

**WELCOME TO THE FELLOWSHIP OF
GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS SCOTLAND**

NEWCOMER'S HANDBOOK

Gamblers Anonymous Scotland

**Service Office, St Columbkilles Halls, Room 3, 2 Kirkwood Street,
Rutherglen, G73 2SL**

Business Tel No: 0141 647 4673

Office Hours: Mon – Fri, 10.00am-4.00pm

Helpline 0370 050 8881 Open 24 hours

Website Address: www.gascotland.org

Email: info@gascotland.org

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**WELCOME TO THE FELLOWSHIP OF
GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS
SCOTLAND**

Dear Friend,

This was probably your first meeting Gamblers Anonymous and you may feel confused. The purpose of this letter is to explain to you that you are no longer alone. We, in the Fellowship of Gamblers Anonymous understand the feelings, emotions and problems relating to your life and can offer **HOPE**.

- **HOPE** that you can live a life without gambling.
- **HOPE** that relationships with family and friends can be rebuilt with your **EFFORTS**.

To achieve this, all we would ask of YOU is a little **FAITH!**

- **FAITH**, in your own ability to abstain from gambling: *One Day at a Time*.
- **FAITH** that the Fellowship of Gamblers Anonymous can help you to achieve these aims, as it has helped many Compulsive Gamblers similar to yourself.

With this comes acceptance of the facts about the illness of compulsive gambling, and acceptance that you can gain the confidence to improve the quality of your life and others who may be affected by your gambling.

We too came to Gamblers Anonymous with the same problems as you, and found help and understanding, which we trust you have found today.

A GUIDE TO STEP ONE

Having attended your first meeting of Gamblers Anonymous and read some of our literature, you will be asking yourself, “Where do I go from here?” You will have noticed the friendly and relaxed atmosphere within the room, and the attitude of the people free from the tensions you may be feeling at this moment. This did not come about by chance.

It’s not by chance that you have come to Gamblers Anonymous.
It’s not by chance that most members appear confident and happy.
It’s not by chance that they can help **YOU**.
It’s not by chance that most GA members **DO NOT GAMBLE**.

If it’s not by chance – then **WHAT?**

It is through the **12 Step Recovery Programmeme**, the first and most **important** being Step One:

**Admitted we were powerless over gambling,
That our lives had become unmanageable.**

The gambler is a person who turns into himself and the purpose of this step is to help open the gamblers mind and surrender part of the burden, lifting the weight and worry of the problem by sharing it with the Fellowship or another human being.

Looking at Step One means looking at yourself the way your life has been, the way your life is, and identifying and believing that the root cause of your problem is gambling.

Believe it or not, accepting Step One will probably be the most positive step you will take in your life. You will feel the freedom from the compulsion to gamble and have the freedom to enjoy the pleasures life has to offer without gambling.

RELAX, TAKE IT EASY, ONE DAY AT A TIME

HISTORY

The Fellowship of Gamblers Anonymous is the outgrowth of a chance meeting between two men during the month of January in 1957. These men had a truly baffling history of trouble and misery due to an obsession to gamble. They began to meet regularly and as the months passed neither had returned to gambling.

They concluded from their discussions that in order to prevent a relapse it was necessary to bring about certain character changes within themselves. In order to accomplish this, they used for a guide certain spiritual principles which had been utilised by thousands of people who were recovering from other compulsive addictions.

The word spiritual can be said to describe those characteristics of the human mind that represent the highest and finest qualities such as kindness, generosity, honesty, and humility.

Also, in order to maintain their own abstinence, they felt that it was vitally important that they carry the message of hope to other compulsive gamblers.

As a result of favorable publicity by a prominent newspaper columnist and TV commentator, the first group meeting of Gamblers Anonymous was held on Friday, September 13, 1957, in Los Angeles, California.

Since that time, the fellowship has grown steadily, and groups are flourishing throughout the world.

GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS

GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from a gambling problem.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop gambling. There are no dues or fees for Gamblers Anonymous membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. Gamblers Anonymous is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any cause. Our primary purpose is to stop gambling and to help other compulsive gamblers do the same.

Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real problem gamblers. No one likes to think they are different from their fellows. Therefore, it is not surprising that our gambling careers have been characterised by countless vain attempts to prove we could gamble like other people. The idea that somehow, some day, we will control our gambling is the great obsession of every compulsive gambler. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of prison, insanity, or death.

We learned we had to concede fully to our innermost selves that we are compulsive gamblers. This is the first step in our recovery. With reference to gambling, the delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed. We have lost the ability to control our gambling. We know that no real compulsive gambler ever regains control. All of us felt at times we were regaining control, but such intervals - usually brief - were inevitably followed by still less control, which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralisation.

We are convinced that gamblers of our type are in the grip of a progressive illness. Over any considerable period of time we get worse, never better. Therefore, in order to lead normal happy lives, we try to practice to the best of our ability, certain principles in our daily affairs.

THE 12 STEP RECOVERY PROGRAMME

1. We admitted that we were powerless over gambling - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to a normal way of thinking and living.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of this Power of our own understanding.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral and financial inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have these defects of character removed.
7. Humbly asked God (of our understanding) to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Make direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having made an effort to practice these principles in all our affairs, we tried to carry this message to other compulsive gamblers.

THE 12 STEP UNITY PROGRAMME

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon GA unity.
2. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for Gamblers Anonymous membership is a desire to stop gambling.
4. Each group should be self-governing except in matters affecting other groups or Gamblers Anonymous as a whole.
5. Gamblers Anonymous has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the compulsive gambler who still suffers.
6. Gamblers Anonymous ought never to endorse finance or lend the Gamblers Anonymous name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every Gamblers Anonymous Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Gamblers Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. Gamblers Anonymous, as such, ought never to be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Gamblers Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the Gamblers Anonymous name ought never to be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television, and all social media/digital platforms.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of the Gamblers Anonymous programme, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

WHAT IS COMPULSIVE GAMBLING?

The explanation that seems most acceptable to Gamblers Anonymous members is that compulsive gambling is an illness, progressive in its nature, which can never be cured, but can be arrested. Before coming to Gamblers Anonymous, many compulsive gamblers thought of themselves as morally weak or at times just plain 'no good'. The Gamblers Anonymous concept is that compulsive gamblers are really very sick people who can recover if they will follow to the best of their ability a simple programme that has proved successful for thousands of people with a gambling or compulsive gambling problem.

WHAT IS THE FIRST THING A COMPULSIVE GAMBLER OUGHT TO DO IN ORDER TO STOP GAMBLING?

The compulsive gambler needs to be willing to accept the fact that he or she is in the grip of a progressive illness and has a desire to get well. Our experience has shown that the Gamblers Anonymous programme will always work for any person who has a desire to stop gambling. However, it will never work for the person who will not face squarely the facts about this illness.

HOW CAN YOU TELL WHETHER YOU ARE A COMPULSIVE GAMBLER?

Only you can make that decision. Most people turn to Gamblers Anonymous when they become willing to admit that gambling has them licked. Also, in Gamblers Anonymous, a compulsive gambler is described as a person whose gambling has caused growing and continuing problems in any department of his or her life. Many Gamblers Anonymous members went through terrifying experiences before they were ready to accept help. Others were faced with a slow, subtle deterioration which finally brought them to the point of admitting defeat.

HOW DOES SOMEONE STOP GAMBLING THROUGH THE GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS PROGRAMME?

One does this through bringing about a progressive character change within oneself. This can be accomplished by having faith in - and following - the basic concepts of the Gamblers Anonymous Recovery Programme. There are no short cuts in gaining this faith and understanding. To recover from one of the most baffling, insidious, compulsive addictions will require diligent effort. HONESTY, OPENMINDEDNESS, and WILLINGNESS are the key words in our recovery.

IS KNOWING WHY WE GAMBLER IMPORTANT?

Perhaps, however insofar as stopping gambling, many Gamblers Anonymous members have abstained from gambling without the knowledge of why they gambled.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A PERSON WHO IS A COMPULSIVE GAMBLER?

1. INABILITY AND UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT REALITY

Hence the escape into the dream world of gambling.

2. EMOTIONAL INSECURITY

A compulsive gambler finds he or she is emotionally comfortable only when "in action". It is not uncommon to hear a Gamblers Anonymous member say: "The only place I really felt like I belonged was sitting at the poker table. There I felt secure and comfortable. No great demands were made upon me. I knew I was destroying myself, yet at the same time, I had a certain sense of security".

3. IMMATURITY

A desire to have all the good things in life without any great effort on their part seems to be the common character pattern of problem gamblers. Many Gamblers Anonymous members accept the fact that they were unwilling to grow up. Subconsciously they felt they could avoid mature responsibility by wagering on the spin of a wheel or the turn of a card, and so the struggle to escape responsibility finally became a subconscious obsession. Also, a compulsive gambler seems to have a strong inner urge to be a 'big shot' and needs to have a feeling of being all powerful. The compulsive gambler is willing to do anything (often of an antisocial nature) to maintain the image he or she wants others to see. Then too, there is a theory that compulsive gamblers subconsciously want to lose to punish themselves. There is much evidence to support this theory.

WHAT IS THE DREAM WORLD OF THE COMPULSIVE GAMBLER?

This is another common characteristic of compulsive gamblers. A lot of time is spent creating images of the great and wonderful things they are going to do as soon as they make the big win. They often see themselves as quite philanthropic and charming people. They may dream of providing families and friends with new cars, mink coats, and other luxuries. Compulsive gamblers picture themselves leading a pleasant gracious life, made possible by the huge sums of money they will accrue from their 'system'. Servants, penthouses, nice clothes, charming friends, yachts, and world tours are a few of the wonderful things that are just around the corner after a big win is finally made.

Pathetically, however, there never seems to be a big enough winning to make even the smallest dream come true. When compulsive gamblers succeed, they gamble to dream still greater dreams. When failing, they gamble in reckless desperation and the depths of their misery are fathomless as their dream world comes crashing down. Sadly, they will struggle back, dream more dreams, and of course suffer more misery. No one can convince them that their great schemes will not someday come true. They believe they will, for without this dream world, life for them would not be tolerable.

ISN'T COMPULSIVE GAMBLING BASICALLY A FINANCIAL PROBLEM?

No, compulsive gambling is an emotional problem. A person in the grip of this illness creates mountains of apparently insolvable problems. Of course, financial problems are created, but they also find themselves facing marital, employment, or legal problems. Compulsive gamblers find friends have been lost and relatives have rejected them. Of the many serious difficulties created; the financial problems seem the easiest to solve. When a compulsive gambler enters Gamblers Anonymous and quits gambling, income is usually increased and there is no longer the financial drain that was caused by gambling, and very shortly, the financial pressures begin to be relieved. Gamblers Anonymous members have found that the best road to financial recovery is through hard work and repayment of our debts. Borrowing and/or lending of money (bail outs) in Gamblers Anonymous is detrimental to our recovery and should not take place. The most difficult and time-consuming problem with which they will be faced is that of bringing about a character change within themselves. Most Gamblers Anonymous members look upon this as their greatest challenge, which should be worked on immediately and continued throughout their lives.

WHY CAN'T A COMPULSIVE GAMBLER SIMPLY USE WILL POWER TO STOP GAMBLING?

We believe that most people, if they are honest, will recognise their lack of power to solve certain problems. When it comes to gambling, we have known many problem gamblers who could abstain for long stretches but caught off guard and under the right set of circumstances, they started gambling without thought of the consequences. The defenses they relied upon, through willpower alone, gave way before some trivial reason for placing a bet. We have found that will-power and self-knowledge will not help in those mental blank spots, but adherences to spiritual principles seem to solve our problems. Most of us feel that a belief in a Power greater than ourselves is necessary in order for us to sustain a desire to refrain from gambling.

CAN A COMPULSIVE GAMBLER EVER GAMBLE NORMALLY AGAIN?

No. The first bet to a problem gambler is like the first small drink to an alcoholic. Sooner or later he or she falls back into the same old destructive pattern. Once a person has crossed the invisible line into irresponsible uncontrolled gambling, he or she never seems to regain control. After abstaining a few months some of our members have tried some small bet experimentation, always with disastrous results. The old obsession inevitably returned. Our Gamblers Anonymous experience seems to point to these alternatives: to gamble, risking progressive deterioration or not to gamble, and develop a better way of life.

I ONLY GO ON GAMBLING BINGES PERIODICALLY - DO I NEED GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS?

Yes. Compulsive gamblers who have joined Gamblers Anonymous tell us that, though their gambling binges were periodic, the intervals between were not periods of constructive thinking. Symptomatic of these periods were nervousness, irritability, frustration, indecision, and a continued breakdown in personal relationships. These same people have often found the Gamblers Anonymous programme the answer to the elimination of character defects and a guide to moral progress in their lives. GAMBLING, for the compulsive gambler is defined as follows: Any betting or wagering, for self or others, whether for money or not, no matter how slight or insignificant, where the outcome is uncertain or depends upon chance or 'skill' constitutes gambling.

**TO ALL GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS MEMBERS, PARTICULARLY THE
NEW GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS MEMBERS:**

Attend as many meetings as possible, but at least one full meeting per week.
MEETINGS MAKE IT!

Telephone other members as often as possible between meetings.
USE THE TELEPHONE LIST!

Don't test or tempt yourself.

Don't associate with acquaintances who gamble.

Don't go in or near gambling establishments.

DON'T GAMBLE FOR ANYTHING. This includes the stock market, buying or playing lottery tickets or raffle tickets, flipping a coin or entering the office sweepstake.

Live the Gamblers Anonymous Programme ONE DAY AT A TIME.
Don't try to solve all your problems at once.

Read the RECOVERY and UNITY steps often and continuously review the Twenty Questions.

Follow the steps in your daily affairs. These steps are the basis for the entire Gamblers Anonymous Programme and practicing them is the key to your growth. If you have any questions, ask them of your Trusted Servants and Sponsors.

Be patient! The days and weeks will pass soon enough, and as you continue to attend meetings and abstain from gambling, your recovery will really accelerate.

DEALING WITH DEBT

Although most of us in GA have come to realise that compulsive gambling is an emotional illness, we also know through our own experience that it causes major financial difficulties.

In the early stages of recovery in GA these financial difficulties can cause tremendous pressure on the newcomer and their family. In the past, before coming to GA our answer to relieving this pressure was to gamble heavier, borrow more and or resort to crime to finance our gambling. These actions resulted in greater pressure, larger debts and in many cases a custodial prison sentence.

GA members can give you advice based on their own experience and this can be helpful but if your debts are of a nature where you need professional advice, then that is what we advise you to seek. Take stock of your position. If you have, like many compulsive gamblers, ignored letters, hidden them, or not caring about what is actually in them, then now is the time to find out just how much debt you are in.

The first thing you must do is look at your income, take everything into account. Next thing you look at is your essential outgoings. Not the gambling debts; they are a separate issue. What we mean is, mortgage/rent, gas, electricity, house and car insurance, food, council tax etc. Remember you must separate your wants from your needs. For instance, a loaf of bread costing under a £1 to make sandwiches for work is far more economical than buying ready made sandwiches. Over the period of a month, the first option can mean £50 saved. Once you have done all this, make an appointment with one of the professional bodies. GA members will help you with this (there is a list at the bottom of this page). Remember these organisations will ask you to bring with you all your documents regarding money, including household debts and gambling debts. It is essential for you and your family's sake, that you don't hold anything back, as this will be misleading and result in further unnecessary pressure. We would strongly urge you to take this opportunity to begin a new and much better life gambling free.

Agencies where free Financial Advice and Support will be obtained –

**Citizens Advice Bureau
Money Advice Scotland
National Debt Line**

Ask the Office Bearers of your GA Group for more information.

TOWARDS THE FIRST 90 DAYS

FOREWORD

In coming to Gamblers Anonymous and genuinely seeking help, you have probably taken the most important step of your life up to this point. This booklet is designed to help you through your early days in the fellowship. In the pages following, you will find practical advice that has been tried and tested down through the years by many compulsive gamblers. All we ask of you is that you keep an open mind when you read through the pages of this booklet. Up to this point, your life (if you are like us) has been unmanageable, directed by your uncontrollable urge to gamble. The pattern your life has been following can only have the following outcome: misery, heartache, and financial drain for you and those closest to you. The Gamblers Anonymous way of life will obviously be very different to you. It may even frighten you. But we can assure you, the Gamblers Anonymous way of life will result in happiness, peace of mind and self-respect. All that is required is an open mind and a genuine desire to stay away from your next bet, one day at a time. We welcome you to Gamblers Anonymous and please, please, if there is anything you don't understand, ask someone to explain. You are no longer alone. Accept the hand of friendship.

WE LEARNED TO LISTEN

When we first arrived at Gamblers Anonymous, we believed that our main problem was the financial mess we were in. We knew that it was caused by our gambling and we also knew that money, or lack of it, was causing problems in other departments of our lives. Because of this thinking, we too, believed that if we could clear up the financial mess, everything would be all right again. Unfortunately, this was not the case. Though it helped to get our finances in order, this often proved to be the easiest problem to deal with, provided we were honest with ourselves and our creditors. Our experience has shown that, by the time we came to Gamblers Anonymous, we had picked up a number of character defects. It was virtually impossible to gamble compulsively without "lying, stealing, avoiding reality and escaping into a dream world, or sometimes indulging in all three". We have found that stopping gambling did not automatically rid us of these defects. Then we listened to learn how to rid ourselves of these defects. First, we must be aware of them and acknowledge them. This requires: Honesty with ourselves and in the meetings we attend. This is not an easy task and can be painful, but with the help of our meetings and sponsor, it can be achieved in time. We need to keep an open mind when we listen to advice, even if it is directed at another member. Finally, we must be willing to apply and act on the advice and make the changes that will be asked of us. By learning to listen, to know other compulsive gamblers have coped with problems on their road to recovery, we can learn to cope with the problems we will undoubtedly face on our road to recovery.

UNDERSTAND AND APPLY THE 12 STEP RECOVERY PROGRAMME

When compulsive gamblers read the 12 steps of recovery for the first time, their reactions can vary: (a) "It's an impossible task", (b) "I don't need to do all these things", (c) Most common, some are just so sick they don't understand what is being asked of them so they put it aside. Whatever the reaction, do not panic. When the higher power gave us the 12 Steps, he also gave us plenty of time and better still, he gave all of us the same time - the rest of our lives. We believe that Step 1 - "We admitted we were powerless over gambling, that our lives had become unmanageable" - is virtually a precondition for all the rest. Unless we can admit and accept that gambling has us licked, that there is no way we can win, we will struggle. The acceptance of Step 1 can keep people free of gambling on its own but, as has been said so often stopping gambling is not enough. So, our predecessors, in their wisdom, laid down the other 11 steps of recovery which will enable us to live normal decent lives and play our part in the society within which we live. Most meetings will, as often as possible, have discussions on various parts of the Gamblers Anonymous Handbook, all of which will relate to a particular step or steps. Try to keep an open mind during these discussions. There is a tremendous amount of knowledge and wisdom in GA rooms. It is not only available to all; it is given freely and unconditionally. If there is something you don't understand, or a step you don't know how to apply in your life, ask any member who has been around for a while. He or she will be happy to help you. Trying to apply the 12 steps of recovery to your life can be a beautiful thing and the rewards are many. It will enable you to know yourself better. It will set you at peace with yourself and fellow human beings. It will bring you serenity and allow you to manage your life with some dignity, self-respect and the love of your fellow man.

STAY AWAY FROM THE FIRST BET - ONE DAY AT A TIME

Stopping gambling was quite simple - do not place a bet. Simple, yes but not easy for a compulsive gambler. When suffering gamblers arrive at Gamblers Anonymous, the thought of never ever placing another bet is unthinkable to them. Until now, their hopes and dreams have been dependent on "the big win". Now these hopes and dreams are being taken away. Gambler Anonymous teaches us that we should try to live our lives: "one day at a time". So, it follows that we're only required to stay away from the first bet "one day at a time". We should not worry unduly about tomorrow, next week or next year. We can only live in the present. Today is all we have. We have to realise that we can do nothing about yesterday, or tomorrow, but if we have a good today, we will be a little stronger tomorrow. As the days free from gambling string together and we try to apply the 12 steps of recovery in our lives, the urge to gamble will lessen. Nevertheless, we should always be on our guard and try to be aware of complacency, any thoughts that may come into our heads that "gambling wasn't all the bad", that "maybe we are cured" or "maybe we were not compulsive at all - just unlucky". These thoughts are all symptoms of our illness and can lead us back to the miseries we have tried so hard to put behind us. These thoughts are not dangerous only to new members; they are just as deadly to any

member, no matter how long they have been gambling-free. Remember, the distance to our last bet may get longer and longer, but the distance to our next bet always remains the same - we are one bet away from disaster. If we don't make the first bet, we won't make the second. So, in the morning, if we say "I will not place a bet today"; and make it a good day, there is every chance we will be able to say it again tomorrow.

STOP LIVING IN THE PAST

Many compulsive gamblers struggle in the early days of their recovery, through looking back to their past, burdening themselves with guilt, remorse, money they have lost, opportunities they have missed, or lack of progress at work. Our experience has shown that if we are to recover, these things must be left in the past and we must move on. Guilt and remorse can cripple us. They are very close to self-pity. We must strive to replace them with the acceptance of responsibility, and make amends where we can. Money lost - we must accept that this money is gone. We have already spent considerable time and money trying to get it back, with no success. All we have achieved is more misery and more pain. Opportunities missed - if we come to accept a safe and more prudent way of life, we will have more opportunities, and if we are free from gambling and living a useful life, we will be able to take advantage of them when they occur. The old ones are gone; look forward to the new ones. Lack of progress at work - irrespective of age or ability, any member can become a better employee. Probably for the first time in years, we are able to concentrate on what our employer asks us to do. We can channel the energy we needed for gambling into our daily tasks, and then leave the rest to our own higher power. To sum up, our experience has shown us that if we care to embark on a new life, free from gambling and all the problems and misery that gambling generates, and then we must close the book on the life we are leaving behind.

FILL THE VOID

We are a few days or weeks free from gambling. Life has stopped getting worse. We are filled with hope and gratitude. Suddenly we find a huge hole in our lives - what do we do with the time that once was taken up by our gambling obsession? It is not an easy task, but one which must be faced. In the early days, few compulsive gamblers have a clear picture of how much of their time was spent on gambling. Most relate mainly to the time spent in casinos, card rooms, at the racetrack, or in front of a one-armed bandit. In actual fact this usually represents only a part of their gambling life. There is also the time spent in pursuit of money to feed the gambling, the sleepless nights trying to invent lies either to get money or to explain about money that has now gone. Lies to our employer as to why we were missing or why a job wasn't completed. Lies to our partners: as to our whereabouts. In fact, gambling dominated almost all of our waking lives. Now we must fill this void. Each member should try to find a way which suits him/her best, but it is essential that they do find a way. Some take up long forgotten hobbies. Some return to sports they once had an interest in. Some resume education (something that can be done

at any age). We also suggest that time is allocated to rebuilding family life or relationships with friends and relatives who suffered due to our gambling. These are just a few suggestions. We hope each member will make his or her own efforts to fill the void, and in doing so, will sustain and enhance their recovery.

ENJOY IT

Recovery from compulsive gambling is a wonderful miracle and every member's recovery is a unique and personal experience. The surest way to have a good and lasting recovery is to learn to enjoy it. This may seem like stating the obvious, but there are obstacles which, if we are not aware of them, can prevent us from enjoying our miracle. One is guilt: when life starts to improve for us, we sometimes let our minds wander to past misdeeds, and if we allow ourselves to dwell on these too long, we begin to think that we do not deserve to recover and these thoughts, if not spoken about, can have tragic results. Another is resentment: when we first come to GA, it is suggested that we make some very radical changes in our behaviour. Some we think are - impossible - unnecessary - or we just don't want to make them. However, in the early days we try them, and it works (we know it does) and we get some time free of gambling. Then the euphoria of being gambling-free fades, and if we have not learned to enjoy our recovery, we start to ask questions of ourselves; "Why can't I buy a raffle ticket?", "Why can't I watch a big race on TV?" We begin to think that the price of recovery is too high, and again this type of thinking can lead to tragedy. If we are to sustain recovery, instead of resenting the disciplines we must impose on ourselves, we should be rejoicing in the many rewards that are ours; self-respect, peace of mind, happy family life, etc. So, enjoy your recovery. If you feel guilty, kick it out and replace it with responsibility. If you feel resentful, think about all the people who have forgiven you and be thankful that you were picked to be part of the miracle that is the Gamblers Anonymous Recovery Programme. Go on, enjoy it!

ACCEPT THE ILLNESS FOR WHAT IT IS

Compulsive gambling is an emotional illness which can never be cured but can be arrested "one day at a time". 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. We compulsive gamblers often express a desire to stop forever, but inevitably we find ourselves back in action. For most of us there are days, weeks or even months when we are certain that we have gained control. These intervals invariably are followed by long periods of all-out uncontrolled gambling during which progressive deterioration in almost every department of our lives becomes evident. This deterioration is most acute in the relationships with our wives and husbands, friends, relatives, and employers. Therefore, acceptance of the progressive nature of our illness is vital in enabling us to recover and return to a normal, productive, and enjoyable life.

ATTEND AS MANY MEETINGS AS POSSIBLE

There is a saying in Gamblers Anonymous, "Meetings make it". You may ask yourself – make what? Recovery. Meetings make it easier, stronger, and better. The foundations of the fellowship are in its meetings. Through sharing our experience, strength, and hope, we believe we find the inner strength necessary to arrest our gambling on a daily basis. We suggest that in your first 90 days, you get as many meetings in as possible. Not because you need them more than we do, but because the quicker you come to terms with this illness, the better it will be for yourself. Also, on entering GA, you will see evidence of a lifestyle that is obviously very different from the one you have been living. The more you see and begin to understand this new way of living will be of benefit to you and your family. After their first 90 days, members usually settle down to a routine. This routine differs from member to member. Some will go to several meetings per week, others only go to one. The choice is yours, but we have found that most members go to more than one meeting. Each to his or her own and you will find a level that you are comfortable with. But remember "meetings make it".

ONLY CARRY MONEY THAT YOU REALLY NEED

You may find this hard to accept at this moment but, believe us, there is a very good reason for it. In your first 90 days you are still finding your way, still trying to come to terms with this illness and beginning to realise that money has uses other than gambling. During this period, we are very vulnerable. We have been made aware of the financial position we/our families are in, and it is so easy to fall into the old trap of believing once more that gambling will solve our financial problems quickly. This dream is so much easier to believe if we have excess money in our pockets. In our minds £10 becomes £100 very quickly, and £100 becomes £1,000 even quicker and, before we know it, we are back on the old merry-go-round once again. We have learned through experience not to put ourselves through this temptation and use the basic suggestions of GA and only carry money that we really need for that day. This suggestion serves another purpose for us. Many of us have put our families through really rough times. If our families can see that we are really making an effort and taking the basic advice, it puts their minds at ease and things in the home begin to improve. Again, through experience we have found that with the support of our families and of our Gamblers Anonymous meetings, these early stages in our recovery can be very pleasant and rewarding times.

ASK OTHER MEMBERS FOR ADVICE ON TACKLING FINANCIAL PROBLEMS

In most cases, it was financial pressures that finally lead us to seek help within Gamblers Anonymous. Many years of borrowing from banks, financial companies, friends, relatives, etc., create seemingly insurmountable problems. Initially upon entering Gamblers Anonymous, it is necessary to establish a sound financial budget which allows

you to pay off debts at a rate you can afford. Gamblers Anonymous members can be invaluable in helping you to work out a budget, as many of them have experienced the same problems. They can advise you on how much you can afford to repay. Trying to settle debts too quickly, causing further financial pressures, can lead us back to gambling. It is often surprising how quickly financial problems can be solved, allowing us to concentrate on the more difficult task of changing ourselves.

TELL YOUR PARTNER EVERYTHING

Another piece of advice we are given early in our Gamblers Anonymous life is to "wipe the slate clean", i.e. tell our partner everything. This can seem a horrendous task to the new member but, painful though it may be, it is essential that we take this advice and apply it if we are to recover. It is truly amazing how this illness can control us and warp our judgement. Many members have told us of how, when their gambling bubble burst and they were pouring out the terrible things they had done and the debts they had incurred due to gambling, they would hold on to one debt. The excuses vary from embarrassment, shame, forgetfulness or "I thought I could manage to pay it myself". We believe it is the illness keeping a hold on its victim. As long as a compulsive gambler has a secret debt, he or she is keeping a ready-made excuse to gamble. Our experience shows this to be true. Another reason for telling our partner everything is that, in the early days of our recovery we need someone to handle our finances. We will probably have a couple of members of our group to help work out a budget which, again, our partner will be expected to manage. But how can a realistic budget be planned or managed if all the outgoing money is not accounted for? Also, if the gambler is intending to pay off a hidden debt, then the income will have to be manipulated to pay it. It is very unlikely that this can be done without lies being told, and without honesty we cannot recover.

MAKE FRIENDS WITHIN THE FELLOWSHIP

Most members, by the time they arrive at Gamblers Anonymous, have suffered badly from the effects of their gambling. These effects can be many and varied, but one of the most common is a terrible feeling of loneliness. Through years of gambling we have put barriers around ourselves, isolating us from family and friends. We have come to believe that nobody could like us, let alone love us, and this feeling drives us deeper and deeper into our dream world. After a short time in the fellowship - if we are following the advice we are given - a bit of order comes back into our lives and our minds begin to clear. We come face to face with ourselves and we don't always like what we see. It is at this time that we need friends within the fellowship. People who have faced similar problems and hardships, people who know what you are going through, people with whom you can feel relaxed and comfortable, and nothing you say is likely to shock or embarrass them. When we stop gambling there is usually a great void in our lives. Friends in Gamblers Anonymous can help us fill that void. They can help us to rebuild our social life again and in the early days it makes it easier if we socialise in non-gambling company. Making

friends in Gamblers Anonymous can help you recover. It also carries the bonus that you can help another member to recover just by being a friend.

IF YOU GAMBLE, GET TO A MEETING OR USE THE PHONE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

Because our fellowship is made up of compulsive gamblers, it is inevitable that some will go back to gambling. Unfortunately, there have been occasions in the past when members have found themselves in this position and never returned to the fellowship. Whether they felt ashamed or had a feeling that they had let someone down or some other reason, it is obvious that something kept them from returning. Don't let this happen to you. If you slip and go back to gambling (and we sincerely hope you don't), get to a meeting or phone another member as quickly as possible. No one will look upon you as a failure. No one will say 'you have let me down'. We are there to help, not judge. It is a fact that GA meetings are full of members who, at some time, have gone back to gambling. They are the fortunate ones. Most of them are living happy, contented lives, free from gambling and the horrors that go with it. The unfortunate ones are still out there, gambling and suffering. So, if you return to gambling (and we don't apologise for repeating this), don't hesitate to get to a meeting or use the phone as quickly as possible.

TELL YOUR PARTNER ABOUT GAM-ANON, IT CAN HELP THEM

Has someone close to you suffered as a result of your gambling? If so, we would like to give you a little information on the fellowship called Gam-Anon. Gam-Anon, although separate from Gamblers Anonymous has very close links with Gamblers Anonymous in as much as its membership is made up of the partners, family, friends of problem gamblers; anyone whose life has been affected by another's gambling. Their suffering is quite different from that of the gambler. They have no control over our gambling whatsoever. In listening to Gam-Anon members speak, we have found that, in most cases, their mood swings depended on the outcome of their gambler's day and in fact, in a lot of cases, they become an extension of the gambler and sadly, in some cases where there once was love, there remains only hate and bitterness. Add to all this, confusion and a feeling of hopelessness, and you can see why they also need help. Gam-Anon won't stop you gambling but we have found, in our experience that it has been of help to have our partners recover and share in our recovery. When we attend Gamblers Anonymous meetings and our partner attends Gam-Non, we find better understanding and communication as we work our programmes and share in our recovery.

TWENTY QUESTIONS

Most compulsive gamblers will answer yes to at least seven of these questions.

1. Did you ever lose time from work or school due to gambling?
2. Has gambling ever made your home life unhappy?
3. Did gambling affect your reputation?
4. Have you ever felt remorse after gambling?
5. Did you ever gamble to get money with which to pay debts or otherwise solve financial difficulties?
6. Did gambling cause a decrease in your ambition or efficiency?
7. After losing did you feel you must return as soon as possible and win back your losses?
8. After a win did you have a strong urge to return and win more?
9. Did you often gamble until your last pound was gone?
10. Did you ever borrow to finance your gambling?
11. Have you ever sold anything to finance gambling?
12. Were you reluctant to use "gambling money" for normal expenditures?
13. Did gambling make you careless of the welfare of yourself or your family?
14. Did you ever gamble longer than you had planned?
15. Have you ever gambled to escape worry or trouble?
16. Have you ever committed, or considered committing, an illegal act to finance gambling?
17. Did gambling cause you to have difficulty in sleeping?
18. Do arguments, disappointments or frustrations create within you an urge to gamble?
19. Did you ever have an urge to celebrate any good fortune by a few hours of gambling?
20. Have you ever considered self-destruction as a result of your gambling?

God

Grant me the

Serenity...

To accept the things

I cannot change...

Courage to change

The things I can...

And Wisdom

To know the difference