



New Life

A journal of experience, strength
and hope in Gamblers Anonymous

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Gamblers Anonymous

England, Wales & Ulster

www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk

Gamblers Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who have joined together to do something about their own gambling problem and to help other compulsive gamblers to do the same.

This journal comprises contributions from compulsive gamblers who want to share their experience, strength and hope. The opinions expressed may not be those of the Fellowship.

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A note from the Editor

It has been some time since New Life went to print back in June 2020. I do apologise to all contributors for the delay in getting Issue 3 out to groups. However, a number of factors including the constantly-evolving situation under Covid-19, have combined to take the decision to pause production and wait until groups had begun their return to physical meetings.

I would like to begin by paying tribute to our former National Secretary Brian, who worked tirelessly as both a Trustee for the Southern Region and later as the National Secretary and member of Loughton GA group. I had the great pleasure to work with Brian and I am sure we all miss him dearly both as a friend and as a recovering member of GA. Brian was the gentlest of men and a true servant to the Fellowship. His passion and his patience were plain to see in all he did. We shall miss you Brian.

One of the positive outcomes from the lockdowns and restricted access to physical meetings, was that members from around the world linked together virtually. Whilst I appreciate these virtual meeting types are not for everyone, they do have a place in our mutual recovery. We may sometimes vary in small ways, but I was struck by the desire and the bonds that developed from those online meetings. In particular new members who were too afraid to walk into a room. The first story in this edition is a striking example of how good has come from a bad situation. Our primary purpose is to stop gambling and to help others do the same regardless of race, creed, colour, gender, sexual orientation and it is the aim of New Life to represent as many of these groups as possible and whilst gambling must remain the focus of this publication it must also seek to include all elements of our society. Gambling is no longer confined to the betting shop and many who would not cross such a threshold now find themselves alone and lost in gambling.



Finally, I am constantly aware of the members we have lost and I would like feedback on whether members would like to have a section 'In memorandum' listing the names of loved ones and friends who have passed on. Perhaps even a simple one line tribute. Many meetings hold a minute's silence for those who are still gambling and for those who have passed away. I leave this to the Fellowship and will react according to responses received.

Graham F

Editor, New Life and compulsive gambler



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When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help,
I want the hand of GA always to be there,
And for that,
I am responsible

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Anne Marie's story

My name is Anne Marie, I am a compulsive gambler, I haven't had a bet in nearly 3 years.

I am 48 years old. I became deaf from an illness at the age of two, while I can talk and communicate well one-to-one, I am totally lost in a group. I've struggled with my deafness all my life: making friends, going to school, I even dropped out of college because of it. Finding a job was twice as hard, I had to develop a lot of coping mechanisms over the years to help me manage.

I've been gambling all my life: we had card games for pennies in my house growing up, group bets on all the major races, lottery syndicates, bingo outings, and visiting the arcades places with the hypnotic slot machines on family holidays. It started off as a fun activity, but over the years it became more frequent and regular, my gambling gradually became a problem. It was also my escapism from the realities of everyday life that got dragged down by my deafness.

Things came to a head in 2018, I was totally broke, I owed money to my friends, my credit cards were maxed out, I had defaulted on loan repayments and was in serious trouble. I found it hard to accept I had a problem, so I decided to go to a local Gamblers Anonymous meeting for help and advice.

There I met a lot of empathetic souls who embraced me; with their patience, guidance and support I was encouraged to go to daily meetings for 90 days, eventually as my confidence grew, I came to enjoy going to the meetings and made some amazing new friends.

I would be lost in the mist of the general banter before and after the meetings – but the 'one speaker at a time' and the circle seating arrangements was really deaf-friendly – I was able to follow 75% of what was being said.



Then the pandemic came and everything changed overnight, at first it was sitting in a bigger circle, then came the compulsory mask wearing which I really struggled with. Thankfully my groups agreed on each speaker taking the mask off when sharing their therapy. Eventually the rooms had to close and everything got moved online.

When the online meetings started on Zoom, I was even more lost, the visuals wouldn't always be smooth for lip-reading and the audio would be out of sync with lip patterns; if the person had an accent – I was even more lost. Gradually I stopped logging onto Zoom and just linked in with members via text messages and the odd video call if the network was good, and they didn't mind me asking them to repeat if I didn't get it the first time! But my recovery was starting to get shaky and I was seeing temptation at every turn.

One day a member told me there was a Special Needs group, separate from GA, starting on Zoom, but I felt reluctant to join as previous experience mixing with similar groups was fraught as some people would have speech impediments making it even harder for me to follow them.

One night I contacted the organiser and explained my situation and he kindly offered to provide online close captions. I was stunned – I had never thought of using these to help me follow meetings! This amazing option changed a lot of things for me, and the online captions really help in GA meetings...

Today I attend several online GA Zoom meetings every week, with the help of the auto-generated close captioning option, and I follow them 80% of the time as the auto-generated captions can be incorrect but I get the gist of what is being said and I don't miss out any more – what I've gained is the ability to join in the social banter as well – and I love this!

I am grateful for the Special Needs group and the amazing people in them; they have opened up a whole new stronger world of recovery for me... I thank my higher power every day for this opportunity.





Dylan's story

My name is Dylan and I am a compulsive gambler.

I had my first bet when I was 17, unlike a lot of people I don't remember any exposure to gambling before this day. I remember walking into the bookies on my way back from the shops and picking a horse. It was only a very small bet but I won six time the stake. I remember thinking how easy it was and also how clever I must have been to pick it out, maybe I could see things in the form other people couldn't see.

I was 23 when I came to GA, so in total I only gambled consistently for six years, it seems an awful lot longer than that. Much of those six years is a blur but I can remember certain periods quite well.

When I was 19 my parents separated, this was a huge shock to me and affected me probably more than I gave it credit for at the time as we always felt a very strong close family growing up. At that time, I lived on my own in a bedsit for a few months. This was the darkest time I can remember. I gambled every penny I had; I was on benefits so this wasn't much but I did paper rounds and car washing to get extra gambling money. I never paid any rent or bills and rarely had food in my flat. I spent from lunchtime every day in the bookies until it closed even when my money had run out, I knew a few regulars and I knew if one of them had a big win they would chuck me a few quid so I just waited every day in the hope I would get another bet. Any time I spent in my flat I remember being very low and lonely, not many periods stick with me as much as this, I was so unhappy.

A year later, at 20, I went to university in Lancaster. I got my student loan, grants, a student overdraft, everything I could and it was the same story. I lost all of it, had to rely on friends to feed me and take me on nights out. I never paid rent on my halls. I can't even remember attending a single lecture, I was in



the bookies all day every day again. Just after Christmas in my first year I came home having been thrown off my course and out of my halls. This was very hard for me, I had made some very close friends in that short time, some of whom I am still in contact with, and I was low for a long time after I had to come back to live at home.

Over the next couple of years, I lived at home initially but eventually moved into a shared house with two of my oldest friends. We were going clubbing in Sheffield at Gate Crasher almost every weekend and although I know I was gambling I think this community gave me a place to be for a while and for a lot of this time I was happy. I remember going to Ibiza and Glastonbury and having a lot of good times that I'll never forget. I was at college and university for parts of it and on benefits at other times. I do remember during my first year at Sheffield Hallam which must have been 1998 I took out five different student bank accounts, each with a large overdraft which I would use to fund my gambling and clubbing.

In those days banking wasn't as sophisticated as it is now and I knew when I was close to my overdraft limit I could get cash back and it wouldn't show in my account until the following day. When it got to this time me and one of my gambling friends would have a whole night going from pub to pub getting cash back and playing fruit machines, we thought it was great at the time but it took me almost 15 years in GA to pay that money back. At the time none of this money was real to me, it was just a vehicle to feed my addiction. It's amazing how flippant I was then and how much hard work it would take to pay it back during my years in GA. The day I paid my last payment to my debt management plan was one of the most satisfying of my life.

There are two moments that really stick with me in these six years, not because of the amount of money involved but because I know how much they hurt the people involved. One was stealing and selling a very rare CD from my



brother's room which I knew he had saved up for a long time to buy. I think the money only lasted me a couple of hours and I lied and lied about taking it, but my mum and him must have known it was me. It always stuck with me and it wasn't until many years after attending GA that I found him a copy online and came clean and apologised properly. The other one was when my Granny came over and gave me money to get cakes for everyone from the bakery. I went into the bookies and lost the lot and was too ashamed to go home until I knew she would have left. She was always so kind to me and my brothers and I know how much this would have hurt her. I think when you hurt someone who you love and who loves you it really hits you how much you are out of control but still it wasn't enough to make me want to stop.

During this time I also met the mum of my first daughter and it was at this time I started to attend GA, as her mum was a recovering alcoholic for many years and she looked up GA in Sheffield for me and I agreed to go. This was towards the end of 2001, a few months before my first daughter was due. I don't remember my first meeting specifically but I remember my feelings for the first few, I listened and I read from the books and I talked the talk but I distinctly remember thinking that all I wanted was to gamble normally and that this was a vehicle to achieve that and I could learn enough to control my gambling. I would half do everything, giving up my card but not stopping carrying cash, not listening to advice about telling people, still watch friends gamble on fruit machines and quiz machines. My heart was never in it. I think in two years I never got much more than 90 days gamble free, I thought I was better than the people there, that I didn't need to stop.

In October 2003 that all changed and I learnt my first big lesson in GA. I was due to go to prison with a long-standing GA member, to attend a GA meeting. That morning I had arranged to get a hardship grant from University, a small amount, but I hadn't told anyone, not even my girlfriend. I went to collect it in person and cashed it immediately, it was the first opportunity I had



had to gamble a serious amount of money for two years. I remember like it was yesterday standing outside the bookies on West Street to phone my GA colleague and make some excuse that I couldn't go to the prison, I was back in my gambling bubble and nothing was going to get me out until I was done. I won a lot of money that day, more than I had ever won in my life, and I remember walking out of the bookies when it shut and going down to our local pub and sitting in the small room on my own. I ordered a pint and took all the notes out of my pocket and threw them on the table and phoned my friend, he got there and I was sat head in hands with money strewn all over the place in complete despair.

I felt sick, sick that I had lied to my friend and sick that I had thrown away the abstinence I had built up. I think this was the first time I had begun to understand what Step 1 was talking about. I was completely powerless. On top of that I had won the thing I thought I had always wanted, but still I wasn't happy. I think this was the point I realised that none of this is a financial problem, that my gambling was to escape emotions rather than to try and win the life I wanted, this was an important moment for me.

I went to Sheffield GA that Sunday and declared 23rd October 2003. I kept that date for eight years. Eight years! I say it again because I can hardly believe it myself. It seems ludicrous in a way because I never worked at it, I just abstained, I had very strict barriers and attended every week and kept my head down but I don't feel like I changed at all. During this time I met the mum of my youngest daughter and we lived together for most of these years. She never attended GamAnon and we never really talked about my addiction very much.

Eventually after around five years my attendance started to drop off. We thought we were doing the right thing having time together on a Sunday night but again it goes back to not listening and not working and not giving the addiction the respect it deserves. I think that is the second important lesson



I learned, that if I don't work at this addiction, every day, then it will get me. This is a lifetime thing, like it or not, and I had never realised that up until this point. When we split up in 2011 I went back to gambling a few months later and it was like I had never been away, I lost a huge amount in just a few months. I would then attend GA again and do a few months abstinence but would always go back. I lived with a heavy casino gambler for a year and we would gamble together heavily both at home and in the casino. My dad had to bail me out every time. I think I was very lost during this whole period, I was drinking and going out three or four times a week, doing drugs and gambling on and off. I was in self-destruct mode and other than when I had my kids at the weekend I was very unhappy. I think through this whole time, and many other times in the last 19 years, my kids literally saved my life; they gave me a reason to live and keep parts of my life together and I can't be grateful enough to them for that.

In September 2015, in the midst of this carnage I met Kayleigh, my current partner, while I was away golfing. I was gambling then. We talked about it and when I got back to Sheffield I was determined to stop properly to try and make this work. I had to go to my dad again and draw a line under it all. I went to the casino and self-excluded myself, I did the same at the bookmakers, I was more determined than I had ever been. In April 2016 we moved in together in Sheffield, but that summer I started gambling again. It was just small amounts that I could sneak out with but I was lying and causing arguments and all the old traits were coming back. In October that year I'd had enough again and I took Kayleigh to GA on a Sunday night. She didn't know where we were going and when I pulled up outside and told her she was understandably very upset. I just thought that was the only way to get her there and I needed her help. That was 30th October 2016, the same date as Peter. This meant a lot to me at the time and I worked so hard, attended two meetings per week, worked on the steps and my personality and Kayleigh and I had couple's therapy. I wanted to succeed so much. I actually felt like I was getting better for the first time in my life.



Eighteen months later, during the Cheltenham Festival of 2018 I started gambling again. I was devastated. I had no idea what I was doing but I remember telling Kayleigh I could control it, that I would only gamble a small amount per day, but would wake up at 7 sharp every morning to read the form and put my bets on before work and sit up until 4 am betting on baseball every night. That's three hours sleep. Every night! After a couple of months Kayleigh left (I honestly don't blame her) and I was completely out of control. I was completely lost. I was too ashamed to go into a GA room, something I had never experienced before. I honestly didn't know where to turn. Eventually I rang someone, something that I honestly think saved my life. I started therapy within a week. and after three to four sessions I went back to GA. He dragged me up from my rock bottom and made me see that I could do this, I could live. He also taught me probably the most important lesson of all, that I needed to remember to live. I had spent 17 years in GA focussing on not gambling, fighting my addiction but he taught me that I needed to concentrate on living and making my life better and that has changed everything for me. Addiction had robbed me of everything, money, friends, family but most of all self-esteem. This is what I need to work on, I need to learn to love myself again and to do that I need to become someone worthy of love.

If I think back to over the last 19 years it has been hard at times and some people may listen to this and question if GA works but I ask you this: Where would I be without GA? It's obvious isn't it, I wouldn't be here anymore. Simple as that! I may have gone back periodically but if you add up the gamble free periods of my life since 2001 it would amount to around 15 years and without GA I would never have had this. I owe GA my relationship with my children, my friends, my career. I owe GA my life.

So on 22nd July 2018 I walked back into GA to try again. This time has felt different. I now know I am powerless: I know that I need to keep working at this for my whole life, I know that if I don't it will kill me and I know that



I need to live. I am working on myself every day, working to understand the 12 steps and build the just for today program into my daily life. Me and Kayleigh are working on our relationship and none of this would be possible without all my friends in GA. I have so much support now in GA and I feel more at home here than I ever have before. I thank each and every person in GA who have stood by me for 19 years and has always been there when I have fallen. I can't say I will never gamble again but I haven't gambled today.

My name is Dylan and I am a compulsive gambler.

What's it like being part of the LGBTQIA+ family in Gamblers Anonymous in the UK in 2021?

I'm a lesbian, in my early 40s who has been in GA since crawling through the door of my first meeting, a broken and lost person, in May 2019 (I know, right, when meetings were in person!). My home meeting at that time was in a part of the UK that maybe does not, as a demographic, have the most enlightened views on LGBTQIA+ persons in a small, but loud proportion of the population.

But, it was the ONLY meeting available to me and it was a meeting or oblivion, and I'm so glad I chose the meeting.

The four guys that were sat in that room that night (it was a small meeting at the time) were AMAZING. I credit them with saving my life that night. I was open with them and felt no shame in disclosing my partner was female. I don't hide my sexuality, but it also felt safe to be able to do that. I can gladly say I received no special treatment either way, which is exactly what equality



is all about. I got the same level of help, support, guidance and fellowship as a straight woman or man.

Since the pandemic and with not just the rest of the UK, but the world opening up virtual meetings, I've got to experience many different meetings and many different styles of meetings. Hand on heart I can say all the rooms I've been in, I have been extended the same amount of fellowship as any other in that meeting. I've never been left wondering, "Was that because I am gay"?

Homophobia is still a very much an ugly part of the world and society in general. So, it is very rare to find such a large organisation or fellowship such as GA that doesn't have unwanted, hidden pockets of it somewhere. I can say that in the two and a half years that I've been in multiple weekly meetings I've never seen it, nor even caught a whiff of it. More than that, if I did, I have every confidence I can go to the people in the service positions in those meetings and that the issue would be dealt with proactively.

Not only have GA not discriminated against me or my orientation, but it also understands the need for all LGBTQIA+ to be embraced in meetings. I LOVE this! It shows a level of acceptance and understanding that is as enlightened as the programme itself. Just like it's important to have dedicated ladies only meetings. Same principle.

I have to add that in 'Ladies Preferred' meetings I have found the same acceptance, support and friendship. True sisters in recovery. I've found a fantastic sponsor, who doesn't care if I'm Lesbian or straight, just that I want to work the steps and recover from this illness. It simply boils down to this... what I am, or am not, does not matter. Gay, straight, bi, trans, non-binary, it really does not matter. It won't affect how I am treated in Gamblers Anonymous in my experience. What matters is that I am a compulsive gambler who has a desire to stop gambling.



Lots of Acton

Hello my name is Emil. I'm a compulsive gambler!!!!

I started gambling in 1967 and didn't and couldn't stop. In Feb 1983 I picked up a phone and rang the GA helpline number. The voice said "How can I help my name is Len..." (He was on duty at that time). The voice had a reassuring effect on me because he listened. I also did phone duty as well in later years.

So here I am some 30 years later...

It took me some time to make that call... "Well finger to mobile... " I'll do it tomorrow..."

I finally made the call and promised to my friend I would go to a meeting.

So here I am! Also I just read a recent edition of New Life... which also prompted me to write my story. 'Lots of 'ACTON' I decided to put the 'I in Acton'.

My very first meet was Acton Feb/March 1983. Len K was there. He knew as soon as he saw my face why I was there.

Doctor Jack was one that sticks out in my memory we met in London. He was a wonderful man, blue blazer, cravat and a flower button hole. It was at the meeting in Marylebone. He said to me he 'was lady luck's lost lover'. It made me smile. Some new members had been asked to speak.

They left the room instead... Jack said "Let's hope they return!"

Someone once shared saying something like... 'you have but two choices tomorrow, one to gamble... I thought how strange! What was the other one... not to gamble!



I am the problem, not gambling! I would say to myself, “who’s in charge of my feet?” I was. So I’d say “Feet NO!” I would always say to a new member “Who is in charge of your head? Some alien being? No, the answer is inside you!”

My new life is a real go. I have had a thirty year-plus journey of travelling the recovery road and I have met some wonderful people All come and gone!

You couldn’t make up some of the stories. Lots of tears and laughter. I’m glad to say I am still here, to be a member of GA... the journey continues...

May our paths meet.

From Braintree and Bocking... ‘still rocking’

Essex

Come and share... we care

Regards

Emil

Compulsive Gambler



Four years on!

By Stephen C, Ballyfermot
I am a compulsive gambler.

I came to Gamblers Anonymous (GA) just over seven years ago. I agreed to go to GA at the request of my family. I went without a fight only because I thought that, come Judgement Day, it would help the judge to not send me to jail! Despite destroying my career, wasting all of my money and then some, I honestly believed that I did not have a problem with gambling.

Just four days before attending my first GA meeting I broke the news to my wife Mary, telling her that I had stolen a sum of money and that I was going to hand myself into the Gardai. My partner was devastated with the news and felt we had been living a lie since we met, nevertheless her instinct was to fight and try to keep me out of prison. Mary called all of our family to let them know what had been going on and to ask for their help. Ultimately, all of the family were too hurt and devastated by the situation to offer me any help, if anything they were so angered they would prefer if I would just go to jail and stay there. My mother hugged me only to whisper 'I was a bastard for doing this to my kids'.

My first GA meeting was very strange, I sat there with the perception that I was better than the people in the room. I had previously formed the opinion that compulsive gamblers were sad individuals that spent their days running in between the bookies and the pub, spending their dole money living a sad lonely life. It was amazing how much I could relate to what was being shared in the room about how these people felt and what they had gone through. Nevertheless, I left my first meeting convinced that I did not have a problem with gambling but I returned to a meeting to keep Mary happy and to get a break from all of the stress that was at home (stress I had created).



Thankfully Mary went to GamAnon; there she learned that things could get better and that I need never gamble again if I accepted the help of the 'lads next door'. Hearing this gave me strength, I knew that Mary was under pressure from all of her family to leave me but felt that if I worked hard that there was a chance that she would stay with me. It was important to me that we stay together because we had a young family and I loved them dearly.

I realised I would have to work very hard to have any chance of staying in the family home as one special member of the family that wanted me out was my then 12-year-old daughter. Naturally, Mary felt it was vital that she protect her family from me and my addiction. Thankfully Mary made the decision to give me ONE chance on the condition that I never gamble again. This condition scared the shit out of me, how could I possibly live without ever gambling again? I wanted to stay with my family but a life without gambling scared me.

I knew I had to work harder and ask the rooms for more help. The more I opened up in the rooms the more members supported me, I know now that they helped me because they had been in my shoes and gone through the struggles I was going through.

After many months of recovery, I realised how bad my situation actually was. I came to realise that I was a sad lonely person who ran from work to the casino and then to work spending all of my hard-earned money! I ultimately became suicidal at the height of my gambling and thought that the only way to stop the madness of what I was doing was to do away with myself. I could not do it how could I possibly leave the family that I loved so much behind? The fact that avoiding self-harm was such a struggle gives me the shivers and shows me that I was a lost soul struggling. I now no longer struggle alone I share my life with my family and members.

Seven years on I am free of a bet living in the family home as part of the family and many of the people who turned their back on me are now



back in my life and respect that I was very ill when I did what and respect me for working hard to turn my life around.

My addiction made me a theft and I did end up in prison for a period of time and I am very grateful to have that part of my life behind me. The support that GA offered me and my family during this particularly rough time was immense and went a long way to make me and my family appreciate and respect the support that is available in GA. Also, by not gambling I have not stolen since coming to GA and therefore I am no longer a theft.

GA has been beside me every day and held my hand through a lot of tough times but what I am most grateful for is the fact that I was able to find the strength to fight this terrible addiction (with a lot of guidance). Today I have the tools to protect myself and continue to improve my life with the help of GA and the 12 Step Recovery Programme. I have found great friends and support in the rooms and know they will never let me down.

I have often thought about what one thing could I say to someone so that they could find what I have found. The best I can come up with is 'stick with GA'. However, so far I have not been able to find any wise words that would convince a compulsive gambler that they should stick with GA. The want in me to stick with GA happened gradually by staying away from a bet, attending meetings and the more my head cleared the more I realised how much gambling controlled me.

Now the more my life improves the more precious my recovery is and the more important it is to me to keep trying to do the right things so that my head stays safe.

Thanks for reading



Back to Basics

My name is Steve and I am a compulsive gambler.

The date of my last bet was 11th May 1996 and I am an incredibly grateful member of GA. I am even more grateful that I have started to regularly attend meetings again after going missing for the last few years.

What prompted me to return was that just before last Christmas, I was standing in a shop queue behind a lady who was buying 30 national lottery scratch cards and, all of a sudden, and, after over 23 years without gambling, playing a scratch card seemed like a really good idea and I started to become obsessed with the idea of playing all the different versions of the scratch cards in the shop, with it being irrelevant whether I won or lost.

Fortunately, before the obsession turned to compulsion, I was returned to sanity with my overriding thought being that at certain times I have no mental defence against the first bet and that I needed to up my game and strengthen my spiritual defence by; going to regular meetings, listening to the stories of other gambling addicts, and being of service to help other people which stops me being so self-centred and self-obsessed.

I feel blessed that I have been welcomed back into meetings in Aldgate, Darlington, the Soho Recovery Centre and a number of meetings online during the Covid-19 shutdown. It has been refreshing to be back in recovery with fellow gambling addicts and living the life that is on offer to everyone in GA.

Though not laying on a bet one day at a time is the main thing in my life there is a whole lot more on offer in GA than just not gambling. With the help of a sponsor and suggestions from other fellows the 12 Step Programme of Recovery offers me a route, via a spiritual awakening and a psychic change, to attain emotional sobriety by providing me with the tools to remove



all those things that prevent me from finding and having a relationship with a Higher Power.

My experience is that though my material life has improved considerably during my years in GA, recovery is not really about external success but, essentially, it is how I feel about myself. Other fellows have given me hours of their very valuable time to share with me about self-care, self-love and how to pragmatically live a spiritual life as faith without works is dead.

The consequence of all the help I have received is that it is alright to be me, it is ok to be Steve the Geek, it is ok to do the things I do, and say the things I say. Not everybody I meet, both in and out of the rooms, are going to agree with me, but the fact is that other people have the perfect right to hold and express opinions that are different to my own and I can still be friends with those people.

Finally, I love the fact that GA has allowed me to change so all the damage I caused to my family, friends and colleagues with my behaviour when I was gambling (and ,on occasions, in recovery) doesn't define me as a person. What defines me now is how I act and treat people today which has allowed me to become my true authentic self and ,for that, I am truly blessed.

I am Steve and I am a compulsive gambler.



Charlie's story

My name's Charlie and I'm a compulsive gambler.

I've been in and out of GA meetings and in and out of gambling for nine years. Although for periods I have managed to stop myself from gambling I have always returned. My last bet was on the November 11th 2019. I'm fortunate enough that my sister controls all of my banking. When I told my sister, what had happened I tried to downplay the fact and the amount I gambled with the word 'only', she picked me up on it and said "it IS a lot of money." Which it is to anyone, myself included, but to a compulsive gambler that's lost ten times that amount it's nothing.

The amount I gambled that week wasn't important. It was the same sick and ashamed feeling I had when I'd lost a great deal in one session. Gambling has ruined my life for nine years. I've put it before anyone and everyone in my life. During those nine years I've destroyed and lost relationships, friendships, reputation, jobs, I dread to think how much time, money, respect, but most of all I feel like I've lost the feeling of being happy.

It's ironic that my last best fell on Remembrance Day because I can't remember the last time I felt genuinely happy with my life. I've had good times, but it's always been temporary and since my gambling started around the age of 17-18 I don't think I've genuinely been happy all the time I was gambling.

Now, despite my past actions I still have a girlfriend, a family that loves me, great friends and a career I do well in. What's not to be happy about? There would have been times when I would gamble and I would win. I often won big, before inevitably losing it quickly after – but I think that's a big part in me not being happy. I've never found anything to match those highs of when I would win. I used to think "Is there any better feeling in the world



then winning a big amount in a day or a few bets?" There should be and I often hear people at GA talk about the feeling they get when they look at their children or grandchildren and they describe it as better than any bet they ever had.

I adore my girlfriend and my family and don't get me wrong when I turn up at her door with flowers or something she isn't expecting and I see the smile it puts on her face it's a great feeling... and that's cost me a small amount in comparison to my gambling. If I'm cheap on the flowers. Yet does it give me the high I got when I won a big amount on a bet? No. And I spoke about it recently at a meeting that I think I'm missing my replacement to gambling.

However, for every high I ever had in gambling, there was a low. God knows there was some lows. Stealing money out of the safe from one employer, gambling the days banking at another, stealing from an old girlfriend, selling my father in laws belongings to have a small amount money to gamble with, lying and cheating people into lending me money – often making ridiculous excuses as to why I needed it to fool or guilt trip them into sending me money, giving my bank details to customers to transfer their car deposit rather than the companies details, hacking an old girlfriends PayPal account and clearing every penny of her savings out, being sat at Harlow Mill train station saying goodbyes on text and notes on my device telling loved ones I'm sorry for taking the cowards way out, being picked up by police whilst on the verge of taking my own life, getting pulled over and done for driving without insurance by the police because that's money I could of spent on gambling rather than insure the car I'm driving, my own mum wanting to get me sectioned to help me get shot of this illness, going weeks, months without seeing friends as the few quid I would of spent on a beer is a few quid I could be gambling with, maxing out every lending opportunity I could – taking out payday loans and forging my mums details



for a guarantor loan when I couldn't borrow any more, cheating my best friend into being a Guarantor and not being able to pay it back leaving him with the debt, sitting outside convenience stores late at night planning to rob them for my next day of gambling.

Luckily, I never went through with the ultimate escape and I have since paid back all my debts – but I could tell countless stories of desperation from when I was at my worst with gambling. Stories and things I've done that my parents and loved ones would be appalled at. Things that I'm appalled at and for anyone who knows me would think I'm having a laugh or I'm talking about a different person. But this is what gambling did to me and does to others. It turned me into. A liar, a cheat, a thief. It's not the person I really am or the person I want to be. I hate gambling and what it's done and is still doing to my life.

I struggle to be honest with letting go of the past and accept what has gone is gone. I have to move on and let go of the past.

I always made my gambling addiction out to be a joke with my friends only gambling isn't a joke to me. I hate gambling. I hate my inability to control my gambling. When I'm worried about money or any anxieties in my life - I gambled and made things worse. I felt like a fool and I was never going to beat this illness. It made me feel worthless, my confidence is on the floor and that I didn't deserve the things I have in my life. My sister told me this week to look how far I've come – clearing all my debt,

I now have my own flat, a lovely girlfriend and a bit of money behind me. And she's right, I do have a lot to be proud of for turning my situation around but it hurts me that there's still things I can't change, I've slipped recently and it had an effect on my life. I can't even talk at meetings most weeks without having some form of panic attack and having to stop for a few seconds to settle my breathing. It isn't normal what this has done to my life and the



fact that there's people in GA that understand this and have gone through similar situations and understand is very comforting. Something had to change. A fellow GA member said "stop talking the talk and start walking the walk!" and that's exactly what intend to do.

My name is Charlie and I'm a compulsive gambler.

Regards

Charlie, Harrow

Nothing to Lose, But Everything

Arriving in recovery was a sobering experience in more ways than one. Multi-addicted; deluded and determined to use my best endeavours to sort myself out. The good news was that my 'best endeavours' were not needed; in fact they were barred. It was these that had got me into the mess of alcohol and substance addiction; the overlying symptoms of a heavily addictive personality.

I was invited to have an open mind; honesty and willingness; and with the help and support of professionals; fellowship and the 12 Step Programme of Recovery I have tread the path of recovery ever since.

Not however the end of the story; because once I put down those momentarily primary addictions; earlier obsessions reared their ugly, and expensive heads. Gaming; gambling in any form; with just as much gusto as I displayed with any drink or drug. A very expensive french farce of spinning; and breaking plates!



Even after many years of experience in fellowship and with awareness of peccadillos; I 'sensibly' sought to invest in stocks; shares and crypto.... What a show that turned out to be; it brought me to my knees; the jumping off place when the only option was to make the supreme sacrifice; to let go of the idea that somehow some way I would beat the game. The only way to win was to surrender; which I do on a daily basis; to the concept that I can drink; smoke; snort; game whether socially or sensibly. I can't; it all leads to the same place – jail; institution or death!

Damion

Compulsive Gambler, UK

8 years off a bet! 27/10/21

I sit here today very emotional (Yep, I now have my emotions back!), my last bet was 27/10/13, following that I crawled into the rooms at the age of 31 years old. I was desperate, it got worse and worse. It got progressive (It says it in the book but I didn't listen first time in GA), I had to find out for myself, silly move! I upset more and more friends and family, lost more and more money. More and more lies, to everyone around me, more and more manipulation and more and more letting people down and generally feeling rubbish, useless and unworthy.

I lied to everyone, let everyone down daily but the biggest lie I told was to myself, I said I was ok on a daily basis when I wasn't. I manipulated myself so much to settle for less because that meant I didn't need to change or put effort in! Can you blame me? I didn't know where to start.



What a big mistake. I let myself down in a big way between the ages of 21 to 31-years-old! If only I had of listened when I entered the rooms of Slough GA at the young age of 21-years-old. It took me 10 years of misery, 10 years of more damage, making my hole deeper and deeper before I listened and changed! I had to admit defeat, lower the ego and understand I know very little. My way got me here, it wasn't going to solve my problems, it created them.

It's an amazing feeling being able to understand and accept I don't have all the answers and I don't need to have. It's a lot easier nowadays to say "I'm wrong" or "I need help" or "I'm struggling".

GA, what an amazing programme for a compulsive gambler. It has all the answers, I just need to follow it and not manipulate it to suit myself! I tried counselling, hypnotherapy, doing it my way and failed time and time again.

For the last eight years I have trusted the GA Recovery Programme and I haven't bet and I do believe I am recovering. Will I ever be recovered? No chance! This is a one day at a time programme that keeps me well. I took the 'I' out if Illness and replaced it with 'We' and I got 'Wellness'.

That is exactly what I needed, others around me, a sponsor, the opportunity to sponsor other members of GA. I am no longer alone! It's a great feeling.

I really had to graft though, staying off a bet wasn't going to solve all my problems. I was way too damaged for that to be the answer... I had to work harder than I ever had to understand myself, break myself and build myself again. The Steps were the answer for me. I didn't just read them, I worked them! My sponsor saved me massively, never let me cut corners, supported but in a tough way (I needed that, no manipulating him!!!) and I began to get well. Through the steps, wrongs were corrected, resentments eliminated,



I could start again. Nothing of my past to hold me back. I had to throw myself into GA so deep that I couldn't get out. Go to different meetings, call members, sponsor, be sponsored, do service, treasurer, secretary etc., set up meetings. Go to the AGM and Southern Region meetings. Do the Steps meet, write the Steps and help take others through the Steps. All these things have helped me stay in the fellowship for eight years and help me get well.

My sponsor recently told me I have to look out for something that hasn't even come yet. COMPLACENCY, and I am. I cannot afford to get complacent; I will go backwards. If I don't fuel my recovery daily my addiction will fuel me! It needs constant effort and I am grateful for that chance.

As previously mentioned, I have let everyone down in my life. I have two young sons, Rico (4) and Lorenzo (2). I DON'T WANT TO LET THEM DOWN AND I HAVEN'T, YET!

So I just have to keep doing what it says in the literature and live my recovery 1 day at a time.

Today I sit here a changed man who has made progress, I shall never be perfect, and have lots more to change and improve but I am going in the right direction and I can look myself in the mirror daily and be proud of the boyfriend, son, father, GA Member and friend that I have become. It is possible if I put in daily effort to live a good life, I just have to remember to fuel that recovery daily!

Just for today I will not gamble.

Anonymous



The Twelve Steps of Recovery

When compulsive gamblers apply The Twelve Steps of Recovery in their lives, disintegration stops, and unification begins. These steps are basically spiritual in their concept and their practice can be highly rewarding. These are the steps which are suggested as a programme of recovery:

1. We admitted 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. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.



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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 practise these principles in all our affairs, we tried to carry this message to other compulsive gamblers.

No one claims these steps are in any way original to GA. They reflect practical experience and application of spiritual insights, as recorded by thoughtful people in many ages. Their greatest importance lies in the fact that they work.

They enable us and thousands of others to lead happy, productive lives. They represent the foundation upon which our society has been built.

They were given to us freely, for which we are grateful.



Poetry Corner



**My name is Louise and I am a compulsive gambler.
My last bet was on the 6th May 2016.**

My A to Z Therapy

- A** Accept I can never gamble again. I never thought this would be part of coming to GA. I was numb, upset and still thinking of dying after my suicide attempt. How was going to GA going to help me with all my issues?
- B** Believe that I could change. That happened very slowly for me. I've never considered myself quick on the uptake or should I say wasn't. I am bloody good at it now though. The power of the mind over matter works for me. I believe I can change with the help of GA and recovery.
- C** Climbing the 12 Steps of Recovery has been a big wake up call to me to change and become a better person.
- D** Decisions. I can gamble if I want to; I choose NOT to.
- E** Evolving. That's what I do by coming to meetings. If I don't learn something new I haven't been listening.
- F** Family & Friends. They have been deeply hurt by my actions. Friends help you make it along the way. I have a lot more real friends since coming to GA.



G GA... I have a life worth living now. Before I had nothing. I was an empty shell pretending to be alive. Now I am loving it in what I feel is a beautiful world. The rooms mean everything to me.

H Happy. That's me! Every day I smile. I have to make myself believe this is really happening to me. Some people think I'm going nuts! I wish they could be as happy as me.

I Illness. Gambling is an illness for me and I have had it for years, but now I am recovering.

J Jumping for joy at every opportunity! Life is amazing now.

K Kicking my own arse daily just as a reminder to stay on the straight and narrow!

L Loving the person I have become. I needed to like and love the person I have become to move forward from all I have done.

M Money. I am managing my debts now and they are reducing. I thought money would make me happy. I was totally wrong. Being gamble-free gives me so much more than gambling ever could. My mother has put up with a lot over the years. I am so grateful she understands and I have the chance to give her some good years looking ahead. I will never be able to say sorry enough to her.

N Never wanting to go back to the old me and the empty shell I was.

O Opportunity for me means seizing the chance to enjoy new positive experiences. I have had many in these last four years and I grasp them with both hands!

P My personality has changed completely. Hiding the real me was so painful and emotionally draining. Sad on the inside, but apparently happy on the



outside. Being honest has allowed all the positivity to shine. What people see now is real.

Q Questions. I had so many questions when I stopped gambling. Who was I? How do I say sorry to those I've hurt? How do I make amends? I have done many small things like baking, gardening; all small, but I have done what I can because I want to make amends.

R Recovery is a lifelong journey.

S Seeking others and leaving self to last.

T Truth. I don't lie anymore. I always tell the truth now because one little lie for me could turn into something massive. I have learnt the hard way. Stealing and covering up with lies became the norm for me. Now I would rather tell the truth and feel crap than lie and hide the problem.

U Understand that I am powerless over gambling and I can NEVER go back to it. To do so would destroy me and all I have now.

V Void is something I had in my life for quite a long while. I shut out everything whilst I was gambling and when I couldn't because I had no more access to money, a void was all I had. Now I fill my life with things like swimming, music. I even engage people properly and listen properly to what they have to say. I don't have that void anymore; I will always find good things to do and enjoy.

U is for up. Life still has its ups and downs for me, but with recovery the only way is up.

W I never realised how much willpower I have. It was not easy for me to stop gambling, but I wanted to change and that gave me the determination and willpower.



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- X** X-rays would have shown my heart as black and as hard as coal.
 - Y** Years I can never get back the lost years, but I can make sure I don't lose the rest.
 - Z** Zzzzzz's are something I can do now. No sleepless nights.

.....

It Made Me Feel Broken

It made me feel broken, but no bruises to show
 It's a hidden addiction many have it and don't know
 It said it's okay it won't be that bad
 Surely you will get lucky and not be so sad.
 However, is malicious and told me a lie
 So evil indeed that it wants me to die.
 Round and round in circles I spin
 Thinking it will be okay I just need a big win.
 So much time I've wasted often in such despair
 And get more money to feed it as it wants me kept there.
 I looked for some help and what did I see
 Such warm welcome faces listening to me.
 They spoke of the journey their experience and hope.
 Showed me a programme they threw me a rope.
 I've clung that rope with all of my might
 Taking a day at a time or even a night.

Anonymous



In Lockdown

There's nothing new under the sun they say, but that can't be true
of this year
12 months living a different life, 12 months of living in fear
But a gambler in recovery, is used to these evil games
The feelings of worry were always there, they just had different names

I was **locked down** for 30 years, trapped inside myself
I didn't have **freedoms** that others did, I just desperately chased
the wealth
And I **locked down** all my feelings too, a necessary task
It wasn't just from March last year, that I have **worn a mask**

I couldn't let my loved ones in, I couldn't share my trouble
I had to do things on my own, I had formed a lonely **bubble**
How could they help if they didn't know?
How could they offer assistance?
I had to keep them at arm's length, I had to **socially distance**

And **self-isolation** was normal for me, burying my head in the ground
Shielding others from the world I was in, screaming without making
a sound
30 years of **quarantine**, not knowing how to say
That I am feeling so, so sad, and I felt it every day

But as a new dawn approaches, and optimism's rising
There's a **vaccine** for the world to take, better times on the horizon
I got my **vaccine** in June 2019, a vaccine called GA
I will always need a boost jab though, and I'll need it every day



And if daily I improve myself, it's clear enough to see
That progress not perfection is good enough for me.

Yes progress not perfection is good enough for me.

Steven Hereford

My First 100 Days

It's the end of July, my life is a mess.

Jo knows I've been gambling and I'm starting to stress.

She has no evidence, she doesn't know shit.

I've been clever this time and she can't make it stick.

I've covered things up and hidden it well.

There's no way she found out, she's blagging it I can tell.

So she points the finger of blame and says its just so

I stand up and moan that's she having a go.

But with no evidence to give that I've done any wrong.

I wonder how long she can sing this same song.

I walk out the room with a huff and a puff

But I know that she's right and I've lied here enough.

I say that it's true, and I feel like a dick

But she sits there all calm and ideas start to click.

"You need to sort it, how about GA",

"Ok I'll go for a meeting but I don't think I'll stay".



My first meeting comes round I don't want to be there,
A room full of strangers who don't really care.
But how wrong I am, it's actually cool,
I'm not on my own these guys aren't all fools.

They listen so carefully and give good advice,
I think I'll come back again they all seem pretty nice.
So week after week I abstain and have hope,
That this illness is solvable and I think that I'll cope.

The guys in the group do all that they can,
To keep people from gambling I'm becoming a fan.
So I'll start on the programme and aim for recovery,
No doubt it will be uncomfortable on this path of discovery.

But once I get there I know I'll be fine,
and this illness will end and my life will be mine.

100 days in and it's going real well,
I'm in this for life and I hope they all can tell,
That despite all my issues and my strange behaviour,
Who would have thought that GA
Would turn my life around and become my saviour!

**Chris J.
Strood GA**



A Knock at the Door

One day I heard a knock at the door
It sounded familiar
Like I'd heard it before
It promised I have the answers if you are ready to play
So I grabbed my purse
And gambled away

To start it was easy I didn't spend or lose too much
But soon life took a turn and with reality I lost touch
Before I knew it, I'd become addicted
Losing my money... oh so predicted
Each time I got paid I'd gamble away
Payday lenders watching waiting like prey

I paid them in coins, blood, sweat and tears
Eaten up by anxiety, stress and fear
I once was a normal mother and wife
But soon became someone full of deceit
Juggling, manipulating cheat upon cheat

There once was honesty... replaced by lies
In a room full of people my life was lonely
Whilst laughing with family... Christ what a phoney
So I gambled much more to escape the feeling of dread
It was hard sometimes not to wish I was dead

I fed my addiction in secret like most addicts do
I told not him, not her, what would I do,
I kept my secret buried within
But who could I tell, where to begin



Then I found Gamblers Anonymous and my new family grew
These people all strangers, just got me, they knew
They knew how I'd suffered
They knew where I'd been
And do much more
They let me be me

Anonymous

The Garden

There was a large gate that stopped entry to the garden
For all those it blocked I do beg your pardon.

The weeds, bushes and brambles grew evading my sight.
They were so out of control that it blocked out the light.

To even think to clear it was so daunting a task
It often drove me to an alcohol flask.

Which in turn only made the garden get worse,
I started to think it was under a curse.

I now understood it was too much for me,
but it could be accomplished by the power of "H"

Slowly but surely it started to snow,
Which weighed down the branches,
It was time for them to go.

People came to my aid from all over the world,
Their hope and experience is a treasure to hold.



After a while it started to clear,
The light had returned on all I hold dear.

There is still daily work that has to be done,
But now I get to it, I no longer run.

There's hard and soft landscapes that need constant care,
So unless I maintain it, I had better beware.

For some weeds and more brambles are just out of sight,
Their growth can excel in the day or overnight.

But with regular work with the help of a team,
Now it's becoming what was only a dream.

Anonymous

In This World

In this world...
Few people are gamblers,
Very few are compulsive gamblers,
Even fewer find the door to GA,
In GA, few stay the course...
Are you in or out?

**Nas, West Country
NGTR**



Fine

When the parking ticket came,
I hid it in my shame,
I knew I'd be to blame,
for it was me who'd parked at Lidl,
five hours straight without a piddle,
a chicken drumstick in the middle,
but shopping was not my aim,
instead like a moth is to a flame,
I saw fortune I would claim,
just by opening an app
I'd put an end to all this crap
as fast as fingers I could snap
and life then would never be the same
and my usual exclaim
of having no pennies to my name
could be over in a flash
as I was sure to win big cash,
I'd transform from being trash
and return to great acclaim
for what I had became,
and the ticket I would frame
but of course I didn't win,
I'd thrown my stake into the bin,
defied my kith and kin,
they'll no longer save my skin
from the mess that I am in;
before addiction life was tame;
before blackjack was 'my game'.



I always wanted more,
a never happy bore,
but then I crossed the line,
and recovery was mine,
and now I'm happy with 'just fine'.

Thanks
Andy

From a Distance

Depression from a distance, on eyes looking in,
A faint smile from afar, on a mind living in sin.

Words barely spoken, nothing hardly said
Sunrise in the morning when you can barely leave the bed.

Another day to face, the challenge lays ahead
Surrounded by people's happiness yet yours is never read.

Addiction's got the upper hand and taken on this man
This is called suicide on an instalment plan.

But you can't let it beat you,
You can't let it win.

The odds are stacked against you
But you're aiming for the pin.



The loneliest place in the busiest town
I have to get through this and turn the smile round.

Depression from a distance, on eyes looking in,
I'll work the steps properly and leave the old life in the bin.

Dan, Orpington

A tribute to Sally Rose

June 21 1922 – October 18 2020



**The “white gloves lady”
who helped save thousands
from gambling addiction.**

Many members will remember Sally Rose, a stalwart of GamAnon, who passed away at the age of 98 in October 2020.

New Life wishes to add its own tribute to a remarkable lady.



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.



Contact Details



Call our National Information Line on
0330 094 0322

There are Regional Information Lines for members in the north of England and in Ulster:

North West **07974 668 999**

North East **07771 427 429**

Ulster **(028) 7135 1329**

Meeting Details

We have a full list of meetings online. Meetings are free to visit and attend. To find out where your nearest meeting is, visit:

www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk

Visitors to Scotland can find meeting details at: **www.gascotland.org**

Visitors to Ireland can find meeting details at: **www.gamblersanonymous.ie**