self-destruction, we will also need help. We must keep our sense of values, our equilibrium, and stability. Gam-Anon can provide the necessary therapy.

It is our hope that newcomers will find in the book, and in Gam-Anon, hope for themselves and renewed faith that eventually the compulsive gamblers can find the way from the personal hell of

compulsive gambling. But even if your gambler refuses to accept help from G.A., you can be helped. You need not allow the gambling to destroy you.

### JUST FOR TODAY

JUST FOR TODAY I WILL BE UNAFRAID. ESPECIALLY I WILL NOT BE AFRAID TO ENJOY WHAT IS BEAUTIFUL AND TO BELIEVE THAT AS I GIVE TO THE WORLD, SO THE WORLD WILL GIVE TO ME.

Most of us who have lived with compulsive gambling are not strangers to fear. It has been our closest companion for years. Rarely have we escaped it except for short periods of time. We have wrestled with fear through long nights and at times, it has dominated our lives. We have known so many different kinds of fear - it surrounded us. We learned to fear the insistent ringing of a phone, the haunted look in the eyes of our gambler, each new day, and the sound of the doorbell chimes. The mailman held a special fear for us and most of all, we knew the gnawing fear of losing control. Insecurity and fear walked hand in hand through our lives. We lived with those nagging, black, unnamed fears which encircled us until we became shrinking shadows of our former selves. The careless freedom and bright hope of our youth were gone. Then came GAM-ANON! We found others who had lived with fear. We learned that individually we were hopeless in dealing with this problem, but we found strength in and through each other. We joined together - together we fought our fears. We looked for and found hope and understanding. We feel this verse by an unknown poet to be appropriate.

FRIGHTENED YOU ARE MY ONLY FRIEND  
FRIGHTENED WE ARE EVERYONE  
SOMEONE MUST TAKE A STAND  
COWARD TAKE MY COWARD'S HAND

## RESIGNATION

Resignation seems to be such a negative word. Perhaps to people on the "outside" it is. Those of us who have been able to truly take the first step in Gam-Anon have found resignation to be a necessary requirement. Maybe for years we longed to resign - sometimes we even thought of resigning from life. Somehow, we could not allow ourselves to give up - to admit there was no way out for the gambler. We journeyed through the years seeing one hope after another smashed. We always thought we could find a solution. We found it impossible to resign ourselves. We wondered why God allowed our lives to be as they were. Were we being punished? Now we can see that God has a special mission for people like us. We are aware that only through suffering can we hope to understand the suffering of another. In resignation we have found hope for ourselves and compassion for others. Sometimes we find ourselves wondering what we would do if the gambler gambled again after years of abstinence. At these times we need to be reminded that this is a decision, which need not concern us today. This is a day-to-day program. If the day should come when the symptoms of the gambler's illness return, the power greater than us will see us through.

## THE GAM-ANON MEMBER ALONE

First of all, a Gam-Anon member is never alone. Through the self-help fellowship known as Gam-Anon, those affected by the gambling problem find others who have known fear, helplessness, anxiety, and the embarrassment caused by the gambler. By identifying with other Gam-Anon members and applying the program, we receive help and relief from the problem. We learn that we are powerless, but not helpless. With the help of our Gam-Anon program we begin to see ourselves as we really are. We see the life we are living and the role we play in the gambling situation.

It is a wonderful feeling to know that the Gam-Anon program can help even if the gambler does not attend G.A. By using the Twelve Steps we learn to accept the gambling problem as an illness and to live one day at a time.

Most importantly we learn that we are not powerless over ourselves and the way we respond to the gambler who continues to gamble. We need to concentrate on our own recovery from the problem, even if the gambler doesn't want recovery. We can have faith and hope, and know that we need never be alone in our problem again.

### **HOW CAN I HELP?**

Compulsive gambling is a disease most baffling to those of us who live with it. We wonder what we can do to help the gambler when he or she joins G.A. It is important for us to realize that gambling has consumed the gambler. It seems to be like a haven where all problems are forgotten. In G.A., they learn that they must face their problems.

This is the time our understanding may be greatly needed. We may find the gambler most difficult to live with. At this point he or she may become moody and depressed, then at times overly exuberant. Recovery will not be accomplished overnight. It is wise to remember there is no known cure for compulsive gambling. The gambling may be arrested but the underlying causes may remain.

Acceptance of these facts is important if we are to be of any help. When problems arise, it is wise to refer the gamblers to other G.A. members in recovery for help, just as we turn to other Gam-Anon members for our support.

**DOES LIVING WITH THE COMPULSIVE GAMBLER  
TEND TO MAKE ONE PHYSICALLY AND  
EMOTIONALLY DISTRESSED?**

Living with this problem proves to be a devastating experience for most of us. The constant emotional beatings to which we are exposed take their toll. After time, we may become confused, feel trapped, and experience extreme difficulty in making decisions.

We may feel despair and experience anxiety symptoms such as dizziness, heart palpitations, hysteria, listlessness, severe headaches, loss of appetite or excessive overeating, sudden outbursts of rage and possibly, thoughts of self-destruction.

Living with this despair makes it difficult to solve our own problems and deal with stress in a healthy manner. We must seek help.

**STRENGTH IN BEING A SEPARATE PERSON**

Can I be strong enough as a person to be separate from another? Can I be a sturdy respecter of my own feelings, my own needs, as well as the gambler's? Can I own and if need be, express my own feelings as something belonging to me and separate from the gambler's feelings? Am I strong enough in my own separateness that I will not be downcast by the gambler's depression, frightened by the gambler's fear, or engulfed by the gambler's dependency? Is my inner self hardy enough to realize that I am not destroyed by the gambler's anger, taken over by the gambler's need for dependence, or enslaved by the gambler's love, but that I exist separate from the gambler with feelings and rights of my own? When I can freely feel this strength of being a separate person, then I find that I can let myself go much more deeply in understanding and accepting the gambler because I am not fearful of losing myself.

Am I secure enough within myself to permit the gambler his or her separateness? Can I permit the gambler to be what he or she is - honest or deceitful, infantile or adult, despairing or over-confident? Can I give the gambler the freedom to be? Or do I feel that the gambler should follow my advice, or remain somewhat dependent on me, or mold him or herself after me?

### **WHAT IS GOOD MENTAL HEALTH?**

Here is a simple four-point checklist to remember:

1. Emotional health is being in balance as God made you, and not being tossed around by your emotions.
2. Emotional health is being comfortable with your-self, as well as with other people.
3. Emotional health is finding satisfaction in the things that occupy your time, both work and play.
4. Emotional health is doing something about your responsibilities and your problems.

If you find yourself falling short in the above checklist maybe you should look for the help you need in the fellowship of Gam-Anon.

### **HOW CAN I KEEP EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY?**

#### ***1. TALK IT OUT***

Don't bottle it up. Confide your worry to some levelheaded person that you trust. The talking-out process has enormous therapeutic value. It relieves your strain, and helps you see your way more clearly.

#### ***2. ESCAPE FOR AWHILE***

Yes, a change helps - whether it is a change of activity, scene or people. It lets you recover breath and balance. But remember to re-

turn to your difficulty when you are in better condition to cope with it.

### **3. *WORK OFF YOUR ANGER***

Let your "revenge" wait until tomorrow. Meanwhile work off your pent-up energy by exercising, working at a hobby, taking a long walk, doing something. It takes a cool head to handle a problem properly.

### **4. *GIVE IN OCCASIONALLY***

Frequent quarrels and feelings of defiance are characteristic of frustrated children. Giving in once in a while - even if you are dead right - is easier on your system. When you give in, often others will too.

### **5. *DO SOMETHING FOR OTHERS***

Doing something for somebody else is a wonderful way to stop worrying about yourself. Make it something positive and helpful and perhaps unexpected. You will be surprised at how much better you feel.

### **6. *TAKE ONE THING AT A TIME***

Are you overwhelmed, perhaps panicky, at the amount of work to be done? You can clear it up more easily and quickly than you believe by tackling just one thing at a time - starting with the most urgent. Forget about the others until you get to them.

### **7. *GO EASY ON YOURSELF***

Don't expect too much of yourself. Remember, you are not superhuman. No one can be perfect in everything. Put honest effort into the things you do and do the best you can. Be tolerant of your shortcomings.

## **8. GO EASY WITH YOUR CRITICISM**

Don't expect too much of others. Don't try to fit them into a preconceived pattern. Instead of being critical, search out the other person's good points and help him or her to develop them.

## **9. MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE**

Do you sometimes feel rejected, left out of things? Don't withdraw and sulk. Chances are that people are waiting for you to make the first move. Don't make all the overtures, because a healthy relationship is give-and-take. But you'll be happier if you make your share of them.

## **10. SCHEDULE YOUR RECREATION**

Don't drive yourself. Let up and relax ... frequently. Realize that definite times for recreation and hobbies are just as important as definite times for work. Include recreation in your daily schedule and stick to it.

### **A HANDY YARDSTICK FOR MEASURING THE VALUE OF GAM-ANON**

1. You have a tolerant, easy-going attitude toward yourself as well as towards others.
2. You estimate your own abilities realistically. That is, you neither underestimate nor overestimate them.
3. You respect yourself.
4. You are able to take life's disappointments in stride.
5. You feel that you are a part of the group, and have a sense of responsibility to the group and to your fellow members.
6. You accept your responsibilities and do something about your problems as they arise. You are able to give love to others and to consider their interests.
7. You are able to set realistic goals for yourself.

8. You put your best efforts into what you do and get satisfaction out of it.
9. You feel a strong need to help another member or another person who lives with a gambling problem, and you realize the tremendous satisfaction in doing so.
10. You find life fulfilling.

### **ARE YOU WILLING?**

To close your book of complaints and to open the book of praise?

To believe other individuals are quite as sincere as you and to treat them with respect?

To ignore what life owes you and to think about what you owe to life?

To stop looking for friendship and to start being friendly?

To be content with such things as you have and to stop whining for the things you have not?

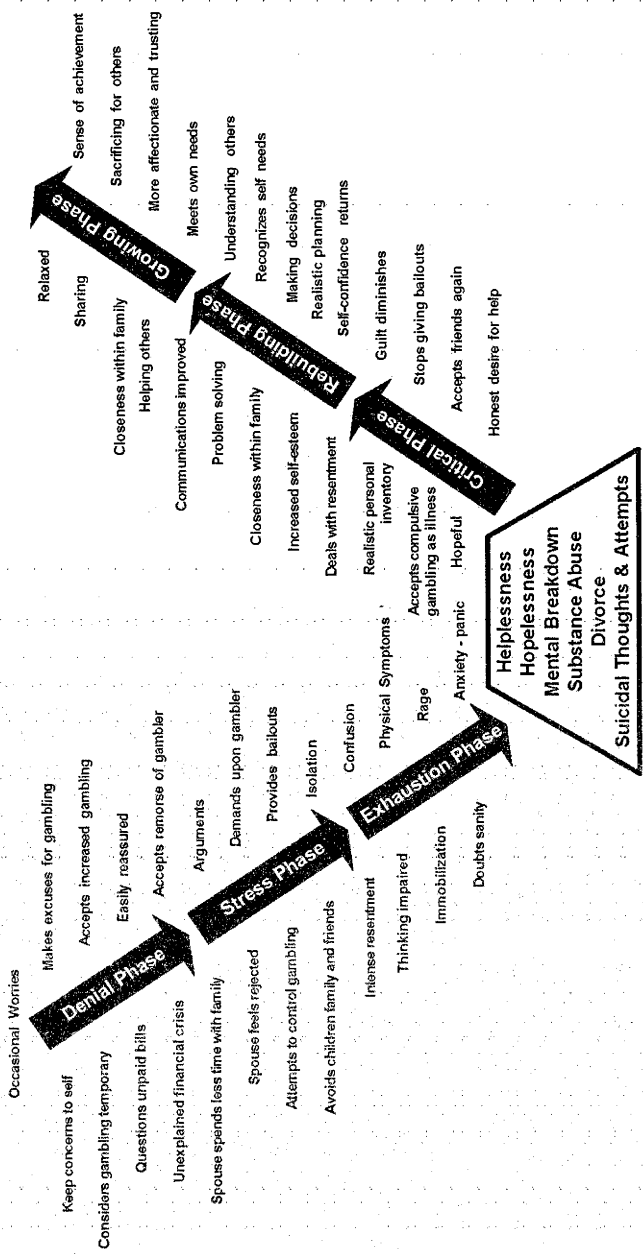
To enjoy the simple blessings of life and to cease striving for the artificial pleasures of the day?

To forget what you have accomplished and to meditate on what others have done for you?

To cease looking for someone to help you and to devote yourself to helping others?

To consecrate your life to the service of an imperfect humanity and to let your life be an outlet for God's joy, love and peace?

# A Chart on the Effects of Compulsive Gambling on the Spouse





## II

# THE TWELVE STEPS OF RECOVERY

## THE PRINCIPLES OF THE TWELVE STEPS

1. Acceptance
2. Hope
3. Faith
4. Honesty
5. Courage
6. Willingness
7. Humility
8. Sincerity
9. Action
10. Vigilance
11. Spirituality
12. Sharing

THE GAM-ANON WAY OF LIFE

\*\*\*\*\*

## RECOVERY PROGRAM

### STEP ONE

*We admitted we were powerless over the gambling problem and that our lives had become unmanageable.*

The admission of powerlessness does not come easily. As those affected by the compulsive gambler, we came to believe in their complete inability to manage their lives. In all honesty, no doubt we were correct in feeling this way. We didn't recognize that although it is true they could not manage their lives, neither could we do so for them. We attempted to be "The Power." Most of us tried every conceivable method to stop those we loved from gambling. We begged, pleaded, loved and hated, threatened, reasoned with and covered for them. Some of us blamed ourselves. We blamed their

family background and the world in general. None of us could stop the compulsive gambler regardless of our unceasing efforts.

We who lived with this problem developed countless emotional and spiritual problems. Some of us felt that God had forsaken us. The stressful life we lived was too much for us. Most of us came to Gam-Anon with overwhelming problems.

We took this first step with an admission of powerlessness over our problem. We came to feel as though a heavy burden had been lifted from our shoulders. We found relief. The first and most important thing we learned was that we were not responsible for the gambler's problem. It was no longer necessary for us to live in fear - fear that any wrong move on our part could send them back to gambling. It became evident to us that as we were never able to stop them from gambling, neither were we responsible if they should gamble. When we released the compulsive gambler, we were able to admit the unmanageability of our own lives. We became increasingly aware of a need to render our spiritual and emotional house in order.

### STEP TWO

*Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to a normal way of thinking and living.*

In the 1st Step we admitted that we were powerless over the problem in our family. Having discovered we were powerless after all that we had done, we might now think there is no hope. To the contrary, Step 2 tells us that there is hope. But first we need to recognize that the life we have been living is not healthy. A life made of fears, worries and suspicions, such as ours, is painful and stressful. So is a life of tears, anxiety, or depression. We seek a power that will help us add balance, stability, even happiness into our existence. In Step 2 we come to believe that there is such a power which is greater than ourselves and that it can and will restore us to a normal way of thinking and living.

What is this power that we come to believe in and to rely on? Some choose to consider the program to be this power. After all, we see that it seems to be working for others. Collectively there are hundreds of years of experience with the gambling problem represented by the people in our rooms. When we attend meetings, these members freely share with us their experience, strength, hope and progress. Certainly, this "people power" is greater than each of us alone.

Some choose to call this higher power God, or simply Higher Power. Many of us spent countless hours crying out to God, of our understanding, during the gambling years. We asked God to stop the gambler from gambling, to pay the bills, or to make us happy. As we take the 2nd Step, we begin to have faith that this power can help us and will indeed help us to live "normally" again. Now when we talk to our Higher Power, we ask for guidance in living our lives.

### STEP THREE

*Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of this power of our own understanding.*

Now that we have come to believe that there is a Higher Power that can restore us to a normal way of thinking and living, we need to decide if we are willing to allow this power to actually work in our lives. We may liken this to the power of electricity that flows continuously through our walls. We all know it's there, and believe it works, but we can't actually use this electricity unless we "plug-in" to it. Similarly, we must plug into our Higher Power to reap its benefits. How do we plug into our Higher Power? The key to the 3rd Step could well be called willingness. How do we demonstrate our willingness to recover from the ills that living with the compulsive gambler has had upon our lives?

If we have faith that our Higher Power can help us, and if we want the help, we demonstrate this by seeking this help. We continue to attend meetings where we learn from each other's experiences. We

share our stories and we act upon suggestions of others who have "been there" even when we are not confident that we can do it or that the suggestions really will help. With this willingness we will cut away the self-will that has blocked the entrance of the Higher Power into our lives. Doing it our way got us to this unhappy place to begin with. What have we got to lose? We can always go back to our old ways again. What have we got to gain? We will gain a new way of coping with life... peace, serenity and even joy! Deciding to try a new way of living demonstrates our willingness to allow our Higher Power to work in our lives.

#### **STEP FOUR**

*Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*

Some of us have an aversion to taking our moral inventory. We may convince ourselves there is no need. We clutch at excuses and perhaps we feel our anxieties and troubles are caused by the behavior of others, primarily the compulsive gamblers. Many of us believed that if they had treated us better, we would not have gone astray in our thinking. We may be inclined to think that our resentments are justified. They, the gamblers, were the guilty ones, weren't they? But what was our part in the gambling picture? They deceived and we put our heads in the sand. They lied and we chose to believe the lies. Some of us even "covered" for them. They placed the bets and we dreamed of what we would do with the winnings. We objected to the losses but accepted the winnings. When they came crying to us, we bailed them out. We participated even when we didn't want to ... even when we knew it did more harm than good. We sought peace at any price, and what a price we paid.

People are driven by self-pride which unconsciously blinds them to their shortcomings. In Gam-Anon, we perceive that something must be done if we have an honest desire to make progress in this program. Difficult as it is, we must look at our own actions and at

our own lives. We need to drop the word "blame" from our vocabulary. Once we have decided to take inventory and make the effort to do this job well, we begin to really see ourselves for the first time. We may find this painful but necessary. Lest we become discouraged, it is important to remember our assets as well as our liabilities. We need not judge ourselves harshly. We acted the only way we knew how. Once we can see ourselves honestly and are conscious of our behavior, we will be able to develop the ability to make choices about how we act in the future. But in Step 4 we need not make any changes yet. We need only to look fearlessly and honestly at who we are.

### **THE GIFT**

*Sometimes I shut the door on all the world,  
And go alone to that most secret place.*

*Where there is only God -  
Just God and I!*

*Then together we go over subtle acts,  
Mistakes, and small hypocrisies of mine.  
I strip myself from shams, from shackles free,  
And stand aghast at my duplicity.*

*We look, just God and I, into my heart,  
And though I shrink, we gaze there to the depth:  
And though I tremble, shamed by what we find.*

*I suffer, too, a kind of painful joy.  
And while I often find it hard to bear  
The burning of God's knowing eyes on me,  
I feel me stronger grow, just from their gaze.  
My nakedness, it seems to me, is clothed  
In raiment new that is most wondrous fair,  
When next I venture forth, I wear Serenity,  
The gift that God in secret gave to me.*

## STEP FIVE

*Admitted to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*

It is sometimes difficult to admit to ourselves that we have any character defects and even more difficult to admit our shortcomings to another person. It takes courage to show our true selves. Once we have summoned this courage and are able to discuss our defects with another, we have come a long way toward peace of mind.

When we are ready to share our personal inventory, we look around for someone in whom we can confide. We will seek someone whom we trust, someone who can be objective, someone who will understand and not judge. We seek empathy, not sympathy. We seek someone who will listen to us and hear us, someone who will not criticize, someone who has been there and understands where we come from. No one can understand our problems quite as well as one with a similar problem. How wonderful it is that we can turn to another Gam-Anon member for help. However, some of us may wish to talk with a priest, rabbi, minister, therapist, etc. This is a decision that must be made individually.

As we discuss our difficulties and defects with another, the burden becomes lighter and the weight of it is removed from our shoulders. When we speak to another person, we get clarity and perspective. When we allow the acknowledgment of our shortcomings to see the light of day, we magically feel relief. As we share, others feel the freedom to share with us. We find that we no longer need to put on the mask of being perfect. We simply become members of the human race with human weaknesses and failings. We discover that we are not alone

## STEP SIX

*Were entirely ready to have these defects of character removed.*

We have taken our personal inventory and shared it with another. We see ourselves clearly and have discovered that we are not all we would like to be. Now it is time, in Step 6, to become willing to have these defects of character removed.

We may feel that, "This is just the way I am ... I can't change." To a degree this is true. We find we are powerless over our defects of character. This parallels our powerlessness over the compulsive gambler. We will need a power greater than ourselves to help remove them.

But in order for that to happen, we need to become willing to live without these defects. Some of them are comfortable and some of them are so much a part of who we are. We even take pride in some of them. Sometimes we cling to a character defect, feeling that it defines us. We wonder, "What would be left of me without it?" Perhaps we are afraid to change. In time, however, we may find that the defects bring us more pain than pleasure. We wish to be rid of them. We feel that enough is enough. We are sick and tired of being "sick and tired." We become earnest in our desire to grow and live more fully and to be the best we can be. We become willing to be rid of the difficulties and troublesome ways of the past in order to make room for positive changes.

## STEP SEVEN

*Humbly asked God (of our understanding) to remove our shortcomings.*

We have found within ourselves a true desire to be rid of our defects of character, but we cannot simply change ourselves by ourselves. Surely if we could have, we would have already. Now we can see that in order for us to change we need help. So, with humility and without reservations, we ask our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings.

Let us remember to place special emphasis on the word humble in working this Step. Some of us believe it to be a desire to seek and do God's will. The dictionary defines it as the absence of (false) pride. Humility is made up of sincerity, integrity and a yearning to improve ourselves, not to be better than others, but to be our own best selves. Humility is the key word to opening the door to recovery through this Step.

Does our Higher Power work alone to remove our shortcomings? Do we simply ask and it is done? Probably not. At this point we have a great desire to change. We are tuned into our behavior, our thoughts and our actions. We are conscious of when we do not act, as we would really desire to act. With this increased awareness about who we are, we develop the ability to choose, rather than just to run on automatic.

When we strongly desire to change and humbly ask our Higher Power for help, we become able to take small steps toward changing. As we look back over time, we see that these small changes add up. We are indeed becoming different people. With the help of our Higher Power, our shortcomings are being removed.

### **STEP EIGHT**

*Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.*

When we took our inventory in Step 4, we discovered that we had done harm to other people. We allowed the gambling problem in our family to twist our thinking. Often preoccupied with the gambling problem, we could not fulfill our obligations to give love and understanding to our children. If our tempers were consistently bad, we aroused anger in others. If we had become irritable, critical, bitter and humorless, we took these personality traits to our jobs and to all of our activities. Many of us had literally sunk to the depths of misery and despair, and because we were miserable, we made others

around us miserable. We hurt our gamblers by participating in an environment that enabled them to continue to gamble. And we hurt ourselves by allowing ourselves to sink to such depths.

But what do we say if these people harmed us too? We may rightfully feel that the others are as wrong or more wrong than we are; however, we are responsible only for our own actions. An important part of becoming willing to make amends to others requires us to be willing to forgive others for the harm they've done to us. When we can forgive others and let go of some of that pain, we are able to concentrate on our own behavior and discover where we were at fault.

In Step 8, we become ready and willing to make amends ... we feel the need to make amends. We sincerely desire to right the wrongs we have done.

### STEP NINE

*Made direct amends to such people wherever possible except when to do so would injure them or others.*

Step 9 calls for action. Now that we have made our list of those we have harmed and have become ready and willing to make amends, it is time to actually do it.

There are a number of ways to make amends. A face-to-face apology is the most direct. Some choose to write their amends in a letter. Some repay a debt, even if anonymously. In many cases, simply changing one's behavior towards someone is a way to mend a relationship.

More often than not, our amends will be accepted. Sometimes people don't even remember the event we have been so upset about. Some people are very willing to let the past be the past. But there are times that the recipients might reject our amends. They may not be ready to forgive us for the harm we did. We need to know that we are doing this to clear up the weight of our own guilt and remorse for our wrongdoings. We must remember that, in the end, we are making the amends for ourselves. It is after making these amends

that we truly feel relieved of our unhappy past. By making amends we give ourselves the gift of freedom. We have taken an enormous step towards our own recovery.

### **OUR OWN**

*We have careful thought for the stranger,  
And smiles for the sometime guest,  
But often for our own  
The bitter tone,  
Though we love our own the best.  
Oh lips with the curve impatient,  
And brow with that look of scorn,  
Would be a cruel fate  
Were the night too late  
To undo the work of the morn.*

*Margaret E. Sangster*

### **THE SIN OF OMISSION**

*It isn't the thing you do,  
It's the thing you leave undone,  
Which gives you a bit of heartache  
At the setting of the sun.  
The tender word forgotten,  
The letter you did not write,  
The flower you might have sent,  
Are your haunting ghosts tonight.  
The stone you might have lifted  
Out of a brother's way,  
The bit of heartsome counsel  
You were hurried too much to say.  
The loving touch of the hand,  
The gentle and winsome tone,  
That you had no time or thought for*

*With troubles enough of your own.  
The little acts of kindness,  
So easily out of mind;  
Those chances to be helpful  
Which everyone may find.*

### **WORDS**

*A careless word  
    May kindle strife.  
A cruel word  
    May wreck a life.  
A bitter word  
    May hate instill;  
A brutal word  
    May smite and kill.  
A gracious word  
    May smooth the way;  
A joyous word  
    May light the day.  
A timely word  
    May lessen stress;  
A loving word  
    May heal and bless.*

*Submitted by Margie M  
Downey, California*

### **STEP TEN**

*Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong,  
promptly admitted it.*

The purpose of this Step is to teach us to be aware of our character defects and guard against them daily. There are a number of ways to do this. Some choose to keep a journal in which they write about their daily actions and feelings. Others speak to a sponsor or other Gam-Anon member about their personal difficulties and successes

as they arise. As we remain in the program, we become adept at making "spot-checks". We come to know when our thinking and emotions have gone awry. When we feel this discomfort, we feel the need to work out our problem in order to bring ourselves back into sync.

Some of us are able to make the greatest progress by working on our liabilities one at a time. For instance, if we are working on self-pity, we analyze our actions and reactions honestly each day as they pertain to self-pity. If anger is our issue, we review the way we handle anger each day. And so, too, with envy, greed, gossip, negative thinking, etc.

It seems that no matter how long we are in the program, and no matter how much we have grown and changed, we can still expect some of our character flaws to reappear as we face new situations. When we discover we are wrong, or when we rediscover a character defect, we need to promptly admit it to ourselves and to another human being.

We thereby set the stage again for the changes we wish to make in our lives. Step 10 teaches us vigilance as we continue to do this work of recovery. We do this Step for our peace of mind, without thought of reward except our own spiritual growth. We have found that this Step has its own reward in a happier way of life for our loved ones and ourselves.

### **STEP ELEVEN**

*Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us, and the power to carry that out.*

This Step, if applied without reservations, will open the door for us to a new and more spiritual way of living. It is suggested that we start our day by turning our first waking thought toward God. Even a few minutes spent in lifting our thoughts to that Higher Power, which is God, can make each day a better day. We may ask God to

direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonesty or self-seeking motives.

When thinking about our day, we will face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. We may ask God for inspiration and intuitive thought or decision. We let God take over. We relax, take it easy and cease to struggle. We may be surprised how the right answers will come after we have tried this. It is an excellent idea to conclude our morning meditations with a prayer asking that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we may be given the strength to solve our problems. When we have gained this strength, it will be easier to face truths each day, starting each morning asking for renewed faith and courage to carry out His will.

\*\*\*\*\*

*In Gam-Anon we do not enter into theological discussions, but in carrying our message, we attempt to explain the simple "how" of the spiritual life ...How faith in a Higher Power can help you to overcome loneliness, fear and anxiety ...How it can help you get along with other people ...How it can make it possible for you to rise above pain, sorrow and despondency ...How it can help you to overcome your desires for the things that destroy. Have I reached a simple, effective faith?*

### STEP TWELVE

*Having made an effort to practice these principles in all our affairs, we tried to carry this message to others.*

Having had some measure of success in working the first 11 Steps, we are now ready to carry out one of the purposes of the Gam-Anon program, which is to help others who are still suffering from the gambling problem. What are these principles that we have made an effort to practice? What is the message that we carry to others?

The principles are the essence of each step. The principle of Step 1 is acceptance. We start our program by accepting that we are powerless over the problem in our family. We must accept personal powerlessness over another person, the gambler. The principle of Step 2 is hope. We came to believe that there was a power that was greater than ourselves which could restore us to a normal way of thinking and living. In Step 3 we show our faith by making a decision to trust our Higher Power with our lives.

Step 4 calls for honesty as we take our own moral inventory and dare to face our own character flaws. We look within to see what part we played in our own lives. It takes courage to admit our faults not only to ourselves, but also to another human being, as called for in Step 5. Here, we dare to take off our masks and show our true selves. In Step 6 we display willingness as we become ready to shed the defects of character which stand in the way of our growth. In Step 7, we show humility, recognizing that we are powerless alone to rid ourselves of our shortcomings and we ask for the help of our Higher Power.

We made a list of those we harmed in Step 8 and find that if we are sincere, we will become willing to actually right the wrongs we've done. In Step 9 we take the action called for to make these amends. Step 10 teaches us vigilance as we continue to look at our actions, admit our mistakes and make changes in our lives. The principle of Step 11 is spirituality as we seek through prayer and meditation to improve our relationship with our Higher Power. In Step 12 we find that we are eager to share with others our wonderful new way of life. It is only in sharing that we can keep what we have gained. We realize that the more we give to the program, the more we will receive.

Our message is one of hope. Our program is a method of coping with life and learning to live more fully and more happily, with serenity and peace of mind.

## THE TWELFTH STEP CALL

Our heart goes out to the people who are most affected by the compulsive gambler, who are so obviously miserable when they come to their first Gam-Anon meeting. Who can possibly understand their suffering better than we who have suffered? We search for words of comfort and encouragement.

Let us take inventory. What do we have to offer our prospective members? We offer that which we have found: new hope, our understanding, our compassion and our love. We offer our greatest possession - ourselves.

We usually meet the new person at a Gam-Anon meeting or over the phone. Some newcomers are reticent about speaking of their problems. It is our responsibility to make them feel comfortable. We tell "our story", as they want to hear something of our experience in living with this problem. After we have gained their confidence, they will want us to listen to them. They need to unload, to know that they are not alone and to find the understanding they seek.

The joy of helping another is our greatest reward in Gam-Anon. The initial 12th Step call is very important, but equally important is the follow-up work we do. The new member will need our strength for many months to come. The telephone is an important tool in 12th Step work - use it! We do not tell the new member what to do or not to do, but only offer our experience and suggestions as a guide. Lest we forget, ours is a sacred trust.

We strive above all, in carrying out our plan, to preserve most carefully the dignity of man.

**III**

**THOUGHTS  
TO  
BUILD ON**

**PRAYERS, MEDITATIONS  
AFFIRMATIONS,  
INSPIRATION**

**TO CELEBRATE WITH GRATITUDE,**  
**GAM-ANON'S 25th ANNIVERSARY**

**Dear Gam-Anon,**

**With Gratitude:** For a life that has known such richness  
For the joys that have filled my heart  
For my faith in a Higher Power  
That wasn't there at the start

**With Gratitude:** For all the pain and sorrow  
I needed in order to grow  
For every problem I handled  
For fears I ceased to know  
That I never knew I had choices  
To do what I knew was right  
Till Gam-Anon gave me the courage  
That helped me see the light

**With Gratitude:** For the courage to stand by my values  
No matter how hard that may be  
That I never I had values  
Till Gam-Anon set me free

**With Gratitude:** For a faith that never fails me  
For God's love every step of the way  
That I never knew he could guide me  
Till Gam-Anon taught me to pray

**With Gratitude:** For the birds, the trees and the flowers  
That make every day bright  
That I never noticed existed  
Till Gam-Anon gave me my sight

**With Gratitude:** For all the people who have shared  
Their strength and faith and hope  
For each of you in all the rooms  
Who showed me how to cope  
For Gam-Anons in all the world  
I humbly want to say  
From the very bottom of my heart  
I thank you every day

Rose L.

### HUMILITY

There are very few of us who walk into our first Gam- Anon meeting with any semblance of humility. We think we know it all. We believe that if the gambler would just follow our prescription, everything would be perfect. We feel justified in our anger; we feel righteous in our bitterness; we complain; we cry; we keep a long list of grievances against the gambler. Finally, and unexpectedly, we walk into our meeting and find truth - and the truth is our realization that we must look inward to find the source of our happiness. On that day, we experience humility.

*Affirmation: Today I will begin to learn the truth about myself. I will give up the lie that someone else is responsible for my happiness. The excuses and justifications I use to blame others will seem shallow explanations for my wretchedness. I will find peace in humility.*

Denise D.

### SERENITY

The ill effects of compulsive gambling take a terrible toll. Even if the gambler has gone into recovery, it can take a long time to rebuild relationships, clear up the debt, make restitution and amends and reverse old patterns of behavior. It feels like the fallout will never end and we become discouraged.

It is important to remember that all of life is a cycle of beginnings and ends, ups and downs, scarcity and abundance. Rather than trying to control the cycles of the universe, work on being the kind of person who can bend, but not break, in the wind.

*Affirmation: Today I will revel in the glory of living a new day. I will accept what the universe brings to me and do the best I can in all ways. If the day brings sorrow, I will endure and be serene in the knowledge that it will pass. If the day brings joy, I will cherish it and allow it to fill me and give me strength for the hard times.*

Denise D.

### AMBITION

It seems that many of us are so concerned with an outcome that we miss the joy and serenity that accompanies the process - the process of living. What happens when we reach our goal? We set another one and another and spend more of our time trying to reach them. "If only... (fill in the blank) I would be happy." And so we spend a lot of time suspending our happiness until each new outcome is achieved, and very little time reveling in an accomplishment.

*Affirmation: Today I will live my day one minute at a time. I will seek joy in the little things, take not one moment for granted and appreciate my efforts as well as those of others, regardless of the outcome.*

Denise D.

### BLAME

When we take the actions of the gambler personally, when we have exhausted all of our efforts to change that person, when we are not able to detach ourselves with love, the gambler becomes our enemy. If we choose to continue our relationship with the enemy, our lives become a co-dependent hell. The more we make others

responsible for our state of mind, the more power they have over us.

**Affirmation:** *Today I will not assess blame. I will take back the power I have given away by taking full responsibility for my life and my decisions. I will not allow anyone to design my moods or disturb my right to peace of mind. My essence cannot be stolen without my consent.*

Denise D.

## CONTROL

I have a friend who lives by the motto: "If you want something done right, do it yourself." She commutes a total of 3 hours a day to get to work... she hasn't missed a day since I've known her. After wiping 30 little kindergarten noses all day, she comes home to her family and begins an evening of chores and services for which she believes herself to be the only one qualified. During lunch one day, she complained bitterly about fatigue and the lack of appreciation she felt from her family. When I suggested that they get together to renegotiate responsibilities, she dismissed the idea immediately. "Forget that" she said. "Nothing would get done right!"

**Affirmation:** *Today I will not try to control EVERYTHING. I will delegate at least one responsibility, let it go and use that time to do something I enjoy. During that time, I will find peace and satisfaction in replenishing myself.*

Denise D.

## PRIDE

It turns out to be a rude awakening when, sometime after our tenth Gam-Anon meeting, we find out that we too have personality defects, that all the problems in our family do not involve the gambler. We like to think of ourselves as the good one, the strong one, the responsible one and the gambler as the sole troublemaker

in our lives. We truly believe that life would be perfect if the gambler would only shape up. Aren't we surprised when we see our gambler doing all of the right things, but we still feel miserable!

***Affirmation:** Today I will not be so smug. I will recognize that we are all human beings with our faults and foibles. I will acknowledge that the gambler was or is not trying to hurt me, but battling an addiction. I will reverse my attention to focus on my own character flaws and find ways to improve myself*

Denise D.

### DEFENSIVENESS

When we first become aware of a gambling problem in our family, we might react as if we are a victim. We come to our first Gam-Anon meeting blaming the gambler for all of our problems and defending our own innocence. But after closer scrutiny, many of us discover that we, too, contributed to the detriment of our family. Perhaps we were enablers by denial or collusion. Whatever our destructive behaviors, we need to be open to change, because recovery is change.

***Affirmation:** Today I will be vulnerable. I will let my defenses down, admit my imperfections, and be willing to change in ways that will make me a better person.*

Denise D.

### WITHDRAWAL

Keeping a journal can be a very healthy way to release pent up emotions. Writing things down allows us to put some time and distance between our reactions and responses. But sometimes we get ourselves caught in a cycle of catharsis and inaction and we need real people to listen and give us feedback. Sometimes we need to take action. That's why the Gam-Anon meetings exist.

***Affirmation:*** Today I will be open to solutions. I will not wallow in self-pity and self-indulgence. I will pick up the phone and get a reality check if I need one and do the next indicated right thing for myself.

Denise D.

## **ANGER**

As Gam-Anon members we live life one day at a time and strive for serenity. But let's face it, there are some days that just test the patience of a saint. A temper tantrum can be very cathartic in the moment, but in the long run it doesn't make the situation any better. Pick up the telephone! This is the time.

***Affirmation:*** Today, I will not act out my anger in a reckless way. I will be honest and direct with the offending party, discuss my feelings with someone I trust and/or write in my journal. I will express myself productively and take responsibility for the way I feel.

Denise D.

## **SHAME**

As caretakers and co-dependents, many of us have learned to deny our own thoughts, trivialize our emotions and suppress our anger. We become a martyr to the problem in our family and a stranger to ourselves because, somehow, an acknowledgement of our true feelings makes us ashamed. When we pretend everything is okay, we lose our ability to fully express happiness as well as pain.

***Affirmation:*** Today I will make an effort to get reacquainted with myself. I will take the time to explore and understand my behavior and will not judge myself harshly or disown my emotions. Just as I accept and honor my feelings, I will not become rigidly attached to them. Part of who I am is the ability to change and grow.

Denise D.

## FORGIVENESS

I remember my first Gam-Anon meeting. I was hurt, devastated, out of control and most of all, angry-angry and defensive. Nothing changed the second week, or the third, fourth, fifth, sixth... In fact, I figured that my gambler owed me plenty of time to be angry, and by gosh, I was going to take full advantage of it! Three months later, I looked in the mirror and saw a bitter, depressed, exhausted person staring back at me. Punishing the gambler with my anger was beginning to consume me.

***Affirmation:** Today, I will acknowledge my right to be angry, honor it, then let it go. With each new day I will find peace in forgiveness and its healing power. From a positive perspective, I will find the strength to make healthy decisions.*

Denise D.

## JOY

If we live with a person who is actively engaged in an addiction for long enough, we become unhealthy in our own way. We become obsessed with a life that is not our own. We become one with the gambler and let our attitude and behavior be affected by the gambler. Soon, we are completely unable to enjoy the simplest of pleasures. Everything pales in the face of the problems surrounding the gambler.

***Affirmation:** Today I will take a half-hour to experience joy. I will stop to smell a flower or sit quietly by my window and listen to the birds sing. I will look at the sunset through the eyes of a child and revel in the beauty of life.*

Denise D.

## LOVE

We all have choices about the way we communicate our truth. Sometimes the content of our truth may be something that others

do not wish to hear, or it may be that we must acknowledge to ourselves a difficult truth. Whatever the content, the delivery must be handled with love. We gain nothing but a petty sense of satisfaction or a temporary catharsis by using blame, anger, or retribution to make our truth evident.

***Affirmation:** Today I will be completely truthful in a gentle and loving way. If I find something disagreeable about myself or another; I will avoid diminishing and controlling behaviors and speak my truth with love. I will remember that we are all children of the Universe and worthy of love.*

Denise D.

## DENIAL

Denial is a passive enemy. When we avert our intuitive eyes to avoid seeing our problems, they sneak up behind us, get in the back door and wreak havoc in our lives. How many times have we decided to ignore it, make excuses for it, cover it up? As much as we'd like them to, those behaviors do not solve the problem. There is no ability to find solutions without first facing the issues. Many of us die slowly in silence because we refuse to admit that something is wrong.

***Affirmation:** Today I will not deny my intuition. Today I will allow my instincts to direct my actions. If I "feel" that something is not right, I will not dismiss those feelings. I will wrap words around them and say them out loud, even if it is only to myself.*

Denise D.

## SELF-CENTEREDNESS

Just as the gambler seems to be unbearably self-absorbed either in active addiction or active recovery, we too may be obsessed with our pain. We feel so alone and can't imagine our miseries could happen to another. When we attend our first Gam- Anon meeting and find so many others who could have written our stories, we

discover a bond we never could have hoped to find in yesterday's world. And in reaching out to others, we help ourselves.

***Affirmation:** Today, in my mind, I will disperse my pain by sharing it with people who understand. I will find solace in belonging to a fellowship that will listen and help me until I feel strong enough to help others.*

Denise D.

## LIMITATIONS

As co-dependents we tend to believe that we just can't afford to have deficiencies. We try to be good at everything because we think we have to. In the hurry of all the "doing" for others, we overlook our own character flaws and cease to grow as human beings. In Gam-Anon, as we learn to look inward and take an honest inventory of our lives, we begin to understand that the world does not depend on us. We depend on it. Ironically, it is in the recognition of our own limitations, that we are truly set free.

***Affirmation:** Today I will take an honest look at an area in my life in which I do not excel. I will either consciously try to improve, if it is something I can change about myself, or simply accept myself as I am.*

Denise D.

## INTROSPECTION

All too often, those of us who live with the gambling problem become so enmeshed with the gambler and emotionally distraught by the resulting issues, that we slowly begin to lose ourselves. We stop paying attention to our own needs, sublimate our own dreams and finally become a secret to ourselves. In Gam-Anon, we become able to identify, once again, the activities that make us happy. We

learn to give ourselves a break from worry and fear. When that happens, it is not unusual to find that, as we rediscover ourselves, the magnitude of the problem, as we perceive it, becomes lessened and we start to regain our own personal power.

***Affirmation:** Today I will put aside all negative thoughts about the gambler and the gambling problem in my family. Instead, I will focus on my own needs, not as a punishment to the gambler, but as a gift to myself and others. When I am replenished, those around me will automatically benefit.*

Denise D.

### HUMILITY

We grow up believing that we are the center of the universe - and we are in our own special way. But we are also just a tiny particle in space and time. Just as we must celebrate our own importance as a human being, we must be equally aware of the bigger picture, the greater intelligence, the Higher Power. And we must submit to this infinite intelligence in order to learn and grow. Only then will we find truth.

***Affirmation:** Today I will remain open. I will let down my defenses and let go of the rigidity of my beliefs. I will stop talking long enough to listen with my heart and narrow the gaps that I have created with my ego.*

Denise D.

\*\*\*\*\*

Speaking to God is very much like speaking in a Gam- Anon room. We speak; the room listens; and sometimes we don't hear a comment. And, if we do this often enough, we find ourselves being guided in the right direction.

\*\*\*\*\*

Taking an inward journey is very important to us. We need to get in touch with who we are. Burying feelings appears to be the easiest route, but what does it accomplish? Nothing. In fact, burying feelings only brings out anger, resentment, and frustration.

\*\*\*\*\*

Look deep into yourself! Self-awareness is really the greatest achievement you can accomplish. Being aware of our feelings and respecting them gently guides us to the path of happiness.

\*\*\*\*\*

Consider the fact that each of us is unique. Some of us are tall, some short, some heavy, some thin. But that is only our uniqueness in physical appearance. We each have a unique combination of experience, knowledge and talents. No one else is quite the same. That is what makes us so truly important.

\*\*\*\*\*

Shame is a learned response. When we were young it was used to control us. Sometimes, we use it to control others. When we start feeling ashamed, we get confused and cannot think or communicate properly. We must unlearn shame.

\*\*\*\*\*

Inner conflicts and unresolved issues rip at the very core of our spirituality. Exhaustion takes over and confusion sets in when we wrestle with fear, apprehension, frustration and anger. That is the time we are most vulnerable. Before hopping on the train to insanity we must resolve some inner conflicts!

## MOTIVATION

There are many times that my MOTIVATION is quite high. I guess you could say I'm like the ENERGIZER BUNNY. I keep going and going. On the other hand, there are also many times that MOTIVATION seems to escape me.

Often, I'll find that I'm less motivated when turmoil or confusion takes over. When times are tough and there are many things to be done, I can choose two roads.

DO NOTHING - This can only create more havoc and confusion, leaving me unfulfilled and even less motivated.

MAKE CHANGES - This may be a horrifying thought, but why not start on a journey within.

\*\*\*\*\*

We in Gam-Anon must remember that in order to survive we must have power and energy. We can get the benefit of both from our rooms. By making meetings we are open to the power of many years of experience. We must also be willing to accept the comments offered to us and work on them, helping us to make it through the most trying days. We can gather the strength and energy from this power to succeed where we had previously felt hopeless and lost. Always remember that our rooms are there to energize us and help us find our way on the troubled roads that we must sometimes follow. Gam-Anon is a way of life. It is power and it is certainly the best source of energy that I have found.

\*\*\*\*\*

When my emotions are overpowering my logic it's time for me to slow down and make a phone call. This gives me a chance to recover from a hectic situation and perhaps see it in a clearer light. Often, I will see that it's not as drastic as I thought.

\*\*\*\*\*

While we can all say that KNOWLEDGE is power, we can still remain powerless by knowing what to do, but choosing not to do it.

\*\*\*\*\*

Energy comes from all sources. We must fuel our bodies with food and we must fuel our minds with a positive, healthful attitude.

### COURAGE

When times are tough and things are not going right, everything we do takes courage. There are times we lack the energy and ambition to perform even the simplest task. Feeling lousy is easy! We grow accustomed to having ill feelings. Sometimes we are at home in our misery. It is familiar, and therefore, comfortable, even acceptable; but is this what we really want?

We need some quiet time, time to think things out and see where our problems stem. Perhaps we need to call a friend for some clarity, someone who has traveled that same road. Perhaps we should take a long bath. Walking is a great stress reducer and it gives us an opportunity to think. We need to take a good hard look into ourselves, not a critical judging look, but an honest, simple look. This may bring on fear or apprehension. We cannot give in to the fear. If we do we defeat our purpose and set our goals into a tailspin. We must move forward and see what the cause of our problem is. This takes COURAGE and effort on our part.

**SELF-TRUST IS THE  
FIRST SECRET OF  
SUCCESS**

People are always looking for security as they have been doing since time began. Security is a wonderful thing – but where do you find it?

When you look to someone else for security you are looking in the wrong direction. The greatest security a person can have comes from within. Nothing anyone can do for you can begin to match what you can do for yourself.

If you give to your vocation enthusiasm, talent, energy and determination, you will find an inner strength and security that can never be taken from you. You will also find something you can enjoy now and every day of your life, instead of waiting for some far-off future. Don't dream about security, make it for yourself - out of yourself. Dare to believe in yourself and act accordingly. If you do, both your present and your future are secure.

**ROAD TO SUCCESS**

If you place God first in your life,  
All other things come also.  
But if you Place the other things of life first,  
And God near the last - then, likely as not,  
You lose everything now and in the next world.  
God knows of your temporal needs better than you.  
Put Him first because of love for him –  
You'll get what you need because He loves you!

**RAINY DAY THRIFT**

One may grow so concerned about some future rain that he'll never enjoy TODAY'S SUN.

## **MEDITATIONS ON THE WAY TO FREEDOM**

Many times we complain that we are overburdened with responsibilities and so busy with our families that we have no time for the things we would like to do. We complain we have so little freedom.

Freedom is a personal thing.

Freedom is an open door, but you must walk through it.

Freedom doesn't mean that you can do what you please, but it does mean that there isn't anything holding you back from striving to make your finest dreams come true.

Freedom is the right to be yourself, to make mistakes, to fail and try again. No failure is final; freedom always gives you another chance.

Freedom is a wide horizon gleaming with promise. The only chains and shackles you must break are within you. You have found the way to freedom when you make the most of all that freedom offers.

## **THE ART OF GETTING ALONG**

Sooner or later a person discovers that life is a mixture of good days and bad, give and take, victory and defeat.

We learn that buck-passing acts as a boomerang.

We learn that a person who loses his temper, usually loses.

We learn that giving others a mental lift by showing appreciation and praise is the best way to lift our own spirits.

We learn that the world will not end when we fail or make an error, that there is always another day and another chance.

We learn that listening is frequently more important than talking and that we can help a friend or a Gam-Anon member just by letting the other person tell his troubles.

## **THE ART OF LISTENING**

Listen to the good. Tune your ears to love, hope and courage. Tune out gossip, fear and resentment.

Listen with patience. Do not hurry the other person. Show him courtesy of listening to what he has to say, no matter how much you may disagree. You will learn something.

Listen with your heart. Practice empathy when you listen; put yourself in the other person's place and try to hear his problem in your heart.

Listen to yourself. Listen carefully and change those things about yourself that you do not like. Listen to your deepest yearnings, your highest aspirations, your noblest impulses.

Listen and you will hear the better person within you.

## **THE WAY TO MEDITATION**

Meditation is the emptying and cleansing of our minds of fear, worry, jealousy and resentment, that God may fill the vacuum with His goodness. It is being quiet and relaxed so that we may experience the inflow of a peace which passes all understanding. It is counting our many blessings honestly and giving thanks for the power to grow, to serve, to conquer ourselves and to discover the real values of life. It is the renewing of our dreams and aspirations that we will rise above defeat, failure and discouragement, and have yet another try at making the most of our lives.

## **MEDITATIONS ON PEACE**

"Lord make me an instrument of Thy peace."

Peace is open mindedness.

It is willingness to listen as well as to speak.

It is looking at both sides objectively.

It is patience. It means keeping our tempers and rising above petty irritations.

It is counting to ten and avoiding hasty and impulsive decisions.

It is having the courage and humility to admit mistakes and to take the blame when we are wrong.

It is acceptance of our role in life.

### MEDITATIONS ON LOVE

*Love seeketh  
not itself to please  
Nor for itself hath  
any care,  
But for another  
give its ease  
And builds  
A heaven in  
hell's despair.*

*William Blake*

*Pains of love  
Be sweeter  
far  
Than all other  
pleasures  
are.*

*John Dryden*

*Never cease loving a person,  
and never give up hope for him,  
for even the prodigal son  
who had fallen most low,  
could still be saved.*

*The bitterest enemy  
And also he who was your friend  
could Again be your friend.*

*Love  
That has grown cold  
can kindle again.*

*Soren Kierkegaard*

*Love is a well  
from which we can drink  
only as much  
as we have put in,  
and the stars  
that shine from it  
are only our eyes  
looking in.*

*Stendhal*

*Inasmuch as love  
grows in you  
so in you  
beauty grows.  
For love  
is the beauty  
of the Soul*

*St. Augustine*

*He who  
desires to see  
the living  
God  
face to face  
should not seek  
Him  
in the empty  
firmament of  
his mind, but  
in  
human love*

*Dostoyevsky*

*It is not the perfect  
but the imperfect,  
Who have need of love.*

*Oscar Wilde*

### **MEDITATION ON ANGER**

*I lived with anger,  
a poison  
eating, gnawing  
at my soul.  
I tasted bitterness  
and it became  
my daily meal.  
I was drowning;  
still hopelessly,  
like a shroud,  
I wore anger.  
I paused one day  
before a mirror  
crystal clear.*

*I saw reflected there  
a soul  
twisted in torment,  
pleading ...  
begging to be free.  
I turned away  
from that vision  
of despair.  
I could not bear  
to see what  
living with anger  
did to me!*

Wanda G.

## **MEDITATIONS ON THE SERENITY PRAYER**

### **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**

To accept life as it is and to go along with it, bravely trying to change what I am capable of changing and serenely adapting myself to what cannot be changed.

To be the best person I am capable of being, realizing that if I have accomplished this, that to this point only, am I responsible to my family. Their failures or successes are of their own making. Guilt concerning the actions of members of my family is a form of self-pity, which I must avoid.

To realize the frailties of human nature and to try to be everlastingly patient, forgiving and understanding.

To realize that no experience in human life is alien to me, that my responsibility is to meet whatever happens to me with fortitude and courage.

To promptly forget slights and insults and to hope that others will not hold against me the winged arrows that may in anger or irritation escape my lips.

To go my way quietly and humbly and not worry too much about mysteries I cannot explain... To do my best here and now and let the future take care of itself.

To understand the goodness of God can be known only through human goodness; that when I express the highest and best, I express God. To allow my family the privilege of making and rectifying their own mistakes, so that they may grow and mature through their experiences.

To admit that, being human, I often fail to live up to my own philosophy, but to keep on trying.

### MEDITATIONS ON SERENITY

*Not forever  
Can one enjoy  
Stillness and peace.  
But misfortune and  
Destruction  
Are not final.  
When the grass  
Has burnt  
By the fire of the steppe,  
It will grow anew  
In summer.*

*Wisdom of the Mongolian State*

*We worry as though  
We had a thousand  
Years to live!  
Let us rather always  
Strive after the gentle  
Humor of the heart,*

*Which knows how to smile  
At the world,  
At our fellow-man  
And at itself,  
And which can stand a little  
Above things*

*Nico*

*Everywhere  
Chance reigns,  
Just cast out  
Your line and  
Where you least  
Expect it,  
There waits a  
Fish in the swirling  
Waters.*

*Ovid*

*What is it that troubles you?  
Death?  
Who lives forever?  
Or because your foot  
has stumbled on  
the earth?  
There is no man  
Who has  
never stumbled.*

*Shmuel Ha Nagid*

*Do you  
Need  
Proof of  
God?  
Does one  
Light a  
Torch  
To see the  
Sun?*

*Oriental Wisdom*

*Let each day be so fashioned  
as though it were closing  
the line of days  
and completely fulfilling life.  
If then, God grants us the morrow,  
let us accept it with a happy Heart.*

*Seneca*

## **THE ART OF SELF IMPROVEMENT**

Life is constantly pounding you from the outside with millions of hammer blows, but you have the last word as to how those blows will change you. By changing the inner attitudes of your mind you can change the outer aspects of your life. You cannot climb uphill by thinking downhill thoughts. If your world is gloomy and hopeless, it is because you are gloomy and hopeless. You must change your mind to change your world. Any great amount of change demands an extreme amount of self-discipline. It means never giving up the effort. It means that you must have so great a desire to change "for yourself" that nothing will detour you from

the supreme effort. It does not work if you try to change to please someone else. Change demands self-discipline. Command yourself and make yourself do what needs to be done. Change can be accomplished most of all through the power of prayer, because with God all things are possible.

### THE WAY TO MATURITY

Life is too short to be wasted in hatred, revenge, faultfinding and destruction. We must not dodge reality or turn our backs on situations that must be faced. It's like refusing to open a letter because one does not want to face another demand for payment or another unpleasantness. Private bravery is the price of personal victory. The mature person will face his or her problems, not refuse to acknowledge them. Trouble and pain are substances, which make us grow toward maturity if they are properly used. We should not complain that the rosebush has thorns but should rejoice because it bears roses. Words seem empty when one is suffering great mental or physical anguish, however, the mature person will be able to look towards the future and be willing to make an effort for that better day ahead and will not sit with hands folded waiting for fate to hand him a better day. With maturity comes the understanding that time is the great healer of hurts, sorrows, and disappointments. When one door closes another will open if we don't lose heart. We will have the realization that the person who aligns his life with the good and true need fear no evil.

### MEDITATIONS ON ANGER

Probably no other group of people understands so well or have experienced as much anger as we, the friends and family of compulsive gamblers. I am not positive whether I was angrier with my compulsive gambler for gambling or myself for "putting up" with it.

Most of us will be able to identify with the following statements:

*I was angry when others criticized the gambler although it was alright for me to do so.*

*I was angry because there was no way to stop the gambler.*

*I was angry because I felt the gambler was using me and "mad" at myself for letting him get away with it.*

*I was angry at the entire world because I felt I had been given a "dirty deal."*

*Most of all, in the final analysis, I was really most angry with myself because of my deficiencies in coping with life.*

My hostile feelings smoldered through the years and at times anger broke out like a raging fire. Anger can be as destructive to me as gambling is to the gambler.

Each individual has his own way of coping with this emotion. If we are to be emotionally well adjusted, anger must be expressed in an appropriate manner. One may try to hold it in or deny it, but as a glass will hold only a certain amount of water without spilling over, the human mind also is only capable of holding so much anger without an escape valve. I see the "sticky sweet" person trying in this way, but over-compensating for anger. Then there is the person who appears so calm and seems never to express anger, who becomes so depressed he can neither eat nor sleep. He may take to his bed and want to sleep all the time. Since he has not been able to express his hostile feelings in an appropriate way, he turns it inward and becomes depressed. Psychiatrists' offices are overflowing with such people.

Now, how do we cope with this problem?

- 1. We must acknowledge that anger and hostile feelings are a problem for us.*
- 2. We need to examine these hostile feelings.*
- 3. Are we positive our anger is justified? If not, NOW is the time to cast it aside.*

4. *Now we need to find some socially acceptable way of releasing pent-up anger without hurting ourselves or someone else.*

We are told that we should not scream at our children, berate our gambler or bring up the past. We cannot hit others who make us "mad" or run over them with our cars. Our good judgement tells us it is not wise to "tell off" our friends or our employer...So what do we do?

We may:

1. *Work it off Strenuous physical exercise helps.*
2. *Express it verbally whenever possible as long as it is appropriate to the occasion. What is wrong with saying to another person, "What you have done or said makes me feel very angry. May I discuss this with you when I have better control of my emotions?"*

The way we deal with anger and hostility is our own choice, but it must be expressed in some form and controlled if we are to find the serenity for which we search.

### **MEDITATIONS ON WISDOM**

*It is worthier of man  
to rise in laughter  
about life  
than to bewail it.  
He is more worthy  
of the human race, who  
laughs at it, than  
he who sheds tears  
over it.*

*Seneca*

*What  
Men  
Commonly  
Call their  
Fate  
Is mostly  
Only their  
Own Foolishness*

*Schopenhauer*

*Ask God's  
Blessing  
On your work  
But do not also  
Ask Him  
To do it*

*Waggener*

*I have bought bread  
And I have been given  
Red roses:  
How happy I am  
To hold  
Both in my hands!*

*Kitahara Hakushu*

*By swallowing  
evil words  
unsaid  
no one  
has ever yet  
harmed  
his stomach*

*Winston Churchill*

*One moment  
Of patience  
May ward off  
Great disaster,  
One moment  
of impatience  
May ruin  
A whole life.*

*Chinese proverb*

### **THE WAY TO A HAPPIER MARRIAGE**

It is never being too old to hold hands.

It is remembering to say, "I love you," at least once each day.

It is never going to sleep angry.

It is at no time taking the other for granted.

It is forming a circle of love that gathers in the whole family.

It is doing things for each other, not in the attitude of duty or sacrifice, but in the joy of giving.

It is speaking words of appreciation and demonstrating gratitude in thoughtful ways.

It is in not expecting perfection.

It is in cultivating flexibility, patience, understanding, and a sense of humor.

It is the capacity to forgive and forget.

It is giving each other an atmosphere in which each can grow.

It is not just marrying the right partner; it is being the right partner. It is holding to your separateness as an individual without losing your togetherness in marriage.

*"Let there be space in your togetherness and let the winds of the heavens dance between you. "*

*Kahlil Gibran*

### MEDITATION ON SELF-PITY

To indulge in self-pity is a luxury that I cannot afford because its costs are too great.

It will cost me the respect of my family and friends, but most of all, it will eat away at my self-respect.

It will make me a bitter and totally miserable person. It will rob me of all spiritual growth.

Self-pity can steal into the mind under many guises, so unless I make a very honest search, I will not believe it is there.

I will know that self-pity has indeed entered into the doorway of my mind like an uninvited guest when I awaken each day and feel anger, despair or any other negative thoughts such as:

Why did this have to happen to me?

What did I ever do to deserve so much unhappiness?

I try so hard to be a good person, but it feels impossible to live with the compulsive gambler.

My neighbors and friends have so much and I have so little.

I feel so depressed; no one really cares about me.

I must search for self-pity and let it go. All through the day I will remain on guard so that I will not be revisited by it.

## MEDITATIONS ON COURAGE

*Have not I commanded thee:  
be strong and of  
good courage,  
be not affrighted,  
neither be thou dismayed:  
for the Lord thy God  
is with thee  
withersoever  
thou goest.*

*Joshua 1.9*

*Only one principle  
Will  
Give you courage,  
That is  
The principle that  
No evil  
Lasts forever  
Nor indeed for  
Very long.*

*Epicurus*

*That the birds of  
Worry and care  
Fly above your head,  
This you  
Cannot change,  
But that they  
Build  
Nests in your  
Hair;  
This you can  
Prevent.*

*Chinese Proverb*

*One must have  
Spiritual strength  
And remain brave  
And cheerful in these  
hard times.*

*Pain and suffering  
Are but externals,  
For such things it is  
Not worth losing  
God's love and  
The ability to smile*

*Guy De Larigaudie*

*Man's life does not fill  
A hundred years,  
But always is it full of  
A thousand year's cares.  
Short the midday,  
Bitter long the nights!  
Why then do you not  
Grasp the lamp,  
Seeking out for yourself  
The short-lived joys,  
Why not today?  
Why will you wait  
Year after year?*

*Chinese Philosopher of the Han Dynasty*

*Nothing else  
In the world  
Can make man  
Unhappy  
But fear.  
The misfortune*

*We suffer is  
Seldom if ever  
As bad as that  
Which we fear*

*Schiller*

*Lord,  
on you I call for  
Help against  
My blind and senseless  
Torment, since you  
Alone can renew  
Inwardly and outwardly  
My mind, my will,  
And my strength  
Which are weak.*

*Michelangelo*

*It is a general  
Human weakness  
To allow things  
Uncertain and  
Unknown, to set  
Us up in hope,  
Or plunge us  
into fear*

*Gaius Caesar*

*When danger  
Encircles you,  
Show yourself  
Steadfast and  
Undaunted,  
But when the winds*

*Are too favorable,  
Fail not to show  
Wise caution and  
Haul in the  
Billowing sail.*

*Horace*

*In the sea of life,  
In the sea of death  
My soul, tired  
In both, seeks  
The mountain  
From which the  
Waters  
Have receded*

*Japan, 7<sup>th</sup> Century*

*It is God  
Who can  
Transform the  
Lowest into the  
Highest,  
Who humbles the  
Proud,  
And causes that which  
Is in darkness  
To become light.*

*Horace*

*Dear God,  
Even when we do not  
Heed the sun, there  
Is still the moon  
And the stars and  
The lamp on a*

*Winter's evening  
There is so much  
Beautiful light  
In the world*

**Wilhelm Raabe**

### **MEDITATIONS ON WISDOM**

*He who wants to live his life  
Should equip himself with a  
Heart which can stand suffering.  
Man must realize  
That life is sometimes good and  
Sometimes bad.  
Only he is worthy of respect  
Who is grateful for the good  
And knows how to bear evil.*

**Jewish proverb**

*Man has  
Three ways of Acting wisely:  
Firstly, on Meditation,  
This is the noblest.  
Secondly, on Imitation,  
This is the easiest.  
Thirdly, on Experience:  
This is the bitterest.*

**Confucius**

*The world  
Is so empty if  
One thinks only of mountains,  
Rivers and cities, but to know  
Someone here and there who*

*Thinks and feels with us,  
And who, though distant, is close  
To us in spirit, this makes the  
Earth for us an  
Inhabited garden.*

*Johann Wolfgang Goethe*

*The  
Most lost  
Day  
Of all  
Is the  
Day  
On which  
We  
DO NOT LAUGH*

*Nicolas Chamfort*

*He who is  
Really kind  
Can never be unhappy:  
He who is  
Really wise  
Can never be confused:  
He who is  
Really brave  
Is never afraid*

*Confucius*

*Man's great guilt does not lie  
In the sins that he commits,  
For temptation is great and his  
Strength limited.  
Man's great guilt lies in the fact  
That he can turn away from evil  
At any moment,  
And yet he does not.*

*Martin Buber*

*"God Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. "*

I heard this prayer for the first time at the close of a meeting when my husband became a member of GA and it held no significance for me because for many years serenity was far from a part of my life. True, I prayed daily that in some way God would make my husband see the light, but my prayers were always for him and not for myself. As I look back, I believe that God did grant me a measure of serenity without my asking for or knowing I had received it, otherwise, I am sure that I never could have traveled that long hard road alone.

Now after five years of association with GA and Gam-Anon, this prayer has become a part of my daily life and I know that my prayers are being answered because I have learned to accept the things I cannot change, have been able to change the things that were within my power to change, without fear, and I have gained the wisdom to, at least in part, know the difference.

### **JUST FOR TODAY**

I have found the "Just For Today's" in our Gam-Anon booklet to be a wonderful inspiration to me in finding a better way of living. When my mind becomes clouded with worry and anxiety, I turn my thought to: "Just for today I will try to live through this day only, and will not tackle my whole life's problem at once. I can do something for twelve hours that would appall me if I felt that I had to keep it up for a lifetime." It gives me such a feeling of release when I remind myself that I need not carry the weight of the future on my shoulders. I can give myself fully to the responsibilities and the pleasures of one day at a time. If this becomes too much for me, I may even revert to taking life one hour at a time. I have learned how simple living can be. Now I can face life's blackest hours, "for this too shall pass!"

## THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Start your garden with five rows of peas:

*Presence, promptness, preparation, purity, perseverance.,*

Then next, plant three rows of squash:

*Squash gossip, squash criticism, squash indifference.*

You will want to plant five rows of lettuce:

*Let us be faithful to duty, let us be unselfish, let us be loyal, let us be true to our obligations, let us love one another:*

No garden is complete without turnips:

*Turn up for important meetings, turn up with a smile, turn up with new ideas, turn up with determination to make everything count for something good and worthwhile, turn up with your prayer to God for a better way of life.*

## MEDITATIONS

When we fill our hearts with regrets over the failures of yesterday and with worries over the problems of tomorrow, we have no today in which to be thankful.

\*\*\*\*\*

*BY FORGIVING OTHERS.*

*WE OPEN THE WAY FOR GOD TO FORGIVE US.*

\*\*\*\*\*

LEARN to pause or nothing  
worthwhile can catch up with you.

SMALL worries are like gnats;  
movement and activity disperse them.

**TO HAVE** ideas is to gather flowers;  
to think is to weave them into garlands.

**GREATNESS** consists in trying to be  
great - there is no other way.

**THERE'S** not one of us who cannot  
make where we are a wonderful place  
to look out from.

**SUCCESS** is getting up  
One more time than you fall down.

**SELFISHNESS** is a gift of nature.  
Unselfishness is an accomplishment.

**WE'RE NOT** primarily put on  
the earth to see through one another,  
but to see one another through.

**ENTHUSIASM** is infectious  
And so is lack of it.

**WHAT** we call luck may often be pluck  
and doing things over and over.  
Courage and will  
Perseverance and skill  
Are the four leaves of luck's clover.

**TO** be happy one must learn  
to tolerate the inescapable  
restrictions of oneself.

**GETTERS** generally don't get  
happiness; givers get it.

## SKETCHES

*I wasted a whole day hating,  
I tinkered with precious time,  
Harboring silly notions,  
Committing a common crime  
I threw away golden moments  
While causing my heart to yearn,  
Squandering treasured hours  
That never will return.*

*I turned my back on a warm smile,  
Thought smiles were a web devils weave.  
It seemed like the right thing to do,  
Although I could see I was blinded  
By things foolish people pursue.  
I let happiness drift beyond me.  
Oh, if I had only known  
That day was my last for living.  
It's too late now, I am alone.*

*Ben Burroughs*

## ANGER

Anger is the wind that blows out the light of the mind.

## FEAR

Fear is the absence of faith as darkness is the absence of light.

## I WALKED A MILE

*I walked a mile with gladness  
And though she chatted all the way,  
I never learned a thing  
When gladness walked my way.*

*I walked a mile with sorrow  
And not a word did she say  
But, oh, the things I learned  
When sorrow walked my way.*

*Anonymous*

## **TWELVE THINGS TO REMEMBER**

The value of time;  
The success of perseverance;  
The pleasure of working;  
The dignity of simplicity;  
The worth of character;  
The power of kindness;  
The influence of example;  
The obligation of duty;  
The wisdom of economy;  
The virtue of patience;  
The improvement of talent;  
The joy of originating.

*Marshall Field*

## **THE QUIET TRUTH**

Self-respect cannot be hunted. It cannot be purchased. It is never for sale. It cannot be fabricated out of public relations. It comes to us when we are alone, in quiet moments, in quiet places, when we suddenly realize that, knowing the good, we have done it; knowing the beautiful, we have served it; knowing the truth, we have spoken it.

## **GOD WILL GUIDE YOU**

*God will guide you, simply trust Him,  
He knows what is best for you;*

*Stop outlining and repining,  
Wait and see what He will do.  
God will guide you, do not doubt Him,  
Yield today your human will;  
Never straying, daily praying,  
He will every need fulfill.  
God will guide you; love and serve Him;  
Like a child obedient be;  
Kindness voicing, keep rejoicing,  
His good purpose will you see.*

**PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS**

*Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace,  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love,  
Where there is injury, let there be pardon,  
Where there is doubt, faith,  
Where there is despair, hope,  
Where there is darkness, light,  
Where there is sadness, joy.  
Oh Divine Master grant  
That I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console,  
To be understood as to understand,  
To be loved, as to love,  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
And it is in pardoning that we are pardoned.  
And it is in dying, that we are born to eternal life.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Father, who hast taught us that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, fill our hearts with Thy love that we may declare it in every word and deed. Renew our minds and purify our hearts that our attitudes may testify of Thee.

\*\*\*\*\*

Almighty God, help us to face our difficulties armed with Thy calmness and temper our frantic drives with Thy peace.

\*\*\*\*\*

I pray that I may live according to the dictates of my conscience.  
I pray that I may leave the results to God.

\*\*\*\*\*

*There is no problem too big,  
And none too small.  
God hears the loudest  
And softest call.  
This is the promise!  
That he hears each prayer,  
And when we have need for Him,  
"He is there. "*

\*\*\*\*\*

"If there seems to be no bright side in your life,  
polish up the dark side."

\*\*\*\*\*

"When life lays a burden upon you, there are three things you can do: you can rebel and make the worst of it; you can acquiesce and make the best of it; or you can accept the challenge and make the most of it."

\*\*\*\*\*

## THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY

Today is here. It is new, it is now. Forget yesterday, which is gone. Use today as best you can. You are sure of it and nothing more. Begin here and now.

\*\*\*\*\*

Men who do things that count, never stop to count them.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ask not what Gam-Anon can do for you, but rather what you can do for Gam-Anon. It is very much like a bank- the more you put into it - the more you will get out of it.

\*\*\*\*\*

To see myself as others see me,  
would make me swear it couldn't be me!

\*\*\*\*\*

Be yourself. It is the one thing you can do  
better than anyone else.

\*\*\*\*\*

I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.

\*\*\*\*\*

Happy is the man who knows what to remember in the past, what to enjoy in the present and what to plan in the future.

\*\*\*\*\*

**BIG "D"**

Anger is one letter away from **DANGER!**

\*\*\*\*\*

"A man should keep his friendships in constant repair!"

\*\*\*\*\*

There are two days in every week about which we should not worry. One of these days is **YESTERDAY** with its mistakes and cares, its faults and blunders, its aches and pains. **YESTERDAY** has passed forever beyond our control.

All the money in the world cannot undo a single act we performed. We cannot erase a single word we said. **YESTERDAY** is gone!

The other day we should not worry about is **TOMORROW** with its possible adversities, its burdens, its large promise and poor performance. **TOMORROW** is also beyond our immediate control.

**TOMORROW'S** sun will rise, either in splendor or behind a mask of clouds but it will rise. Until it does, we have no stake in **TOMORROW**, for it is yet unborn.

This leaves only one day - **TODAY**. Any man can fight the battles of just one day. It is only when we add the burdens of those two awful eternities - **YESTERDAY** and **TOMORROW**- that we break down.

It is not the experience of **TODAY** that drives men mad, it is remorse or bitterness for something which happened **YESTERDAY** and the dread of what **TOMORROW** may bring.

**LET US LIVE BUT ONE DAY AT A TIME**

*Is there a tomorrow?  
Perhaps there is, but I shall not fear it.  
I shall live only for today.  
And not be afraid of tomorrow.  
I will welcome each day with a little love,  
A little understanding, a little patience.  
Some may say the older we get, the wiser we are.  
I wonder if that is so.  
Would a wise man throw away another day  
Because he fears tomorrow?*

*Jean  
Cleveland, Ohio Group*

\*\*\*\*\*

When we fill our hearts with regrets over the failures of yesterday and with worries over the problems of tomorrow, we have no today in which to be thankful.

\*\*\*\*\*

By forgiving others, we open the way for God to forgive us.

\*\*\*\*\*

It does little good to attend meetings once hoping to get something out of the program. Sooner or later, we have to get into action, by coming to meetings regularly, by giving a personal witness of our experience, strength, hope and by helping other Gam-Anon members. Building a new life takes all the energy that we used to spend on self-pity. Am I spending at least as much time and effort on the new life I am trying to build through Gam-Anon?

\*\*\*\*\*

Life's major business is to achieve maturity, wisdom, compassion, self-control and competence.

\*\*\*\*\*

" YOUR TEMPER IS YOUR GREATEST ASSET....  
KEEP IT!"

**MEDITATION FOR THE DAY**

Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, when you cannot make yourself as you wish to be.

\*\*\*\*\*

God brings men into deep water, not to drown them, but to cleanse them.

\*\*\*\*\*

Too often people call on God for guidance, and then hang up the receiver in His face.

\*\*\*\*\*

Make me thoughtful but not moody, helpful but not bossy; with my vast store of wisdom, it seems a pity not to use it all, but Thou knowest that I want a few friends at the end.

Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be mistaken. Keep me reasonably sweet. I do not want to be a saint  
- some of them are so hard to live with. Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places and talents in unexpected people  
... Give me the grace to tell them so ... Amen.

\*\*\*\*\*

The past is gone, the future yet unknown.  
They both belong to God. Waste not yours in vain regret nor fearful  
dread;  
Let doubt give place to hope instead of gloom. Let sun in radiance  
shine.  
Guard this precious gift, O man,  
Today alone Is Thine.

\*\*\*\*\*

Give truth, and your gifts will be paid in kind,  
And honor will honor meet;  
And smile that is sweet will surely find  
A smile that is just as sweet.

### MEDITATION IN TIME OF DEPRESSION

To bear up under loss; to fight the bitterness of defeat and the  
weakness of grief; to be victor over anger; to smile when tears are  
close; to resist disease and evil men and base instincts; to hate hate,  
and to love love; to go on when it would seem good to die; to look  
up with unquenchable faith in something ever more about to be. That  
is what any man can do and be great.

\*\*\*\*\*

Don't take rumor at its face value.  
Treat it like a check.  
Be sure it is genuine before you endorse it.

\*\*\*\*\*

Don't be discouraged if adversity knocks you to your knees -  
that's the best position for praying.

\*\*\*\*\*

The man who deals in sunshine is the man who gets the crowds -  
he does a lot more business than the man who peddles clouds.

\*\*\*\*\*

We constantly "take stock" of those about us. We observe how  
attractively the "merchandise" is packaged and displayed, and how  
effectively it is being marketed, but how often do we turn "inventory  
eyes" on ourselves?

\*\*\*\*\*

Youth is not a time of life. It is a state of mind. You are as young  
as your faith, as old as your doubt; as young as your self-confidence,  
as old as your fear; as young as your hope, as old as your despair.  
So long as your heart receives messages of beauty, cheer, courage,  
grandeur and power from the earth, from man and from the infinite,  
so long, you are young.

### OTHERS

*It doesn't matter who you are,  
Or what you have, or do.  
If you give of your very best  
The best returns to you.  
A law of compensation works,  
We get just what we earn,  
If we love others with our hearts  
We get love in return.*

*The little things we sometimes do  
For others day by day,  
Return quite unexpectedly  
In some peculiar way.*

*Herbert Parker  
(Guideposts, Jan. '65)*

### **IF I HAD HELPED**

*If I had made some face to smile  
Once darkened by a frown,  
If I had helped to lift the load  
From one with grief bowed down,  
If I had brought a gleam of faith  
To one whose hope was gone,  
If I had changed the wayward path  
Of steps to right from wrong,  
I'd thank the Lord and be content  
At night times close of day.  
I'd ask again for strength to help  
Another on his way.*

*Sent in by Jean S.  
San Jose, Calif., Group*

### **DON'T WORRY**

*To worry does no good at all,  
But does a lot of harm;  
It puts cross lines upon your face,  
And dissipates your charm,  
Whatever is to be, will be;  
It only serves to dim your joy,  
And all your friends estrange.  
'Tis lack of confidence in self  
That causes worry's fright;*

*A lack of faith in God 's design  
Your happiness will blight.  
Then cast aside those gloomy thoughts  
And bid your dark fears flee,  
live in the light of faith and love,  
Joyful and worry-free.*

### **SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT**

*I've shut the door on yesterday,  
Its sorrows and mistakes;  
And locked within its gloomy walls,  
Its failures and heartaches.  
I've shut the door on yesterday,  
And thrown the key away;  
Tomorrow has no doubts for me,  
Since I have found today.*

### **A MORNING PRAYER**

*Let me today do something that will take  
A little sadness from the world's vast store,  
And may I be so favored as to make  
Of joy's too scanty sum a little more.  
Let me not hurt, by any selfish deed  
Or thoughtless word, the heart of foe or friend.  
Nor would I pass unseeing worthy need,  
Or sin by silence when I should defend.*

*However meager be my worldly wealth,  
Let me give something that shall aid my kind-  
A word of courage, or a thought of health  
Dropped as I pass for troubled hearts to find.*

*Let me tonight look back across the span  
Twixt dawn and dark, and to my conscience say –  
Because of some good act to beast or man –  
"The world is better that I lived today. "*

*Ella Wheeler Wilcox*

### COMPENSATION

*Who never wept knows laughter but a jest;  
Who never failed, no victory has sought;  
Who never suffered; never lived his best;  
Who never doubted, never really thought;  
Who never feared, real courage has not shown;  
Who never faltered, lacks a real intent;  
Whose soul was never troubled has not known  
The sweetness and peace of real content.*

*E.M. Brainerd*

\*\*\*\*\*

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

\*\*\*\*\*

### SKETCHES

*Today is the day to be happy,  
Tomorrow may be too late;  
Only the present is certain,  
Foolish are those who would wait.*

*Make use of the blessings God gave you,  
Or else He will take them away;  
Remember things fade rather quickly,  
Enjoy all your gifts while you may.*

*Happiness stays but a moment,  
But very few realize this;  
Seldom can people recapture,  
A moment of heavenly bliss.*

*So it is I who sends this message,  
To all who tread life's toilsome road;  
Live every day to the fullest,  
It may be the last episode.*

*Ben Burroughs*

### **PATIENCE**

*Patience has an upturned face,  
Of radiance and trust  
That's born of love and wisdom,  
Of all things kind and just*

*Patience is a knowing,  
Deep within the waiting heart  
That order draws a perfect course,  
Upon the spirit's chart.*

*Patience loves the present hour,  
Whatever it may hold,  
Savoring its offering,  
Of spindrift or gold.*

*Patience is expectancy that  
Good is ever true,  
That Love's abundance flows  
Unchecked,  
And constantly to you ...!!!*

## WORDS ARE MAGIC

A word of appreciation, gratitude, or encouragement will brighten an individual's day and often change his whole outlook and give his life renewed purpose and hope.

It takes little energy or time to say, "That was very thoughtful of you," or "How gracious you are," or "How well you look," or "We are proud of you," or "That's a mighty fine piece of work."

Try sprinkling your conversation with sincere expressions such as these and watch their effect on the lives of those who receive them.

## SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

S-ense of direction	F-rustration, futility
U-nderstanding	A-ggressiveness (misdirected)
C-ourage	I-nsecurity
C-harity	L-oneliness (lack of oneness)
E-steem	U-ncertainty
S-elf Confidence	R-esentment
S-elf Acceptance	E-mptiness

If you feel that your marriage may go on the rocks, why not list the things your partner has that are pleasing to you, and opposite this, list those traits of your own that might make you a bit difficult to live with. It may change your entire existence.

## THINK!

*If you stay humble  
You will not stumble.  
When God seems far away,  
Think!  
Who has moved?*

\*\*\*\*\*

He that would live in peace and ease must not speak all he knows nor  
judge all he sees.

### A SYSTEM I'M GOING TO TRY TO WORK

When, for some reason or another, my thoughts turn to doubts and then to fears, frustration and anger - instead of pacing the floor - or drinking coffee and just sitting around trying to look into the future and decide how I am going to meet the worst when it comes (we all know those thoughts) I am going to ask myself - what am I doing right now? Am I sitting doing nothing or am I taking care of things which are my part of the responsibility?

Of course, the answer is that I am not doing what I should be doing and that I had better start concentrating on getting myself "on the ball."

I don't know whether this system will work or not - but I do know that sitting and worrying never worked - so I am going to try to close the door on the "worrying system."

*Pat L.  
Downey, Calif. Group*

\*\*\*\*\*

One thing to be said for big problems is that they take your mind off the little problems.

\*\*\*\*\*

A day of worry is more exhausting than a week of work.

\*\*\*\*\*

## MISTAKES

*Don't be concerned, nor be surprised  
If what you do is criticized;  
There are always some who usually can  
Find fault with every different plan;  
Mistakes are made, we can 't deny,  
But only made by folks who try.*

## MY PRAYER FOR TODAY FOR STRENGTH

Arise and awaken oh my soul and be glad,  
For the wonderful night's rest you have had.  
Give thanks for the dawn of this new day,  
In which to love, to laugh, to work and to play.  
As the sun rises high to shed its light,  
Make this my day to be kind and do right.  
Let the love of God that is my heart,  
Pour forth on all of whom I am a part.  
So ...when the sun sets in the Golden West,  
I can thank God today I did my very best.

*Leah Hortense Crane*

## FOR GRATITUDE

Thank you, God, for the good feeling I have toward my husband.  
Without your loving guidance, I could not know the happiness I feel  
today. Thank you for relieving me of bitterness and resentments.  
Dear God, erase any remaining resentments from my heart, but Thy  
will be done. Help me to surrender my will to you and to remember  
not my will.

*Wanda G.*

## IN TIME OF SORROW OR DESPAIR

This too, will pass, of heart say o'er and o'er. From out of my deepest sorrow, from out of my deepest grief, no hurt can last forever. Perhaps tomorrow will bring relief.

## MEDITATION FOR THE DAY

Understanding and tolerance  
Are ours when we recall  
Others are just human, too,  
And failings plague us all.

## PRAYER OF DIRECTION

God grant that I may find my rightful place in the world, and that my work may be made more effective by Thy grace.

## PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE

Dear God, I pray that I may try to bring something good into every situation today. I pray that I may be constructive in the way I think and speak and act today.

## PRAYER FOR SELF-FORGETFULNESS

O, Lord I pray that I may gladly serve others out of deep gratitude for what I have received. I pray that I may keep a deep sense of obligation.

### **PRAYER FOR PATIENCE**

I pray O God that I may wait patiently. I pray that I may put my trust in You and keep preparing myself for a better life.

### **PRAYER FOR TOLERANCE**

Keep your hand on my temper this day, O God, and lower my boiling point. Make me slow to anger and able to refrain from speaking words I'll regret. Hold on to my temper, O God, and keep it in Thy hand, no matter what the provocation. Help me not to forget to see Thee daily and to commit into Thy care my life and thought; and to live and speak and think as always in Thy presence.

### **PRAYER FOR HUMILITY**

God, forgive me that when life's circumstances lift me to the crest of the wave, I tend to forget Thee. Yet, like an errant child, I have blamed Thee with my every failure, even as I credit myself with every success.

When my fears evaporate like the morning mist, then vainly I imagine that I am sufficient unto myself, that material resources and human resources are enough.

### **PRAYER FOR GRATITUDE**

I need Thee when the sun shines, lest I forget the storm and the dark. I need Thee when I am popular, when my friends and those who work beside me approve and compliment me. I need Thee more then, lest my head begin to swell.

### PRAYER FOR FAITH

O God, forgive me for my stupidity, my blindness, my lack of trust in Thee. Be Thou now my guide. Save me from conceit. Save me from pettiness. Save me from myself!

### PRAYER FOR COMPASSION

Dear God, take away all bitterness and resentment from our hearts. Bless those who have wronged us and give us grace to overcome evil with good. Help us to seek Thy forgiveness that we may be willing to forgive others.

### COUNT OUR BLESSINGS

Dear God, help me to have a truly thankful heart. Remove the blindness from my eyes and open my heart so that I may see myself as I really am. I pray that I may be constantly reminded of reasons for sincere gratitude.

### PRAYER FOR TODAY

God grant me perseverance in time of trouble, strength to overcome fear and misgivings and courage with which to face all adversities. Give me the gift of gratitude for all the blessings I have received. Help me to forget the past, but if I must look back, let me do so without resentment.

### MY PRAYER

I pray that I may put all my trials and tribulations in God's hands and leave them there ... I pray that I may fully trust God to take care of them ... I pray that I may never doubt the power of God and so

take things into my own hands ... I pray that health, joy, peace and serenity may take the place of worry, fear and resentment.

### PRAYER FOR THE MONTH

O God, take from us all false pride and vanity, all boasting and forwardness.

Give us the true courage that shows itself by simplicity, and the true power that shows itself by modesty.

O God, we know that without love our lives are hollow and bitter. Please help us to obtain the love which bears all, endures all and gives all.

### PRAYER

*Lord, protect me from the dangers ... which I have to face each day ... and within the nightly darkness ... do not let me go astray ... In the time when dawn approaches ... and the earth in silence lies ... Let my waking mind be peaceful ... and with newborn hope arise ... when the sunlight fills the heaven ... and reflects in crystal dew ... Give my heart the inspiration ... which it needs to live for you ... and when afternoon is ending ... as the dusk is drawing near ... Bless my home and all my loved ones ... and my friends from far and near ... and before my eyes are closing ... In the light of stars above ... Let me say that I am grateful ... for your patience and your love.*

\*\*\*\*\*

And in doing good let us not grow tired; for in due time, we shall reap if we do not relax. Therefore, while we have time, let us do good to all men.

### PASS IT ON

Have you had a kindness shown - pass it on  
'Twas not meant for you alone - pass it on  
Let it travel down the years,  
Let it wipe another's tears,  
'Til the deed in Heaven appears - pass it on.

### THANKSGIVING PRAYER

O God, we are grateful for every gift, but especially for life itself. May our gratitude reflect itself in the lives we lead, bringing honor and glory to Thee.

### THE BETTER WAY

*I'd rather see a sermon,  
Than to hear one any day;  
I'd rather one should walk with me,  
Than merely show the way.  
The eyes are better pupils,  
And more willing than the ear;  
Fine counseling is confusing;  
But an example is always clear.  
And the best of all the preacher,  
And the men who live their creeds,  
For to see good put in action,  
Is what everybody needs.  
I can watch your hands in action,  
But your tongue too fast may run;  
And the lectures you deliver,  
May be very wise and true,  
But I'd rather get my lesson  
By observing what you do.*

*For I may misunderstand you,  
And the high advice you give,  
But there's no misunderstanding in  
How you act and how you live.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Pray daily; God is easier to talk to than most people. God help us to be masters of ourselves that we may be servants of others.

\*\*\*\*\*

Most of life's problems are like those cloverleaf interchanges we find on our highways - unlikely though it may seem, there is a way out.

\*\*\*\*\*

Make it a rule of life never to regret and never to look back. Regret is an appalling waste of energy; you can't build on it; it's only good for wallowing in.

## TALK

*TALK not of strength, till your heart has known  
And fought with weakness through long hour alone.*

*TALK not of virtue, till your conquering soul  
Has not temptation and gained full control.  
Boast not of garments, all unscorched by sin,  
Till you have passed unscathed through fires within.*

*Author Unknown*

**LOVE**

*It is in loving, not in being loved  
The heart finds its quest;  
It is in giving, not in getting  
Our lives are blessed.*

*Author Unknown*

**I NEVER KNEW A NIGHT SO BLACK**

*I never knew a night so black  
Light failed to follow on its track.  
I never knew a storm so gray  
It failed to have its clearing day.  
I never knew such bleak despair  
That there was not a rift, somewhere.  
I never knew an hour so drear  
Love could not fill it full of cheer!*

*John Kendrick Bangs*

**OUTWITTED**

*He drew a circle that shut me out  
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.  
But love and I had the wit to win;  
We drew a circle that took him in!*

\*\*\*\*\*

A man has to live with himself, and he should see to it that he always has good company.

\*\*\*\*\*

Life is so busy and complex that people are usually puzzled about what they can do to straighten out the things that are wrong in the world. "What can I do?" they say. "I am only one person. "The magic of action unfortunately goes un-recognized. A person's influence is something that can never be buried. There is no limit to the good a man can do if he doesn't care who gets the credit.

\*\*\*\*\*

*The waste of life in the love we have not given;  
The powers we have not used;  
The selfish prudence which will risk nothing and  
Which shrinking pain, misses happiness as well.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Let me not judge my brother until I have walked three miles in his moccasins.

\*\*\*\*\*

Faith is no guarantee against troubles, only against defeat.

\*\*\*\*\*

Nobody should ever be ashamed to admit he has been in the wrong, which is saying in other words that he is wiser today than he was yesterday.

### LOVE

I have come to believe love to be the escape from the prison of self. Only in self-forgetfulness can we experience the fruits of true love. It is easy to return love for love. But if I wish to make any

real advancement in my search for love I must do more. It is necessary that I rid myself of resentment and hostility. I must attempt to change my state of mind until I am conscious only of harmony and peace within myself.

### **THE NEED OF FRIENDS**

*If nobody smiled and nobody cheered  
And nobody helped us along;  
If every man looked after himself  
And good things all went to the strong,  
If nobody cared just a little for you  
And nobody thought about me,  
And we all stood alone in the battle of life  
What a dreary old world it would be.  
Life is sweet just because of the friends we have  
Made and the things that in common we share.  
We want to live on, not because of ourselves  
But because of the people who care.  
It's giving and doing for somebody else;  
On that all life's splendor depends,  
And the joy of the world when you've summed it all up  
Is found in the making of friends.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*A bell is no bell till you ring it,  
A song is no song till you sing it,  
And love in your heart wasn't put there to stay,  
Love isn't love till you give it away.*

*From Oscar Hammerstein's  
Sound of Music*

## LOVE

Love is not content with fair works, but being a very real force. It seeks to assert itself by deeds. The effect of love is an eagerness to be up and doing, to heal, to serve, to give, to shelter, to console...A love that remains inactive, a force that is asleep, is a dying love. If you do not wish to cease to love, you must never cease to do good. If you love, you do not fear labor; for love makes even drudgery pleasant ... Love makes everything easier. The cure for all ills and wrongs, cares and sorrows, lies in that one word. Love that is genuine does not ask questions, but pours itself out, like sunshine and like rain which falls upon the ocean as well as on the thirsty field.

## MEDITATION

I will try to help others. I will try not to let a day pass without reaching out an arm of love to someone. Each day I will try to do something to lift another human being out of the sea of discouragement. In my own gratitude, I will turn and help another person with the burden that is pressing heavily upon her.

## GOLDEN KEY

*The trustful heart will surely find  
When irritants appear,  
That turbulent distress of mind  
Is tranquilized with prayer:*

*That prayer becomes a barricade  
To worry, grief, or pain;  
And makes restricting shadows fade  
From the dark domain;*

*That prayer will keep a dream aglow,  
And help to bring success  
To any great attempt, to grow  
In strength and loveliness.*

\*\*\*\*\*

However discouraging your days may have been thus far, keep this thought foremost in your mind - life begins each morning.

### **DON'T QUIT**

*When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,  
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,  
When the funds are low and the debts are high,  
And you want to smile but you have to sigh,  
When care is pressing you down a bit,  
Rest if you must, but don't you quit.  
Life is queer with its twists and turns,  
As everyone of us sometimes learns,  
And many failure turns about,  
When he might have won had he stuck it out;  
Don't give up, though the pace seems slow  
You may succeed with another blow.  
Often the goal is nearer than  
It seems to a faint and faltering man.  
Often the struggler has given up  
When he might have captured the victor's cup.  
And he learned too late, when the night slipped down,  
How close he was to the golden crown.  
Success is failure turned inside out-  
The silver tints of the clouds of doubt.*

*And you can never tell how close you are  
It may be near when it seems afar;  
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit -  
It's when things seem worst that you mustn't quit*

*Poor Clare Nuns*

## IV

# PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

## THE DOCTOR'S WIFE

I am Sally, the wife of a compulsive gambler. I have been a member of the first London Group of Gam-Anon for nine months and so I know now that my story follows the pattern of so many other wives of compulsive gamblers, but before the miracle of GA came into our lives, in my utter misery and aloneness, I could never have dreamed that there was another woman who was suffering as I was.

My husband is a Doctor of Medicine, and we have been married for 19 years. We enjoyed four short years of happiness, during which time our three children were born, before he started to gamble. It all started so innocently. He asked me one day whether I minded if he joined a bridge club. I said of course he could, particularly as he assured me that it would just mean his playing one night a week until about 11 o'clock.

Until then, to the very best of my knowledge, he had never indulged in gambling of any sort. Very soon one night a week became three, and often he would play until three or four in the morning. I would try to sleep but even if I eventually managed to, I always woke in the early hours to discover that he wasn't home yet and I would lay there listening to the engines of passing cars, always waiting for his car to pull up and stop.

This was just the beginning of 15 years of nights spent in wakefulness and fears and the start of scenes that in my terrible misery I caused. Even then I was bitterly ashamed of this. The hours and hours, night after night that I would stand at my windows looking out into the darkness, crying in my unhappiness, wondering where my husband was and only wanting to see his car pull up and see him step out. The children would beg me to go to bed but I could not. I could never understand how a husband could hurt his wife in this way. I used to say time and again to him, "We see so much of unhappiness and tragedy in your practice, we know better than most people how short life can be. Isn't that all the more reason that no

one should deliberately cause unhappiness to another?" But in those days, to reason with my husband was an impossibility.

From cards he quickly went on to horse racing and then finally, the casinos. With every crisis he promised that never would it happen again and I would hope and trust, always to be let down.

One of the nicest things about my husband when I married him was his wonderful nature. He not only made a delightful son-in-law for my parents, but a greatly sought-after friend and a wonderful doctor to his patients. He loved his work, knew every single one of his patients by their first names and always had a smile and a joke for them. If I had only realized then how our lives would change! At the end of the 15 years of gambling the only friends we had were a few from within the family. As a person he had changed beyond recognition. Completely gone was the friendly happy man; all that was left was a morose, haunted looking person who never conversed with anyone, escaping into sleep even when we were among other people

During those years, the house in which we lived, and from which my husband practiced, had steadily grown shabbier and shabbier. Everything that was once new became worn out and was never replaced. The outside of the house had not been painted for 17 years. The flaked off paint, the holes in the carpets, the frayed curtains did not register with my husband. Nothing at all mattered to him except to be able to go on gambling.

At my insistence he went reluctantly to a psychiatrist, but I know now that he lied to him and would be gambling right up to the time of his appointment and immediately afterwards.

This state of affairs continued until July, 1964 with things getting steadily worse and with the last financial crisis occurring in June, it all looked so hopeless that I could only see imprisonment lying ahead, in the very near future for my husband. Up to that time I had never heard the term "compulsive gambler." I just thought my husband could only be insane to have done what he did time and time again, never to learn.

It was just at this time, when my despair was endless, that I read an article about an American, Henry F. who had come to England and was proposing to start a GA group in London. When I read of all the things this otherwise highly intelligent, capable man had done, I said, "That is my husband." And that is how I came to know that he was a compulsive gambler. How many nights had I cried aloud to God. "Why, oh why isn't there a GA to help people like us as there is an AA to help the alcoholics?" But I had no knowledge that in America there were over 90 such groups. This was not known in England. I showed the article to my husband, people cut it out and sent it to him, but he still refused to believe that he was like Henry F.

Only three weeks later on the very afternoon that I finally made the decision that I must take the children and leave my husband, the telephone rang and it was a patient and friend, ringing to beg my husband to go to the next GA meeting. Where all my pleading had failed, he succeeded. He went reluctantly and I went in such deep despair, but we emerged, he from his meeting and I from mine, transformed. He learned that he wasn't the only monster in the world to have done the things he had to his wife and family. I discovered there were actually other women who had experienced all the distress that I had thought was mine alone. We also rediscovered a faith in God. It was surely God's hand that had brought Vivian and Henry to London, and with them

GA In my daily prayers I thank God for bringing them to England and with them the miracle of GA because miracle it has been. Our lives are altered beyond recognition. After the first three weeks my husband gave up gambling and has never returned to it.

He is now as he was fifteen years ago. We are happier now than we have ever been because we value our happiness so much more, having experienced so much unhappiness. Our children seem to have forgotten all the discord we had for so long and once again seem contented.

Since we came to GA and Gam-Anon, we have not missed a single meeting, and our greatest pleasure is gained when we feel that we have been of some help and comfort to a new member. The question that I find most often repeated by new members is, "Will I ever be able to trust him again after all these years of lies?" And I am always able to say with certainty, "Yes, you will!" The very fact that we are there in that room tells of our love for our husbands, and when we see them giving up their gambling and see the change in their eyes, their walk and their honest wish to atone for all the unhappiness they have caused, our love comes flooding back, and with it that so precious commodity - trust.

Never, never will we forget what GA has done for us. It brought hope and happiness into our lives again where before there had only been misery and despair. I can only pray that this new found happiness and peace of mind may come to all those wives and families of every compulsive gambler who, with the help of GA, continues to stop his gambling. From experience I know that the wives will find help and friendship beyond their wildest dreams through Gam-Anon.

*Sally R.  
London, England  
1965*

### **RETURN FROM DESPAIR**

In the early years of our life together, I thought my husband was a clever gambler who used his wits to gamble successfully. I could not accept the fact that his winnings were merely a fluke.

Shortly after our marriage Stan was hospitalized with tuberculosis. During this time, he supplemented our tiny income with winnings from fellow patients. I remember well the first time I became apprehensive about his gambling. He was in the process of being transferred from one hospital to another. Unknown to me he became involved in a crap game on the train. He lost all the money

we had and I was forced to borrow from a fellow passenger in order to eat. He could not admit to me that he had lost the money; instead, he led me to believe that someone had stolen it from my purse. I accused almost everyone on the train of taking my money and couldn't bring myself to believe the conductor when he told me that my husband had been in a crap game the previous night.

The next year or two went fairly well. A few times his paycheck mysteriously disappeared but the losses were not frequent. I was not aware at this time that he was gambling and felt that this part of our life was over. It was five years and three children later when we realized that gambling might be a problem in our lives when we received a mortgage notice on our car. That was the first time Stan admitted that he had lost money gambling. As the gambling worsened, so did our family relationship, until both became almost unbearable. During these years I hid his gambling escapades from family and friends. As the children grew it became impossible to conceal his illness from them, and even more impossible to teach them respect for him when I had none. I lost my respect for him when I was forced to become the pillar of our family, both emotionally and financially. I hated Stan for creating this situation but, at the same time, never lost my love for him.

I tried to retain my illusion that our marriage was a complete partnership in which there could be no deceit nor distrust. When this illusion was finally shattered, my life fell apart. I became a bitter, nagging, and totally miserable person, creating such an emotional chasm between us that it could no longer be bridged by love or understanding. I filled my thoughts with self-pity. I had no understanding of my children's or husband's emotional needs.

Because my religious convictions would not allow my divorcing Stan, I found satisfaction in day dreaming of his death, but at the same time felt guilt for these thoughts. I could never voice my hate and resentment to Stan directly, but through my actions showed it

in every way. I degraded him before the children by treating him as one of them.

On the other hand, I felt I had failed as a wife and mother and deserved all the misery in my life. The emotional stresses in my family became so intensified as to cause one child to often be physically ill when Stan was away from home. Our other children showed their insecurity by poor work in school. All the children became quarrelsome. I could not make them understand. When our situation was more than I could handle I would scream at them until I was no longer conscious of my words. When this happened, I had the sensation of a dam breaking in my mind and the thunderous water crashing forth. I felt that I was on the verge of a mental breakdown.

To see my husband gradually lose his self-respect and become a mere shadow of the man I had once admired so much made my heart ache for him. I finally came to the realization that my husband's gambling was not just a problem, but also an illness. I phoned our local mental health center seeking help for him. They recommended Gamblers Anonymous as the only help for compulsive gamblers. It was not until two years later, and after Stan had suffered two heart attacks that he agreed to seek help from GA.

The way back to emotional good health has not been easy for either of us. I joined Gam-Anon. In this group I have come to accept my husband's illness and to understand and work through my many personal problems. I realize that compulsive gambling is only arrested, never cured. In order to acquire a better way of life in our separate programs, Stan and I find it necessary to give of ourselves. It is only through helping others that we are able to help ourselves. Without the help of Gam-Anon I would still be the nagging, bitter and resentful person I was when Stan gambled. To see my husband at peace with himself and to have that same feeling makes my life again worthwhile.

*Wanda G.  
Downey, California*

## GAM-ANON, MY LIFE PRESERVER

My name is Ellen and I am the wife of a compulsive gambler. When I heard the term "neurotic need," it was good for me. When Chuck and I met, I was an attractive seventeen-year-old. He was an exciting man of twenty-seven, already married and had personality traits any healthy girl would run from. But this domineering female knew she could change him. I guess we complimented each other. I feigned interest in sports just to be with him. My maternal instinct worked overtime helping him even before we were married. I knew that he gambled yet I loaned him money, protected him, bailed him out, hated him for doing this to me and hated myself for allowing it. So we were married.

When our daughter was 15 months old, I contacted a marriage counselor. He told us about GA but my husband convinced me he would stop gambling without help. I guess I believed him because I wanted desperately to do so. He tossed the GA literature into his top drawer and did nothing about it.

After six months of abstinence from gambling, we decided to have another baby. Our second daughter was born in March, 1961. At the same time he was fired from his job when it was discovered that he had been embezzling for nine years. After five months of knocking about we went into our own business. It was then that I walked into my first Gam-Anon meeting, expecting a sheet of paper with all the rules and regulations to make him stop gambling. I didn't want to lose our business.

My husband finally started to attend GA meetings and after a year our attendance faltered because he became complacent and felt that he no longer needed the program. I went along with him, much to my sorrow.

The son I had always wanted was born in June, 1963 and from that time on there were constant waves of gambling and abstinence.

In April, 1964 I swam for help and Gam-Anon threw me a life preserver. I anchored there and they applied respiration. I pumped

out self-pity, hate, resentment and negative thinking. I joined Gam-Anon to try to save our business but now I am here to save a life. I am beginning to feel stronger with each step I take. Sometimes I slip off the deep end but my life preserver has no holes in it so I always come back again. I know now that I will not drown as long as I have Gam-Anon. Thank God there is no time limit in Gam-Anon and my progress can be made in my own way.

*Ellen L.  
New York*

### A NEW WAY OF LIFE

Words cannot describe the wonderful sense of relief I felt when my husband Steve finally admitted that he needed help after many years of compulsive gambling, and sought it in the GA fellowship. I knew somehow that this was the answer to all my prayers through the years.

I found I could sleep through the night without disturbing and fearful thoughts running through my mind for the first time during our life together. I became able to relax and to enjoy things I had been too blinded by my frustrations and anxieties to see before.

Everything I did in the past had become automatic and without pleasure because I was obsessed constantly with fear, worry and insecurity. I told myself time after time that this was the cross I must bear, but as the years passed it became increasingly difficult to tolerate until, at last, I was ready to give up. I became numb and eventually reached the point of not caring what happened to either Steve or me.

My children were grown and married by this time and I believed there was nothing left to fight for, but one day my husband came home from what was to be his last gambling spree and suddenly my mind was changed. He looked me straight in the eye and said, "I have had it, I need help", and I believed him, probably because of the desperate tone of his voice and the equally haunted and desperate look in his eyes which I had never seen before.

He went to a GA meeting several times a week and soon there was a semblance of normalcy in our home. The fact that we still owed a lot of money did not worry me for I knew that as long as he did not gamble the debts would be paid. I began to relax and enjoy life a bit. But after a few months of this wonderful new way of living resentment from the past began to creep into my life. I was beginning to take his abstinence from gambling for granted and to feel that he owed me something for the many heartaches I had suffered because of him. I now know that as he was improving, I was slipping behind. It was then that I became a member of Gam-Anon. I, like countless others, felt that there was nothing wrong with me - hadn't I suffered with his gambling all these years and hadn't everyone told me over and over again what a remarkable person I was to live with a man who gave me nothing but disappointment and worry?

After attending several Gam-Anon meetings, however I discovered that if I wanted to really help my husband it would be necessary for me to improve my way of thinking and living. I listened to other members speak and I learned, from the message they carried how to change my attitude. It was not an easy task to erase the bitterness of so many years. The first thing I worked on was my attitude toward my husband at home. I suppressed the desire to be sarcastic and critical toward him and learned, even in a heated discussion, not to bring up the past. It was important for me to remind myself not to indulge in self-pity or resentment.

The first step in our Gam-Anon recovery program told me I was powerless over his gambling and I found myself to be powerless over other things in my life. So, I learned to "let go." I have learned and continue to learn all these things through my association with Gam-Anon. This is a school from which I will never graduate because I know I must practice the principles Gam-Anon teaches day after day in order to become a more worthwhile person. My husband has not gambled since September, 1960 and I dread to think of the kind of person I would

have been without the help of Gam-Anon. I could have become instrumental in sending him back to gambling or I would have made our life together so miserable that it would have been little better than before he joined the GA fellowship. One of the best things I have learned is self-forgetfulness. This is not difficult if I remain in Gam-Anon. I am fortunate to have the opportunity of reaching out a hand to those who suffer as I have suffered in the past. But I realize that unless I help myself, I cannot help others. I have come to love the Serenity Prayer, but my favorite prayer, one which I repeat often is, "God help us to become Masters of ourselves so that we may become servants of others."

*Kathryn P.  
California*

### **GETTING THE MOST OUT OF LIFE**

I find that I am now able to go along getting the most out of life on a day-to-day basis, as a result of having been an active member in Gam-Anon for the past four years.

It seems that worry lies in our minds more often as the result of a simple misdirection of our imaginations. I find that I am now able to control my processes of thought, thereby putting worry in its proper place by trying not to dwell on the past and not thinking of what tomorrow might bring. It is amazing how you can turn a gloomy day into a cheerful one by just applying this simple formula. I think the program, as a whole, has helped me learn that life with all its little upsets and big shocks still goes on and that the important thing is to cultivate a little self-control and serenity. Lest I forget, I find myself repeating time and time again, "O Lord, Grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the Courage to change the things I can, and the Wisdom to know the difference.

*Kathryn K.*

## A RAY OF HOPE

When John Donne wrote, "No man is an island, entire of itself," he wasn't separating sexes. "Man" is synonymous with the human race.

In my experiences as the wife of a compulsive gambler, I withdrew from all social life. My problems were so mammoth and so humiliating that I often found myself unable to communicate with family, friends and neighbors. My first exposure to the Gam-Anon program revealed to me that my behavior had not been unnatural. On the contrary, I was able to identify with the majority of the members who confessed to the exact same fears and frustrations.

Through Gam-Anon you will find yourself turning from a caterpillar into a butterfly and suddenly you're aware that there's a big, wide, wonderful world out there. You are once again a member of the human race. Come to our meetings, find your way off that island. We will be there to welcome you to the mainland. You need us - We need you.

*Ruth R.*

I'd like to tell you my story briefly to encourage some others. Five years ago, my husband and I attended GA and Gam-Anon at 48th Street in New York City. He listened with a closed mind for one year and went steadily down the drain for the next four. I managed to attend Gam-Anon alone for four years because I needed to help myself through these difficult times and with five children to care for, I had to keep my sanity and find some kind of serenity. I knew in my heart that Tony was a lost soul, there was no hope for him and he would never return to GA. Never. But due to the Higher Power who enlightened my husband with what I call a spiritual awakening, which brought him back to GA, the soul I thought was lost is now helping others.

*Connie G.*

I never could imagine anyone had lived or could be living a life like mine. I always thought I was the only one.

There was never a time in my 21 years of marriage that Lou wasn't in terrible trouble. He owed tremendous sums of money and people were always looking for him. No sooner had I helped him make a new start than he would be in trouble again over his head.

He finally lost his livelihood, his reputation in his field, and for one full year we have been struggling to keep our heads above water.

He hasn't gambled for a year and he has finally stopped lying, which came as natural to him as breathing.

I never close my eyes at night without thanking God for leading us to GA and Gam-Anon, which to me means God's answer.

*Rose M.*

### **WE WERE YOUNG THEN**

We were young then, but I remember feeling very old. Compulsive gambling had caused so much destruction that it was virtually impossible to connect that what had happened to our lives was due only to "gambling." I thought gambling was responsible only for the financial crisis ... not for all the other hurts throughout the years.

Our love began as only it can ... when two people are so young and in love. I thought this young man would make all my dreams come true. It never occurred to me that I should be responsible for that myself. So, we began our lives - with him on the path that takes all compulsive gamblers; and with me - not having a clue of what was ahead. We were young then.

So he gambled. I never thought of it as a problem ... more as a hobby ... a social outlet for him and he loved it. We were young then.

The first few years were not "so bad" ... just little incidents ... lies ... lack of considerations ... selfishness ... all things he would grow out of. I see now so clearly that although those years were not "so bad" -they were the beginning. It had to be ... there was no maturity ... no responsibility ... I thought we were trying ... I thought it would be better tomorrow ... and there were good times ... but no growth ... no moving ahead ... just living - sometimes surviving each day ... wondering what was happening to us. I could not figure out why all our friends, who were basically in the same financial bracket, had things, were buying houses, were taking vacations that were saved for and planned for. How did they do it??

When I would ask my husband, he would explain it to me. He always had a reason and explanation, and I have to admit now that even then I knew it wasn't making sense. I only probed so far and no further because what would I do, what could I do. I needed this sick, undependable, manipulative person to take care of me. Why, I wonder, did it not occur to me that I should be responsible for doing that myself?

So, as it was inevitable, the gambling escalated, the lies escalated, our life was unmanageable. I just continued to blame him for it all. It was now many years later and I still was allowing it all to happen, we no longer felt young.

We found GA and Gam-Anon. I began to understand his illness and how my fears and insecurities allowed it all to go on. Our journey to recovery was in many ways as difficult as our life before, but there was one huge difference, all the struggles of recovery had a positive effect on us, whereas before all the struggles were in vain. I was becoming stronger every day (instead of weaker every day). My husband had a very difficult time along his road to recovery because he fought the program and the guidelines: he returned to gambling: he signed himself into a rehab: and was hospitalized again for severe depression. Finally, he stopped fighting the program and put that energy into working on his recovery.

Through it all and with endless help from other recovering compulsive gamblers and Gam-Anon, we now have what we came for - we have peace, we have dignity, we have each other, we have the respect of our children, we have financial security, and we have friends that are worth more than any treasure.

We are older now, but we feel very young.

### 24 YEARS IN PROGRAM

Who would have thought that a "little gambling" problem 24 years ago would lead me to a way different life style than I had envisioned for myself. Angry, hurt and a little frightened, I entered my first Gam-Anon meeting in Walnut Creek. I was then promptly told that I would have to learn a "new way of life," and practice it for the rest of my life. Overwhelming? Yes!!! Sounded unbelievable? Yes!!! Would I be able to do it? Would I even want to do it? I wasn't quite sure. I did make a promise to give it a try as long as my gambler was trying and not gambling.

My Gam-Anon room became the only place where I could talk about my problems and also get guidance for the problems I was facing. The people I met in the rooms were kind, but also truthful. Ultimately, I had to come to my own conclusions for solving my particular set of problems. They offered me multiple ideas and a new understanding of the gambling problem. I became like a sponge and absorbed everything I could. I read the literature, attended other meetings and pinnings and got involved on many levels.

It definitely helped my recovery to also have the gambler recovering at the same time. Would I have survived if he had gone back to gambling? I will never know until I've been tested. I hope that never happens, but I would hope that all I have learned would be of great help to me if I had to make a serious decision.

Many people have wondered why I still keep coming to Gam-Anon meetings after all these years. I guess the answer lies in fear. I never want to have to suffer the pain and shame that I went through

so very long ago. If we both stay active in program, we never get a chance to get lazy and complacent about the changes we fought hard to make in our lives. Program has enriched our lives, not stolen from it. We have met some very nice and interesting people and visited many places throughout the states. We have even attended meetings in other countries.

I do want you to know that I am many things, not just a person in recovery. I've raised a family of three children (well, almost raised). I belong to a ladies' club; I square dance weekly; I work four days a week; I attend my church as frequently as possible; and I can still attend Gam-Anon weekly.

I believe in all the 12 Steps and feel that I must continue to work them. If I say that I am working them, then I must also work the Twelfth Step and carry the message to others. Can I carry the message if I am never around the people in program or at the meetings? I don't think so. I still learn new things through program, and I do not want to lose all that I have gained.

*Sharon B.*

### A NEW LIFE

I would like to say thank you to Gam-Anon for changing my life and giving me wonderful new opportunities.

My husband was a closet gambler. I watched him go from a loving, compassionate husband and father to a shell of a person who couldn't function even enough to go to work each day. He became a habitual liar and sneak. My children and I had no respect for him. I wasn't sure which one of us would have the nervous breakdown first. I debated the issues of divorce, suicide and often wished for his death.

But then I was introduced to Gam-Anon, for which I will be forever grateful. It has been over three years now since he last gambled. I feel so much better about myself. I have graduated from college with an A.A. degree and am going on for a B.A. My oldest son is in his second year of college, too. The best part of all this is

the new communication in our relationship. We have learned how to talk to each other and even when not to "say our piece."

This man I once hated, I have learned to love again and even to respect. Thank you Gam-Anon for our new life!

*Kim O.*

### **THE STORY OF REBIRTH**

When my first child, my son, was born, I was filled with a total joy. I'd protect him. I'd provide for him. I'd guide him. I'd watch him. I'd teach him. I'd support him. I'd love him. I had great dreams for him. I knew that he could be anything he wanted to be for he was smart, strong and proud.

He grew into adulthood and I discovered he has a disease. I'm not sure how, when, where, or why he has it, but he does. A vicious, insidious, destructive, addictive disease, a disease that has eaten away at his very being. A disease that has left him with little pride, hope or dignity. The symptoms are lying, stealing, debt, cheating and manipulating. He is a compulsive gambler. There is help! Gamblers Anonymous is the path to good health. It provides the "physicians" to guide his recovery. It offers the "medicine" to soothe the wounds. It has many opportunities for "calling" to share the pain. It has "rooms" filled with understanding and healing. Most importantly it stipulates the specific twelve steps needed to recover.

As a parent I found support, comfort and understanding in the companion Gam-Anon room. It is there that I was able to lift guilt. It is there that I grew to understand this disease. It is there I heard and learned that I am not alone. It is there that I freely express frustration, confusion, impatience and concern. It is there that I evolve as a stronger human being.

Now, after time, my son and I have become friends. I better understand the needs that drive each of us. We communicate regularly, share successes and enjoy each day as a new opportunity.

to improve ourselves. Each of us is on the road to success: success with everyday encounters, success with self-realization, success with recognizing defects of character and working toward eliminating them and most importantly, success with recovery. He is more compassionate, caring and concerned. He has become stronger, smarter and prouder. He has been reborn! I am again filled with joy!

*Carol D.*

### **MY SON CARL IS A GAMBLER**

I go through pain that is all too familiar to a parent as I watch my son struggle in life. When I take over and do things for him, the jobs may get done in half the time, but Carl's dignity suffers. Testing his own knowledge and skills is the only way he can grow in self-esteem, self-reliance and self-discipline.

I need to allow my child to do as much for himself as he can, lest I rob him of an opportunity for growth. I have been in the program 20 years. I am a grateful member of Gam-Anon.

*Sandra R.*

### **GAMBLING WAS ONLY A PHONE CALL AWAY**

My name is Marie R. I am married to a compulsive gambler. My husband truly lived in a dream world. He always sought to justify his gambling with vows of hitting it big so he could buy me a big house, fancy cars, jewelry and exotic vacations to far off lands. He claimed he wanted nothing but the best for me and the children. What I wanted was a husband who was there for us in body and mind; a husband who I could talk to and sit down with; a husband to cuddle with; a husband who would be with the family at night. Sadly, however, he worked 16-hour days to support his compulsion. You could imagine how little time that left for me and him alone. There was great stress in the house because I never knew what mood

he would be in when he walked through the door.

What also drove me crazy was the constant financial strain. He never went out to the bars; he never went to the track to play the horses; he never went out to play cards; he never went to the casinos. Yet there was always this incredible financial stress and he was always working. I didn't understand what was happening. I never realized that he didn't need to go out to gamble. He used the phone. He never had to leave the house to get his action. He just had to pick up the phone and call the bookie to place the bet. Truly, his gambling was only a phone call away.

I stumbled onto this fact when I overheard him talking on the phone. I heard him say "fifty times" on some team, "fifty times" on another team. My stomach turned. This was the reality. This was the truth. In my heart I knew something was going on but it was easier for me not to face it. Facing it would mean having to do something about it and that was frightful. One day I checked the phone bill and there was a list of numbers that had no good reason to be there. This confirmed that indeed my husband had a problem. I had no choice but to confront it and do something about it. I was wrought with emotions including rage, fear, anger and hurt. I was shaking and crying. I felt my world crumbling down - my dreams, my hopes, my marriage.

I got in my car and went to see a man to whom I am forever indebted, my Monsignor. He listened to me as I explained my plight. He calmly advised me that the only real option was Gambler's Anonymous. I left knowing that I must stand strong, but I was weak. This was such an awful day, but it was a turning point. I went home and told my husband that he had a choice: he could call GA or he could leave the house. Thankfully, he called and we entered the program on September 10, 1985. This began a whole new life for us. Today, I can say proudly, that we have been married forty years. The last thirteen have been filled with love, peace and serenity. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, GA and Gam-Anon.

*Marie R.*

## LETTING GO

My son has been a compulsive gambler since his late teens. We were concerned that he gambled at the dog track, played bingo at college and seemed to receive more and more sports game brochures in the mail as the years went by. During one vacation, he took a small inheritance from his grandfather and blew the entire thing at the newly opened casino in a few hours. At that point, I was quite sure he had a gambling addiction and talked with him about it. He was contrite, but denied having any serious problem.

Otherwise, his life seemed normal. He graduated from college, married his high school sweetheart and obtained a good job on the west coast. We thought it strange when we visited him there that he and his bride had no new furniture or TV to boast about and didn't offer to show us around. Things looked a bit shabby, although the apartment was nice and they'd recently bought a new car.

We had no idea he was in serious trouble until he moved back east and again, never seemed to have any money. Our daughter-in-law rarely showed up at family parties and was noncommittal when we talked to her. One Sunday morning, we were shocked when our son showed up at our house, exhausted after a two day gambling binge at the casino. He said he was about to lose his car and had hocked his computer and other valuables. He was extremely depressed about his gambling and marital problems and mounting debts. We loaned him money for a car payment, helped him get his things back and urged him to see a psychiatrist and attend G.A.

Typically, his "confession" proved to be the tip of the iceberg. We didn't learn just how big the iceberg was until our daughter-in-law informed us a few months later that he'd amassed big credit card debts and been arrested for embezzling from his job. We, enablers to be sure, hired an excellent attorney. The cost of the attorney and

paying back his embezzled funds (yet another "loan") cost us dearly, but kept him out of jail.

It also led to a long and, at times, angry struggle between my husband, who needed to continue to enable him and me, who wanted him to start suffering the consequences of his gambling. Meantime, my son's wife divorced him and he moved into our house on the condition that he attend GA and not gamble in any way. We began to regularly attend Gam-Anon meetings.

These meetings eventually crystallized our opposite poles of thought and action. We fought about how much we should demand of our son, especially when his hostility was directed at me, how much we should help him, how much we should trust him.

My son became a GA member on the surface, turned over his paycheck, lived within his means and didn't gamble - until we went on vacation and he blew his first commission check of several thousand dollars in a weekend.

His move out of the house was bitter. My husband was furious at me because I insisted we follow through on his leaving. He was hurt at what our son had done, guilty about "kicking him out" and unable to see through the cloud of all the enabling he'd learned in his own home, where his mother was an alcoholic.

Gradually, painfully, our Gam-Anon friends helped us understand and work through our serious conflicts with ourselves and each other. The tremendous guilt of not being able to "help" our own child because it would prevent him from getting well, aroused in us overwhelming feelings of helplessness, incompetence and a longing for things as they used to be.

For months, we angrily blamed each other, until our Gam-Anon friends, several of whom were also parents, forced us to look at the reality of the gambling personality and the downward course of the illness, neither of which was our fault.

We watched sadly as our son quit two successive jobs in less than two years, moved into a poor neighborhood and an ugly room. We saw him lose his car, his friends and his self-respect, all the while

maintaining an unreal, almost jovial attitude when he visited us or talked on the phone. After a few months, he saved enough to buy a "junker" car and to insure it. Recently, he quit yet another job and seems to be depending on his part-time job to exist. He hasn't paid back any of his loan, but thanks to Gam-Anon we have learned not to question or nag him.

Instead, we continue to draw strength and meaning from the experiences of our Gam-Anon friends and the support of our weekly meetings. Although we're saddened by our son's apparent continued gambling and his non-interest in GA, we still hope that someday he'll return to GA - the one group that won't buy his excuses or salve his wounds, and therefore, may help lead him toward a different way of thinking and acting, just as Gam-Anon has led us.

We wait and hope, sometimes impatiently, for the day he wants to get better. The difference though, is that now we wait beside Gam-Anon friends who understand our struggle and support our new found conviction not to help and our increasing ability to feel okay about that decision. *P.H.*

### CONFUSED ABOUT LOVE

My name is Wanda, and I am both the wife and daughter of compulsive gamblers. As a daughter of a compulsive gambler, gambling was something I grew up with, but never understood. I never understood that our family devastation was all caused by this disease.

Between the ages of 7 and 9, I started to witness the destruction of my family. My parents fought all the time over money, bills and where my father was. My mother was always asking him why we couldn't afford to buy food, pay our bills and why he would never come home after work. He worked two jobs, but I did not realize that one job was supposed to provide for the household expenses

and the other was to support his gambling. My parents had so many gambling debts, they never caught up. My mother would beg him to stop gambling. She even went out and got a job to help pay these debts. I remember many nights listening to them fight and I would pray to God to please make them stop. Sometimes my mother would go to find my father. In the middle of the night, she would throw a coat over her nightgown and drive for hours.

When I was 9, at about 1:00 in the morning, my mother was screaming. I woke up and snuck down the hall to see what was happening. There at the foot of the bed sat my father with a knife in his hand. The next thing I saw were two policemen trying to talk him into giving up the knife. Approximately one hour later my father entered my room to say good-bye. He asked me to take care of my mother, sister and brother because he would not be coming home. From that moment on, I felt so abandoned. But if I did a good job taking care of everyone, I knew he would love me and be proud of me. I would never lose him. So, from that moment, I became the best caretaker. My parents did divorce after 19 years of marriage and my father never stopped gambling. He even refused to pay child support. My parents explained ... we grew apart from each other and someday you'll understand.

I left my house at 19 and worked very hard to support myself and my son. My marriage to his father only lasted 5 years. One year later I met my husband, Michael, my knight in shining armor. He promised to love and take care of my son and me, forever. I knew he was a gambler but that was okay ... so was my father, and I loved him. We lived with my father for 5 years to help him out; he was now divorced from his second wife. My father and Michael became best friends, even gambling buddies. Every weekend they would have coffee, read the sport section and then go out the door to O.T.B. Now they were both keeping secrets from me.

Not until we moved into our first house did we start to feel the devastation of gambling. I started to have flashbacks of my child-

hood and watched my children experience some of the same devastation. The bill collectors called constantly, the lies and fights got worse and worse. We would take our meals from work home to put in the refrigerator for the boys and we both worked two jobs. We exhausted our family and friends; no more money could be borrowed. I started doing all the things my mother did.

In the 16th year of our marriage, I had had enough and so did Michael. We needed help to survive and keep our marriage together. In 1995 we attended our first GA and Gam-Anon meetings. They gave me all the answers I was looking for. The puzzle was starting to come together of both the past and present. All I wanted to do was love everyone and help them. My way of loving was only hurting them, being the caretaker and enabler only added wood to the fire. I knew I had to change myself in order to put a stop to the continuing cycle that grew from generation to generation, always knowing I am powerless in relation to the disease but not powerless to my own personal change. I learned how to say no and how to take care of myself. Even Michael is happy with whom I've become.

My children today are taught to live an honest life and the GA way of life. Compulsive gambling is a disease and we know it cannot be cured, but as long as Michael and I work the program, attend meetings regularly, make phone calls and get involved, we can share a beautiful life together. I thank my husband for the choices he made, GA and us. I look at my father with sorrow; he doesn't want to change. Our life today is a good life. I am so happy we found the answers.

Thank you, Michael, GA, and Gam-Anon for helping me find me and for all the friends and support that helped put our lives back together.

*Wanda M.  
New York*

## CROSS ADDICTED

My husband is cross addicted to alcohol as well as gambling. I began attending Al-Anon when my husband was drinking so heavily that I was at my wit's end as to how to handle the situation. A friend suggested that I call Alcoholics Anonymous. They referred me to Al-Anon and I was directed to an Al-Anon meeting that very night. At that time, I had never even heard of either AA or Al-Anon, so you can imagine how much I was in the dark about addictions. That first meeting opened my eyes to the fact that I was not alone. Other people were living in a similar situation which was the result of an illness which could not be cured, only arrested. I realized that I also needed help, which was available to me through the 12 Steps of Recovery, and regular attendance at meetings. I also learned from a member about a course on understanding alcoholism at a local hospital. After a few attempts at sobriety while attending AA meetings, my husband was finally directed to an in-house recovery program where he found his sobriety. He began attending AA meetings and he has been sober for 26 years. I was thrilled that I no longer had to deal with an active alcoholic, and thanks to Al-Anon, I was getting help for myself.

After a short while, I began to realize that although my husband was no longer drinking, something else was going on in our relationship which I could not put my finger on. He had apparently crossed over to another addiction which became evident to me when I began to find checks missing from the back of my checkbook. When I questioned him about this, he reacted with a smoke screen, denial about any knowledge of the missing checks, blaming me for accusing him, etc., etc. His behavior was that of someone who was not really working the Steps of Recovery, only abstaining from drinking, but open to continue his addiction in other areas. Finally, someone who knew him well told me he was caught up in gambling. I was in shock. I had thought that my troubles were behind me and now I had something new to cope with!

I found out about GA and Gam-Anon and I began to attend meetings, but he resisted. The Gam-Anon program showed me that although it was also a 12 Step Program, I was dealing with a different problem, and I needed help which I got by following the Gam-Anon program. I gained the strength that I needed to take a stand with him when he refused to go to GA. So, I separated from him for about a year. He was in denial. When we got back together again, we both began going to meetings. There were more incidents of slips on his part, as I tried desperately to take care of myself financially, emotionally and spiritually. None of this would have been possible without the help of my Higher Power, whom I choose to call God. It was my Higher Power who guided me to the Gam-Anon way of life, and the fellowship and support I found in the program.

Finally, my husband surrendered to his Higher Power and found the beginning of his recovery in GA. He now has 14 years clean. His recovery has accelerated and most importantly, we are now able to share our days together in openness and honesty. We are now both very active in our programs, trying continually to work the 12 Steps, ... especially Step 12, giving back to others that which we have received. Thank you, God, for leading us to these programs, which have saved our lives and made us into better people.

*Dottie V.*

If I were able to express what is in my heart, I would be most grateful because life has brought me much happiness with my husband and much sorrow as a result of his gambling. I thought that GA offered us a chance for happiness. I felt as long as Gamblers Anonymous kept him from gambling, we would be able to live our lives as "I" wanted us to. I wasn't ready for a change, other than no gambling, so I thought, as long as he had GA our problems were over.

Through Gam-Anon I found that unless that change comes from within us both, we cannot find happiness and serenity. Gam-Anon has taught me that I have to look to myself and see my problems if I am to help my husband in his recovery. I must do what I can to be a better person, to want to give, rather than receive and to understand his times of torment and restlessness. This could never have happened unless I had God in my heart and Gam-Anon to turn to. I thank God and Gam-Anon for giving me the strength to see these hard times through and the love to want to do so.

My story has not come to an end. On the contrary, I hope and pray this is the beginning for my husband, our family and myself. We can never be perfect and only through trying to better ourselves can we hope to bring pleasure and happiness to others and therefore in turn, be happy ourselves.

*Pat G.*

### **WHAT GAM-ANON HAS DONE FOR ME**

My husband and I have been married for seven years. The first nine months that we were in GA and Gam-Anon were our happiest. We were able to communicate for the first time because he had nothing to hide. However, as we all know, some men have slips and my husband slipped six months ago and has been "slipping" since. He goes to GA meetings "now and then" and as a result, he gambles now and then. Our lives again have become unmanageable, but this time I have Gam-Anon. I have meetings to attend, pamphlets to read, hope and encouragement from all the wonderful Gam-Anon members. Without this, I don't know where I would be today. I know that with hope, faith, patience and more patience and most of all with GA and Gam-Anon, everything will turn out okay!

## ATTENDING ALONE

When my husband and I returned to GA and Gam-Anon after a two-year absence, I resolved that I would never again turn my back on the program and became entirely committed to it. This commitment served me well, as my husband returned to gambling after six years of abstinence and left the program again. But this time, I continued to attend my weekly meeting (even though I disliked driving at night) and started to look at and work on myself, instead of concentrating on him. With the Gam-Anon program, the support of my room and faith in my Higher Power, I grew in self-confidence and maturity, living one day at a time, always with hope that someday my husband would return to GA.

After five years of attending alone, this hope became a reality nearly three years ago, when he did come back - and without any nagging, begging, or pleading on my part. My husband has since admitted that he probably would not have returned if I weren't going to Gam-Anon.

Today we share a much closer relationship and are enjoying the serenity we deserve, thanks to GA and Gam-Anon.

## A SAFE SANCTUARY

My name is Wendy R. and I am the parent of a compulsive gambler. I came to Gam-Anon because I was lonely, ashamed and frustrated.

The meeting provides a warm, safe sanctuary where I can connect with people like myself. I am able to listen to others and be listened to. Together we are able to share both the pain and the joy of living.

I must keep reminding myself that:

I did not cause the gambling

I cannot control the gambling.

I cannot cure the gambling.

I may not be able to change the gambler's behavior, but I certainly have the power to change my own. As we so lovingly say to each other: "Keep coming back. It works."

### I FOUND ACCEPTANCE

Years ago, I acknowledged my identity and became active in the gay community. In 1993, I met my partner who is a compulsive gambler. We went to Lake Tahoe in August 1995, and gambled at several casinos there and in Reno. Gambling became a problem and I first attended a Gam-Anon meeting in October 1995. After about four meetings, I stopped attending Gam-Anon, as the gambling stopped and it didn't seem to be a problem anymore. By October 1996, my partner started gambling again and the situation became unmanageable for me, so I resumed my attendance at Gam-Anon and have been attending on a regular basis since that time.

Gam-Anon has become an important part of my life. When gambling became a problem, I felt like I was drowning. I already knew something about 12 step programs, having had an alcoholic friend. I started coming to Gam-Anon because there was nowhere else to turn to. But, I had deep reservations and a sense of insecurity in turning to a group of unknown people. From that first meeting the atmosphere was of trust and honesty. I was accepted without questions by the group, and was able to unburden myself in the initial session. By the end of the meeting, I knew I was in the right place with the right people.

P.S. My partner has been attending GA since October 1996 and his second anniversary is not too far off.

\*\*\*\*\*

Most of us came to Gam-Anon with overwhelming problems. All we wanted was for our gambler to stop gambling. We were in pain and were looking only for relief from the misery caused by compulsive gambling. Little did we know that we would find a

whole new way of life. Little did we know how much more awaited us in this program. The following "promises" so beautifully state what our future holds when we continue to come and work the steps:

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.\*\*

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us - sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.\*\*

### **HOW MUCH AM I WILLING TO GIVE?**

Most of us are aware that, in this life, we never get something for nothing. We are probably more aware of the fact than most. Our gamblers chased this idea for many miserable years of their lives. When we find Gam-Anon and our gamblers find GA we feel we have been given a wonderful gift.

Perhaps we should take time to examine and analyze this gift. I hardly think that the expression, "never look a gift horse in the mouth" applies to Gam-Anon and GA. Most of us are so eager and willing to receive this so-called gift, but what we sometimes forget is that in both fellowships the peace of mind and serenity we

finds (Paragraph starting "If we are...") This excerpt from the book Alcoholics Anonymous, pages 83-84, is reprinted with the permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Service, Inc. Permission to use this excerpt does not mean that A.A. is in any way affiliated with this program. A.A. is a program of recovery from alcoholism only - use of this material in connection with programs and activities which are patterned after A.A., but which address other problems or concerns or in any other non A.A. context does not imply otherwise.

not a gift, but a state of mind which must be developed through diligent effort on our part.

After our gamblers stop gambling and we begin to feel good again, so very often we forget that we cannot keep this good feeling unless we give it away. We should be willing to give of ourselves. When I say this, I mean take time to call a new member even when it's inconvenient. Be willing to serve in the field of publicity and to carry the message.

So often I have heard a member say, "I'd love to help but I'm just too busy with my family." They forget one important fact – in all probability, without Gam-Anon and GA they might not have a family.

How much are you willing to give these fellowships???

\*\*\*\*\*

How does one explain the beauty and fellowship that is given to all of us by the Gam-Anon program and the Gamblers Anonymous program? I can only speak for myself, but these two programs have changed my life forever. I have never been in such a calming place in the 24 years of my husband's compulsion.

The Gam-Anon program has so much to offer, all you have to do is want change. You can receive all the tools that you could ever need, the support, information, literature and involvement in activities. All these things are at your fingertips. All you have to do is reach out for them.

I came into this program not knowing which way to turn and not knowing in which direction I was going. My life was an emotional and financial mess, the trust we had was hanging on by a thread and the good times just did not exist any longer. I was so tired of cleaning up the messes and trying to rob Peter to pay Paul. I guess I knew all along that change was looming in the mist and boy was it ever!

I came into this program July 17,1997. My husband came in July 11,1997 and as GOD is my witness we have not looked back since.

We have not forgotten the bad times but we do not dwell on them either. This can only help in our recovery. We are closer and more involved in life in general than we ever were. Our children are also involved in the program and know recovery is for everyone. For the first time in our 24 years, I can finally say we are "winners." This program works, so work it!!

*Julie T. San Francisco*

**V**

**UNITY PROGRAM  
AND HISTORY**

## STEP ONE

*OUR COMMON WELFARE SHOULD COME FIRST;  
PERSONAL SERENITY DEPENDS UPON GAM-ANON UNITY.*

Without unity, Gam-Anon would cease to be. We make references to the groups as a whole; because, although the groups are many and scattered all over the nation and other parts of the world, we have our common welfare at heart. The Gam-Anon Way of Life is read and discussed at all meetings everywhere, thus to a great extent, our thinking is in accord. We aim for the same goal, which is to try to improve our lives to an extent where we are better able to cope with and understand, not only the gambling problem, but also the problems of life. If each one of us, as an individual, will do his/her best to maintain unity, we will most surely grow. "In unity there is strength!" Through the use of our Gam-Anon literature, we are learning how to best work together as groups and by faith we are able to build.

Occasionally, a whole group is disrupted by an unthinking member who wants to run the group his/her way, regardless of how the others feel, or by an inconsiderate person who talks all the time, airing private feelings and grievances. The entire group may suffer from one member's self-indulgence unless his/her eyes are opened to the dis-service that is being done to the group. It is not the intention of any group to hurt the feelings of individuals, but if we are to survive, the welfare of the group as a whole must come first.

## STEP TWO

*OUR LEADERS ARE BUT TRUSTED SERVANTS; THEY DO NOT GOVERN.*

Gam-Anon is merely a suggested program. It gives us perfect freedom to work it in any way best suited for each individual's recovery; we have no one to tell us what we must or must not do.

Experience has shown that we need no heavy hand to govern us. It is truly a great privilege to have the opportunity to serve in Gam-Anon, whether it is as secretary, chairman of a meeting, founder of a group, or trustee of the International Service Office. Perhaps we may at times need to be reminded of our status as servants of a wonderful group of people who need our help as we need theirs.

### **STEP THREE**

*THE ONLY REQUIREMENT FOR GAM-ANON MEMBERSHIP IS THAT YOUR LIFE HAS BEEN AFFECTED BY SOMEONE WHO HAS A GAMBLING PROBLEM.*

We are aware that the Gam-Anon program could apply to anyone whether or not he or she had this type of problem but the gambling problem in our home is our common problem.

This step is one of acceptance. It invites all who have suffered the agony that only those who have lived the way we have lived will understand. It embraces all, regardless of race, creed, religion, social or economic background. The message we get from this step is "come join us - we hold out our hand in compassion and understanding - we too have suffered - you are not alone."

### **STEP FOUR**

*EACH GROUP SHOULD BE SELF GOVERNING EXCEPT IN MATTERS AFFECTING OTHER GROUPS OR GAM-ANONAS A WHOLE.*

In Gam-Anon we have no ironclad rules to govern us; each group is free to function as they choose, using the Unity and Recovery Program as a guide. However, any group needs to consider its actions with prudence since individual group activities often affect other groups either directly or indirectly. A group has the right to use any agenda agreeable to the group. It may wish to have outside speakers and it might differ as to methods use to attract new

members. When any group disregards the Unity Program by indulging in idle gossip, ill-considered promotion, public solicitation of funds, or lack of anonymity, the reputation of Gam-Anon suffers.

Each group will grow through trial and error as long as their mistakes are not made at the expense of other groups or as long as Gam-Anon unity is not affected.

### **STEP FIVE**

*GAM-ANON HAS BUT ONE PRIMARY PURPOSE - TO CARRY ITS MESSAGE TO THOSE AFFECTED BY SOMEONE WHO HAS A GAMBLING PROBLEM*

Our main obligation is to help the families and friends of compulsive gamblers and the survival of the Gam-Anon fellowship depends on adherence to this principle. There was no hope for people like us until Gam-Anon.

We have another reason for our singleness of purpose. We know that we can rarely keep our precious gift of serenity unless we give it away. If we help those who need us, we will maintain all we have gained in our search for the good life.

### **STEP SIX**

*GAM-ANON SHOULD NEVER ENDORSE, FINANCE OR LEND THE GAM-ANON NAME TO ANY RELATED FACILITY OR OUTSIDE ENTERPRISE, LEST PROBLEMS OF MONEY, PROPERTY AND PRESTIGE DIVERT US FROM OUR PRIMARY PURPOSE.*

It is important that we not finance any organization or enterprise, lest we deviate from our primary purpose of carrying our message of hope to those affected by the gambling problem.

Gam-Anon and Gamblers Anonymous are not related facilities or outside enterprises, but this Step applies to our financial relationship. We are cooperating organizations that are fully self-supporting. Neither fellowship should financially support the other. When we engage in joint fundraising projects, the money raised is to be shared. Gam-Anon ISO and GA ISO, through their Boards of Delegates and Trustees, have set guidelines for the sharing of responsibilities, costs, and profits from jointly sponsored conferences. It is important that Gam-Anon Unities and Intergroups follow these guidelines.

We have learned that it is best not to donate Gam-Anon funds to individual members however worthy the cause. It is necessary to use accumulated monies to promote growth and strength in the fellowship.

#### **STEP SEVEN**

*EVERY GAM-ANON GROUP SHOULD BE FULLY SELF-SUPPORTING, DECLINING OUTSIDE CONTRIBUTIONS.*

If we are to be a responsible group of people and our cause is worthwhile, then we should be willing to support it. It is necessary that each group upholds this idea. It takes not only time and effort, but also a certain amount of money to propagate our fellowship. However, this money must come from Gam-Anon members, and not the solicitation of public funds.

#### **STEP EIGHT**

*GAM-ANON SHOULD REMAIN FOREVER NON-PROFESSIONAL, BUT OUR SERVICE CENTERS MAY EMPLOY SPECIAL WORKERS.*

The premise of Gam-Anon is to get help by giving it, and if professional people are brought in for this purpose the value of the group is lost. However, looking into the future, we see the need to employ special workers in our service office.

## STEP NINE

*GAM-ANON AS SUCH SHOULD NEVER BE ORGANIZED; BUT WE MAY CREATE SERVICE BOARDS OR COMMITTEES DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE TO THOSE THEY SERVE.*

It has never been necessary in our fellowship to organize, to discipline members, or to enforce rules. In order to further our fellowship, we have established an International Service Office. The trustees of this office are directly responsible to Gam-Anon as a whole. Committees may be formed within the groups individually, to serve in various fields, such as those assuming the responsibility in contacting new members. Wherever it is necessary to further the cause to help Gam-Anon to grow and more than one or two members are needed for the task, then service boards or committees may be established.

## STEP TEN

*GAM-ANON HAS NO OPINION ON OUTSIDE ISSUES; HENCE, THE GAM-ANON NAME SHOULD NEVER BE DRAWN INTO CONTROVERSY.*

There should never be heated religious, political or reform arguments among Gam-Anon members. So long as we don't argue these matters privately, it's fairly certain we never shall publicly. Gam-Anon opposes no one. We have no quarrel with gambling as such.

## STEP ELEVEN

*OUR PUBLIC RELATIONS POLICY IS BASED ON ATTRACTION RATHER THAN PROMOTION; BUT WE NEED ALWAYS MAINTAIN PERSONAL ANONYMITY AT THE LEVEL OF PRESS, RADIO, FILMS, TELEVISION, INTERNET. ETC.*

Although it is understandable that we are all enthusiastic in our efforts to promote the growth of Gam-Anon through the medium of press, radio or television, we should ever be mindful of the fact that we must maintain our anonymity at all times. In order to attract new members, it is most important that we have much to offer in the way of hope, encouragement and understanding. It is never necessary at any time for anyone to lose his/her anonymity by appearing publicly to promote publicity.

### STEP TWELVE

#### *ANONYMITY IS THE SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION OF THE GAM-ANON PROGRAM, EVER REMINDING US TO PLACE PRINCIPLES BEFORE PERSONALITIES.*

Gam-Anon members need to protect their anonymity for two obvious reasons. At first, we may think only of protecting the gambler and/or their families against unfavorable publicity, which could affect their livelihood. We sometimes feel ashamed of the gambler's problem; we attract new members because they are assured of this anonymity. Our second reason is that anonymity brings us true humility. By remaining anonymous, we have found that we do not feed an obsessive need for recognition. A cardinal rule for our survival is, "Principles must always be placed before personalities." In order to grow, the welfare of the group must come first. There have been times when a member has refused to attend a meeting because of a personal animosity toward another member or members. This is a good example where principles have not been placed before personalities.



## **GAM-ANON HISTORY**

## GAM-ANON HISTORY

On September 13, 1956, Gambler's Anonymous was founded by Jim W. of Los Angeles. The need for support and understanding for the gambler and the families of compulsive gamblers soon became evident. A fellowship was formed to give this support and understanding.

Sybil W. made arrangements to hold a meeting in 1958. She had two Al-Anon members as guest speakers. The meeting was for spouses of compulsive gamblers. Those present were: Sybil, Alwyn, Ruth B., Ann, Ruth K. and Ruby. The message to start meetings for spouses and families of compulsive gamblers didn't go over in the southern California area at this time. However, a wife of a compulsive gambler from the San Francisco Bay area, Mary R., had been living temporarily in Los Angeles and met people from GA and their spouses. When she moved back to San Francisco, she and her husband introduced GA and the meeting for spouses in that area. The San Francisco Bay area took hold and began to form meetings and grow.

The San Francisco Bay area, through the efforts of Mary R. and other G.A spouses, developed a light-yellow pamphlet titled, The Gam-Anon Way of Life. This pamphlet had a stairway to success on the front cover as our present pamphlet does. It is believed this was first published in late 1959.

Personal notes of a GA member taken at the "GA Membership Committee Meeting, April 11, 1958" in Los Angeles, includes the following: "Leo K. asked for and obtained an OK for our wives to meet every second week of the month. Bernice and Sybil will make personal calls and phone wives of gamblers who have attended our meetings in the past, to attend the wives' meeting."

The following is an excerpt from How We Did It, a pamphlet sent by GA during that time to people requesting information about the

program. "Following the formal meeting, our wives often get together for a meeting of their own. Incidentally, in San Francisco the first and third meeting of each month is closed to gamblers only, while the 2nd and 4th meetings of each month are "open" to wives, husbands, and friends of members. In Los Angeles all meetings are open ..."

On the east coast, in New York City, GA began to meet and spouses sat in on the meetings. On March 12, 1960, Sybil responded to a letter from Connie G., "Have patience and soon there will be plenty of wives attending. If you want to start a group as you mentioned in your letter, I will try to think of a name."

On June 3, 1960 Connie was joined by Ruth S., Lillian S. and Lee S., in the lobby of the St. George Hotel where GA met. As Ruth recollected, "After about two weeks we realized that we needed something more for ourselves. We needed a program. This was the beginning of separate meetings for Gam-Anon and GA."

In further correspondence Sybil suggested that the New York group contact Al-Anon for help and she suggested the name Gam-Anon for the group. On July 7, 1960 Sybil wrote to Ruth, "I am thrilled that you used the Gam-Anon name. Write and let me know how you progress."

Bea M. of Al-Anon helped these Gam-Anon members adapt the Al-Anon literature and attended meetings until they were ready to meet on their own. They called their meeting the 48th Street Group.

As GA received publicity in the New York press, it began to grow and Gam-Anon grew with it.

Barbara F. from Boston attended meetings. After a few weeks she went home and started a meeting there.

On September 26, 1960 the pamphlet, Gam-Anon, was published by the New York group.

We now had meetings in three states, two pieces of literature, a name, and a program of recovery. We were bi-coastal and on our way!

On April 28, 1961, Sybil, who worked at the General Services Office of Gamblers Anonymous, wrote to Ruth S. in New York, "I am enclosing letters from wives all over the country that ought to be followed up. Each letter has been processed and GA pamphlets sent, but I think correspondence with those troubled souls would help immensely ..."

She also invited a representative of the New York group to speak at the Gam-Anon meeting at the Third Annual World Wide GA Conference in Fresno (to take place in May 1961.) No New York member could attend, but the Conference was a huge success. The literature published by the San Francisco group was distributed. (The New York group sent copies of their literature, but it arrived too late for the Conference.) As Sybil wrote after the Conference, "Forty women came from all over the California area and we had three speakers from Northern California and three from Southern California. One wife was from Las Vegas, Nevada. I'm so glad plans are already being made for delegates from New York at next year's Conference."

LaVora V. writes that "The Southern California Gam-Anon membership began to grow and grew rapidly following this convention."

At about this time or shortly after, Wanda G. of the Downey, California group started a bulletin to help communication between all of the meetings. This bulletin was called Gam-Anews.

As Gam-Anon grew, the demand for Gam-Anews and literature increased. Gam-Anon needed a central location to facilitate communication between groups that were forming all over the country and in foreign countries. Members in Southern California, Wanda G., Rose R., and Kathryn P. filled that need. There was no real office, so they took turns meeting in each other's homes. These members would fill literature orders and prepare and mail Gam-Anews.

LaVora writes, "Moneys for the expenses of this office were from group contributions and fund raisers. There were book sales, house parties, dinner dances and garage sales in Southern California to raise these moneys." In late spring, 1964, LaVora began working in the Gam-Anon office. By that time it was called the Gam-Anon National Services. "I was pressed into service because I could type, knew office procedure and had a portable typewriter."

There were only 37 Gam-Anon groups in 1964. The constant growth of Gam-Anon was noted by the members at the Gam-Anon National Services who realized that the lack of legal status of the office would one day, have to be addressed.

In 1967 The Gam-Anon National Services office was still a rather loosely knit organization without legal status. The bank account was listed by the bank as a non-profit organization without government approval.

In August, 1967 it was reported to the membership: "We have consulted an attorney concerning the incorporation of the Gam-Anon Service Office. Like GA, we will be a non-profit organization with incorporation, and those who wish to do so may list Gam-Anon donations as tax deductible."

In the middle of 1969 incorporation was completed in the state of California and the national not-for profit status was achieved shortly after. Six signatures were needed on the final papers of Gam-Anon Incorporated for legal acceptance by the government. Local members in the Los Angeles area with the greatest longevity were called upon to fill this need.

The first Board meeting of Gam-Anon, Inc. was held in 1970. Elections were held and the Board was elected for a two-year term in accordance with the new by-laws. Gam-Anon elections for Delegates were held in other states and representation was obtained from coast to coast in 1972.

In 1978 LaVora V. was the current President, having served 13

years. The Board of Delegates recommended that the office be moved to New York where the largest membership existed, and the membership approved the move. In June, 1980, the office equipment and literature were moved to the Gam-Anon International Service Office, Inc. in New York City and the Manhattan office opened in July, 1980. The officers were: Executive Secretary, Ruth S. (a member of the first Gam-Anon meeting in N.Y.C.), Assistant Executive Secretary, Jean R. and Treasurer, Joyce S. These officers were elected for two-year terms. Ruth S. served as Executive Secretary until June 1, 1987 when the office moved to Queens, New York.

The International Service Office services the hundreds of Gam-Anon meetings throughout the world. The office publishes our literature, fills literature orders, produces the Gam-Anews newsletter, responds to requests for information about Gam-Anon and manages our website.

## NOTES