



# 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](http://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

Every year that passes for a compulsive gambler without a bet is essentially a good year, but within that time he or she will have fought and won many personal battles. The mantra ‘one day at a time’ still holds true, but in the modern world of gambling it can be as little as one moment. This edition of New Life includes all types of gamblers from the betting shops to all forms of online gambling. Much is happening both inside and outside the GA Fellowship in terms of recognising gambling as a problem and the mental health issues often associated with it. Some of the stories may be heart breaking, but the writer is speaking what they feel and that is important to recognising the illness within.

Many different outside agencies have contacted GA within the last year both asking for help and for information about the Fellowship. Many of our members have multiple addictions and the experiences are often similar. The struggle will never end, but this edition of New Life is partly a celebration of those who stand against addictions in all its manifestations. New Life now also goes out to prisons and GA members holding meetings there have seen copies of the magazine during meeting visits. Additionally, conventions like the most recent in Scotland, continue to enrich and empower the experience of the Compulsive Gambler.

I am hoping that future issues of New Life will contain contributions from members across the fellowship. Stories and poetry that reflect the struggle many face with this addiction.



**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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# Contents

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|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Note from the Editor ..... | 4 |
|----------------------------|---|

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## GA Recovery Stories

|  |    |
|--|----|
| My fourth breakout .....                                     | 8  |
| Addiction – 90 days gamble free .....                        | 11 |
| My name is David and I’m a grateful recovering gambler ..... | 13 |
| When all hope was lost, strangers cared .....                | 21 |
| DVLA and GA .....  | 24 |
| 13th February 2017 .....                                     | 25 |
| Returning to GA – talking to my addiction .....              | 26 |
| My Open Meeting experience .....                             | 27 |
| Never safe .....   | 28 |

---

## Poetry Corner

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Keep it Straight, Keep Going Forward ..... | 32 |
| Moving On .....                            | 33 |
| No Need .....                              | 35 |
| This Mortal Coil .....                     | 36 |
| A Wheel that Spins .....                   | 37 |
| End of the Year .....                      | 38 |



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## **My fourth breakout 18th December 2021**

No one's fault but my own. I didn't use the tools from GA I've been shown and got lazy with meetings, I didn't pick up the phone when members called, then I wonder why as I cry and I moan.

These tools are so simple and can do so much anyone who needs them. It's within my touch and if I think I don't need them that's when the addiction comes alive. It buries my recovery and work, leading to the inevitable. Addiction runs through my veins giving me a feeling like no other, but also gives the worst kind of pains.

I'm a competitive person and I like to win. Breaking out, slipping back into my addiction feels like I am failing and all my hard work gone in the bin. Failing in recovery isn't an option for me anymore and I don't want to go there. I want to breakout, but I know my addiction will live in me forever. Other members are proof that if you play it carefully not even clever it can be silenced, but it does take work, time and effort. There's no fast tracking this if I want to live through my prime.

Meetings make it! That is so true. I missed two weeks and my addiction stuck back to me like glue. Invasive thoughts that had left me for a while came back. A reminder when I get those thoughts pick up the phone and dial for help. This breakout feels like the hardest yet and though I wasn't left with loans, unpaid bills or debt it gets harder mentally every single time. Feels like I'm back at the bottom and again. I must climb out. It's how I feel inside and the feeling of letting others down that I don't want. I want to cause people to smile, not frown as they watch me slowly drown, I would be lying if I said I hadn't thought of leaving GA, but I know I'll end up in the river, gutter or prison, or worse.





Gambling led me to desperation and to these rooms. I need to use them and start to extinguish the fumes It's a long road ahead and I have a lot of work, but it will all be worth it for what I get in return and the perks I want a simple life with a clear head. If I continue to gamble, I have no doubt I'll end up dead. So for me its death or the programme; it really isn't hard. Time to stop running and let down my guard, use the Orange Book, speak to members in the rooms. Put in the time and let the recovery work. It doesn't have to be gone; I need to see this as a step forward.. Show me next time I'm in that position to plan ahead and prep This is my 4th breakout since returning eight months ago I don't want a 'well done' for coming back though If I put in the barriers and work, I wouldn't break out. I question myself, am I even dedicated or even cut out for this?

All I know is I that I want this so bad, but the pain from breakouts is hard to deal with and makes me mad. I'm angry at myself and it's made me feel like a failure. I feel weak, but I'm proud I'm here saying this. Letting you hear me speak. I know I should be doing better, working the programme properly, but I don't seem to be working it consistently. There are big changes I need to make and I have the answers. I just need to stay alert and awake. I felt judged this time and that hurt a lot. I felt bad for doing something that came so naturally by pressing spin on a slot.

I have friends in the rooms and I know that they care, but I haven't tried to hide it like some sordid affair. I've owned up and said what I had done. I didn't carry on gambling for days and after a few hours I snapped out of it and ran. It would have been easy to pretend like it didn't happen at all, but that's not me and I'm not just going to sit on that wall. I know going back there is a dark lonely place. I'm not on my own here and my addiction is something



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I have to face. There are moments of the day when it hits me. I try Codeine, gear, I've got lots to keep at bay. I'm trying and f\*\*k me it's hard. Things I've done and been through have left me emotionally scarred, but they are only scars and wounds heal as reminders of how strong I really am and feel, I hope.

I want this to be my last breakout, but can't say for sure. Like we all know there is no cure. I have a choice and my choice is recovery I have a lot of work to do and own self-discovery. So I'm choosing this, I won't run and flee. I'm doing this for no one except for me Just for today I can say I'm gamble free and just for today, that's good enough for me.

**Jordanne, Beaconsfield**



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## Addiction - 90 days gamble free

Another night of madness, no sleep and a big loss I was left feeling empty and hating myself because of something I felt I could boss I wasn't bossing anything, in fact it bossed me Kicking my ass, eating away destroying me financially, mentally and emotionally.

Gambling had been my life for many years, helped me temporarily forget my problems but also helped cause my tears In action, I thought I knew happiness but it wasn't real. Constantly worrying, not even saving enough money for my next meal I wasn't addicted to winning it was so much more.

It Allowed me for a short while to escape my problems through an invisible door. None of it was real and it was a dark lonely place. Forever battling with myself but all anyone saw was a happy smiling face I had become master of allowing people to see what I wanted them to, but what they were seeing wasn't me and it certainly wasn't true I no longer recognised myself, lost myself in the process of it all, created never ending problems for myself sometimes big, sometimes small. I was addicted to gambling, the chaos and pain. It felt like that's all I deserved and I was the only one to blame.

I hated that something I loved had become a problem I could no longer control. I struggled to accept I had a problem and it continued to darken my soul. I had attended GA many years before and didn't take it seriously, I got a big win and walked out the door. I regret not staying but I wasn't ready for it then.

Six years later I picked up the phone in desperation to try again, six years of damaging myself even more. A lot more guilt, hatred and resentment towards myself than I had all those years before. But I had to hit the bottom to allow me to break through.

Six years ago I wasn't broken enough and didn't have a problem, or at least that was my point of view.



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After leaving, a member from Uxbridge continued to message me, sending me inspirational quotes, not giving up, trying to make me see. This lasted for many months and even though I ignored him he did not stop messaging even though he knew the chances of me returning were slim, I blocked him in the end, at the time he was saying things that dampened my mood.

But six years later when I needed help, he's the first person I pursued. He instantly replied, got me back to a meeting. I went to Beaconsfield Wednesday and got an unbelievably welcome greeting. The Tuesday group has become my home, a place I respect, can be truthful and never made to feel I'm on my own.

The people in this room are some of the strongest people I know. Fellowship has brought us together and we encourage each other to progress and grow. We care about each other deeply, if you don't reply to messages we will pester – unity at its finest, unity at its best. I've met lifelong friends and built relationships with people who understand I'm no longer running or burying my head in the sand.

I can't put into words how eternally grateful to GA and members I am. It saved me from drowning and instead, I swam. There's not a day goes by I don't speak to a member. But addiction lives in me, I can never get complacent and that's important to remember. I've buried my addiction and for now it's silent, but I know it can return at any time just as ferocious and violent. I'm aware I'm still in the early days on my journey I have a lot of work to do for myself and my recovery. But I am worthy.

It's been a roller coaster of emotions up to now. But I let myself feel, continue to move forward and plough I still miss gambling despite what it took. Instead of giving in when I get urges, now I refer to the orange book. The book can guide and give advice But I need to put the work in, the books designed purely as a helpful device I've lost weeks, months and



years gambling in my prime. Now I value moments, appreciate life living one day at a time.

Gambling was my best friend, yet took everything from me. Gambling is no longer my best friend, is now firmly my enemy. Giving up gambling, I felt like I was grieving, but every single struggle has been worth it for what I am now achieving. Ironic, the thing I used to escape and help give me that feeling of freedom and peace is the one thing I needed to eliminate and make deceased. I never believed I could stop gambling ever. Accepted that it would eventually put me in a hole in the ground. However, today I can sit here and say I am 90 days gamble free, no one could be any more proud of that than I am, of me.

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## **My name is David and I am a grateful recovering compulsive gambler**

Up until I was nine years old, I'd had a seemingly normal child. Both my parents were together and I had three older siblings, two sisters and a brother who were 10, 11 and 12 years older than I was. My parents were religious and they would take me to church each Sunday. I was very close to my mother.

My father was a workaholic and was often angry and would shout and hit out a lot towards my sisters to keep them in line. I was afraid of him. He was considerably older than my mum and as I got older, he settled down. I remember I was a nervous child I was agitated easily and full of fear of what others thought of me and my family.



When I was nine, my mother started taking us weekly to a seaside town for the day. One day, whilst on one of the trips, I was in the amusement arcades and my brother who was 21 at the time decided to try one of the fruit machines there. I asked for 10p to try one too and he let me. I climbed up the machine as I was too small to reach the slot. I put the money in and had a spin.

Something happened to me that day. It felt electric, the sounds, watching the reels spinning in anticipation, I felt like I had been taken away somewhere, like I had opened the wardrobe and discovered Narnia. One thing I knew was, whatever it was I wanted more of it. I become obsessed with the machines, I wanted nothing more than to be around them, even without money to play I could happily watch others play for hours, days even. I felt comfort and safety in those places. As time passed watching and spending the little amounts, I could get my hands on wasn't enough anymore.

When I was 12 my brother died. I didn't know how to handle it so I pretended it didn't happen. We had been very close. When I was 13, I crossed a line. My mum had sent me to the bank for a small amount and a receipt. As I approached the bank the thought came to me – what if I take the money and then do it again and take the second amount to play the machines? I felt guilt in the pit of my stomach and I knew it was wrong.

But then I thought, well, I'm using this money to win more and when I do, I will pay back mum and more so really it benefits her that I take this. This was the beginning of my descent into increasingly dishonest and selfish behaviour to maintain the wonderland I had discovered. I left school at 16, having passed my exams somehow, I had done no studying whatever as all I cared about was getting money and getting to places to play my beloved machines.

I decided to take a year out and decided that I would further my education the following year. I had arrived. I could finally stay in the arcades all day until they closed and I did. I often manipulated and stole and squeezed my family for money most days especially my mum, which had become an art by now.





After a year of this, at 17 I tried to go back to college. I lasted a few months whilst skipping classes to go to the machines and generally not putting any effort in.

I flunked out and decided that I didn't want to study or work. I would become a professional gambler. After all I had 8 years of experience already. I was super smart. I would find a way to be rich from this. Of course, I didn't get rich. The same patterns continued and as I got older, I started getting anxious even when I was gambling. Feelings and emotions of all sorts were starting to arise. I was jealous of friends who had jobs and girlfriends and here I was at 20 years old with nothing. I found the world of online poker and things started to look up. I got 'good' at it quickly and started getting good money. Now I could play poker and use the money to gamble on the machines too.

This worked for a while then when I was 23, I was so low and so isolated and depressed I had had enough. I decided that my problem was that I needed a partner in my life and that would fix everything. I was already quite a hard drinker at this stage but infrequent. I decided to hit the bottle as it gave me confidence to go out and face the world. Without it I could barely leave the house I had no social skills what so ever and I was afraid of my own shadow. The plan was to meet the woman of my dreams then I could stop this lifestyle and live happily ever after.

The next three years my mental health got worse and worse. I would go out on Friday to Sunday and drink round the clock and try and meet someone. Each unsuccessful attempt left me in so much self-pity I would often curse myself for not being good enough for anyone and throw away what money I had in the poker in anger. This went on and on, I hid in the house gambling through the week and then went out again at the weekend.

When I was 26, I finally met the woman of my dreams. She had every quality I could hope to find in another human being. We fell head over heels for each other. I felt like I was in heaven. She even accepted me as a poker



player which no one had ever done before. I thought that I had found a life of happiness at last. How wrong I was. After sometime when things began to get serious in the relationship my anxiety and fear where steadily increasing.

I was now drinking almost daily and I was often building some money on poker then throwing it away again getting nowhere. I decided that the answer was a part time job. I got a job as a support worker for people with learning disabilities. For a short time again, I was on cloud nine. I felt worthy of this world. People were bound to love and accept me now that I had an important job and a partner. I stopped playing poker for a time and things started getting even worse. My anxiety had reached an all-time high. I was making frequent errors in my work and I was drinking to cope every chance I got.

One day a 'poker friend' asked me how I was doing. I said I wasn't playing anymore. He offered me some money to get me started and I accepted it. It had been a few months since I had played. I all of a sudden felt peaceful again and focused. I started building money again and everything seemed to improve. My work was much better and I got engaged. I felt powerful, I was buying people drinks at work functions, taking my partner to restaurants and acting the big shot cocky as can be.

I was looking down on everyone around me thinking how great I was that I could get money at the drop of a hat and all these guys were wasting their lives away working for nothing. Of course, this didn't last. A few months later I lost the lot. I had saved money for the wedding and I got access to that and spent it all. I had a breakdown and took off sick from work. I was never to return.

I went to the doctor for the first time in my life at 29. He put me on anti-depressant medication. I didn't bother with that though I just decided to keep drinking. Around this time online slot machines were becoming a bigger and bigger thing. I had stopped going to arcades as the stakes where much too low to enjoy it.





I started to play online slots. I was entranced. The wins where huge and the music and gameplay took me to that place when I was nine. I was so hooked it terrified me. After many losses, a steady deterioration in my relationship and lots of money stolen from my family I decided enough was enough.

I had to stop. It never occurred to me that I couldn't though. I got married at 30 at which stage I had managed a few months off gambling. My mental health was a mess and I had got to a stage where I couldn't even face going to the shops for fear of panic. I got an email from a casino with five free spins. I played them and got nothing, moments later I was throwing what money I had in from my bank until it was all gone.

I was bewildered. Did that just happen? I cursed myself so much and I wrote a note saying that I swore on mine and my family's life to never place another bet. This lasted six months with my drinking and panic getting worse day by day. I started to get a little better or so I thought. I went on holiday for a few nights with my wife to a hotel. On the second day we went to a bar for lunch so I could drink. I saw a fruit machine there. I didn't play it and thought nothing of it at the time. After we left, I felt the overwhelming desire to go back in and play. I lied to my wife and off I went round this strange town gambling in every bar I could find.

The next day I felt utterly hopeless. six months gone and I hadn't even considered the consequences. The online gambling continued and along with my drinking my wife got more and more worn. My behaviour was getting more and more abusive as I just continued down this path of destruction. I was started to get suicidal after losing sessions.

My wife was putting so much into taking care of me that she had become a shadow of her former self. Eventually she couldn't take anymore and she decided to temporarily separate to work on her own health for a while as her mother was also very ill at the time. That was to be the end of my marriage.



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I moved in with mum and my destructive gambling reached new heights. I got hold of my mother's card one night and stole thousands. I was only stopped as the bank intervened. I just wanted to die but I didn't have the courage. My sister wanted me locked up but my mum just couldn't do it. I finally decided that I needed serious help and went to GA.

I was so full of fear when I arrived but once I sat down and heard the stories, I was getting so much identification. These people knew me and knew me well. There was talk of God and being in the program for life both of which I didn't like so much. As much as I enjoyed the meeting, I figured I would leave these religious people to do their own thing. Besides from what I had learned I knew that I couldn't bet so it was simply a matter of not starting. Not long after I was in the house looking for something and I found quite a lot of cash in a wallet in the drawer. I took it and lost the lot.

My mum was living in fear that I would find her cards, she was hiding them in different places each day. My family were afraid of me. All I cared about was playing the slots nothing else mattered now. One day my mum went on holiday, I was playing slots with my benefit money and had just lost it. Desperate and alone I searched the house aimlessly looking for cards or money or anything. What I found was much more than that. In an address book in my mum's drawer was the details to her online bank account. I tried it out and got in.

I remember the feeling of pleasure and rubbing my hands together I had literally found the motherlode. The person that deep inside would have told me this was wrong don't do this David had gone, for the first time I was in the presence of my illness in its full manifestation. I wanted all this money gone. I started to spend and spend with impunity. Then a miracle happened. My bank decided that there were too many transfers going into my account and stopped it. I was stopped by force. The next day I managed to get enough courage to tell my sister what had happened and get the bank



codes out of my hands before it was too late. I believe today that a God of my understanding gave me that courage. That turned out to be my last gambling spree.

I went back to GA. I gained some abstinence and then as my drinking progressed, I ended up at a rock bottom. I was finished. I just couldn't not drink and gamble. I had to accept that I was defeated. I got a sponsor who explained to me that working the 12 steps of recovery was my only hope. This I accepted totally. I learned that I had been very sick bodily, mentally and spiritually. I learned that I had an obsession of the mind that would always lead to the first bet.

Once having placed the first bet I find it virtually impossible to stop. This gave me relief as I had always thought I was just weak willed not powerless. Once I had accepted the physical and mental conditions, I suffered from that kept me gambling all those years I was willing to go to any lengths to get better. I had no choice. I had tried everything. For me to bet again was to die.

Upon the acceptance of my illness and as I went through the work with my sponsor, I could feel things beginning to happen, my sponsor had been where I was and had relayed stories by the dozen of his gambling escapades. He was able to laugh at himself about some serious crimes he had committed to get money to bet. He had since amended all these and in all honesty, I couldn't picture him gambling at all let alone doing the things he was describing. He was calm, collected and I felt safe and free to open up around him which I'd never felt before except in those early days of gambling. From then things just got better and better.

I truly did come to believe in a power greater than myself. If my sponsors story was true, then there was no doubt that no human power could have restored him to the way of thinking and living he was exhibiting. I handed myself to my creator in step 3 and I really felt like I wasn't alone anymore.



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I was able to look deep within myself in steps 4 and 5 and realise that I am powerless over everything, gambling was just a symptom. I had been full of resentment towards the world and its people. I had lived a life of intolerance, fear, selfishness and self-seeking. I was looking for something on the outside to come and fix me when I really needed to look deep within for the solution. I admitted my wrongs to a God of my understanding and to another human being.

Throughout this process wonderful things began to happen. My fears fell from me. I all of a sudden was becoming interested in the wellbeing of others. I was able to look people in the eye for the first time. I began to make new and true friends who genuinely cared for me and my wellbeing. I began to make amends both financial and living to the people I had harmed especially my family. I have regained my families trust through my actions and today my mum and I have a great relationship.

She can leave her cards and purse anywhere today without fear. I knew that none of this could have come from me. When I tried to control things gambling or otherwise, I always ended up with less control. When I gave up control and allowed God in, I had a peace and contentment I had never known. Today I live a life of use and purpose in the fellowship, I try to give freely what was given to me to another compulsive gambler. I try to treat everyone with kindness, tolerance, patience and love. The 12 steps and a higher power in my life have given and continue to give me the power to carry out this new way of life.

I have been lifted from certain death and placed into a life I never knew possible. When I look back at all this now as I get further along in recovery, I realise more and more how insane I was and where gambling took me and would have continued to take me. I was living a delusion and seeing everything through the eyes of a sick mind. In that sense what God



ultimately does for me on a daily basis is help me to see things just the way they are. When I see things just the way they are life is a miracle.

As long as I continue to keep close to God and perform Gods work well little miracles continue to happen in my life all the time. I am truly blessed for what I have received and God continues to guide me each day to help others through the steps and find their own higher power. I love this new way of life and I wouldn't trade it for all the money in the world.

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## When all hope was lost, strangers cared

### **Rhys, compulsive gambler**

Imagine an empty ditch, a ditch in the ground, its dug but totally empty. There is a small trowel on the side next to the huge pile of earth that has been dug up. Imagine this ditch is my gambling room of choice, the casino, bookies, our living room, bedroom wherever I spent the most time gambling. It looks nice and empty so I decide to lay in there comfortably alone with plenty of room and it's easy to get myself out, no risk, no harm, just somewhere to relax and escape for a little while

After a little while I entered that room of my choice. I was having a look around and I decided to place a small bet, it wasn't detrimental to me, a small sum placed for a bit of fun whilst I pass the time, a bit longer out of the house to relax and enjoy the race or whatever it was that I placed a bet on. The bet lost and because it did a small trowel of earth is placed inside the grave near my feet, I hardly noticed it as it didn't affect me in any way so I went on with the day.



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The next day I placed another bet which lost, a small trowel of earth was again placed near my feet in the ditch and again I hardly noticed it, and just moved on with my day. This continued to happen. A few months passed by and by now I had been gambling daily, gradually upping my stakes as I went. I was at the point where the earth has covered my feet and bottom of my legs up to my knees. I had noticed that the bottom of my legs were covered but I quickly got it out of my mind because if I need to get out of the ditch it won't be an issue at all, still easy to get out no problem.

As each day passed, I gambled more and more, and started to have arguments with my loved ones, I spent less time with our families and friends. My performance started to dip at work and I was not in control of my life anymore. but I thought to myself, it's OK I know I can get out, I can stop the chaos and break free whenever I want, I'm just not ready to stop yet and I can handle it, I can afford it I am fine I tell myself.

Some more months passed by and I had been spending almost all of the time in my place of choice. The earth was now all the way up to my chest and only my head was uncovered. Now suddenly relationships had been crushed, huge debts, more time wasted, even less productive at work, lies, cheated, deceit, anger, frustration, discomfort, chaos, life had become extremely difficult to manage, but it's OK I tell myself; I know no matter what I could stop.

A few more years pass by and my gambling got worse than ever, I managed to keep it at bay for a short time cutting back slightly and telling myself I could moderate it and get it under control. On the hamster wheel stuck in the repetitive cycle of gambling, borrowing money, mounting debts, financial pressure and pressure at home. Then it went downhill, worse than ever before.

The arguments are horrendous I had broken everyone's trust, no one can help. Family and friends, everyone has had enough. I was totally alone



and isolated; telling myself this is just who I am I can't change, I am a gambler, I always have been there's nothing I can do about it. I can't pay the bills, my significant other is going to leave, we are going to lose the house, the kids don't have everything they need.

I briefly assess my current situation and come to the conclusion and tell myself, fuck it, nothing is going to get better anyway. I'm too deep too far gone, I might as well carry on and bang I am fully submerged in the earth, every single inch of me is covered. The thing I said I would never do, the lengths I said I would never go to, the risks I said I would never take is here, I've done it. In my mind at this moment No escape is possible, family can't help, friends can't help, what can I do? How can I possibly get out?

Somehow, I found a huge amount of strength and I managed to push one arm through the earth, this was my last gasp attempt to escape the pain, suffering and misery that I had caused everyone including myself. I had gone so far that I could only get an arm out and full escape is seemingly impossible. For a long time, I have been living a life of quiet desperation. And it's at that very moment I reached rock bottom. I somehow managed to reach out my hand or in this case walk through doors of GA and the room that has given me my life back.

If I ever think to myself, shall I go to the meeting, or it'll be OK to not go for a while or I feel fine now I don't need to come anymore, if I question my recovery or the process or the severity of my addiction. if I ever question the power and strength of the people and unity within the room I try and remember my hand sticking out of the dirt. At a time of pure anguish, When I was alone, empty, and totally broken, when in my mind there was absolutely no way out, the collective power of this room and the people inside saved me. When no one else could, when no one else would; Strangers cared.

**Thank you  
Rhys**



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## DVLA and GA

Giving up gambling and attending GA is like driving. The last bet date is the date someone gets their licence. They may make mistakes and crash on your journey and even lose that licence but they can always start over, recognise your mistakes and get a new licence.

When they first get that licence, it can be nerve racking. They have a million things going through their head and they're focussing hard on trying to get absolutely everything right. It can make them feel uneasy, they're not use to it. There are things in place designed to protect a person with driving. Seat belts, airbags. barriers to help stop someone being injured. They are there and available, but it's their decision if you put that seatbelt on or have the air bags on. Some people feel they don't need them but later on will wish they had them.

As time goes on, it becomes easier and that person can start to enjoy those moments of driving down a long road, music on, sun shining. Appreciate the feeling of freedom. With a clear head. Noticing things, they didn't notice before when exploring new areas. As they become more experienced at driving, they can help guide those that are new to driving. Even though with time it becomes easier to drive it's still imperative that as an individual to concentrate otherwise they can easily crash, even if they've been driving for 10 or 20 years.

No one is immune from accidents. They can be hard and some take time to recover from. For some it can destroy confidence, bring feelings of guilt and it can take a long time for them to get behind the wheel again.

Others on the road may cause them to be angry, but if they lose control and get road rage there are often consequences. They will be faced with daily challenges, some out of their control. Traffic, road works, other drivers'





frustrations. Some days they may respond better to these challenges than others and that's ok. There will be short cuts available, sometimes these aren't the best choices and may not be the safest way to travel. I could be having a really tough day and find myself stranded somewhere. Instead of sitting down and crying alone pick up the phone and talk to someone else. Reach out and ask for help when needed.

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## 13th February 2017

Now that I'm not gambling today, one day at a time, I realise that I've got a wonderful fulfilling life and having so much to do. As the old cliché goes "Where did I ever find time for gambling".

Don't get me wrong I'm not perfect I do have my moments at times and that is where with the help of God and I review myself.

I believe and believe strongly in the First Step. I say that I am a compulsive gambler and that my life is unmanageable. Even today my life can sometimes be unmanageable and I couple this with one day at a time. Sometimes people have said to me, "Do you not fear going back gambling?" and I say "it's not fear, it's a commitment to myself that I must make my recovery is my bedrock. What I've just said, step One coupled with ODAAT (one day at a time) and attending meetings on a regular basis so that I can hear and rehear things that are good for my recovery."

**Anonymous**



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## Returning to GA – talking to my addiction

You tell me you're my best friend but you're my enemy. I want to evict you from my life, but you refuse to leave. You won't let me be. You grow like a cancer eating away, temporarily making me happy, but when I feed you but you're always starving, wanting more. You are greedy. I tell myself over and over I'm going to close that door and I'm so sure, but the door keeps opening and each time it's a little more. Gambling makes me sore and brings feelings of anger, regret and guilt of the highest purity.

There is no cure. I need to learn to live with you and be aware of you and not get in bed with you. I must keep you at a distance and recognise you, silence you. I need to take steps to understand why you live in me and what I am running from. You make me untruthful not to just myself, but others around me. You isolate me from people I love and care for the most and make me invisible to them. They become terrified of what I might do next. I am like a ghost letting others carry the worry and pain for my actions and decisions. Expecting them to help me yet again and heal my wounds and self-inflicted incisions.

No amount of money or wins or time spent will ever satisfy you. It enables you to keep destroying me and you will continue to pursue me, even when there is nothing left to feast on. You are capable of destroying the strongest relationships, but I am capable of stopping you. I have the upper hand now, not you and with the support of GA and people around me I promise you; I will resist you.

This is not a fake promise that I've made so many times before. I don't want you as an active part of my life anymore. I accept you will never go away and you will live in me, but you are not going to define me. I'm going to be free and if you disagree I will try even harder. Making the effort is key. This relationship is over.

**Anonymous**



## My Open Meeting experience

I attended Beaconsfield Wednesday Open Meeting and what a meeting it was. Everyone was friendly to everyone else with a welcome greeting.

There was a combination of feelings, happiness, smiles, struggles and tears. In a room full of people some off a bet by just a few hours, others weeks, months and even years. Friends and family were there supporting their loved ones. Parents, mates, siblings, daughters and sons being present was the best feeling ever. It's not something I thought I would feel, never.

One thing that was present was the atmosphere of unity. Members together fighting addiction forming their own community of like-minded people just sharing and talking. No judgement at all, no matter how shocking the stories. Gambling, drugs, alcohol and more; We're all addicts and we had the courage to walk through that door and not just recognise we are addicts, but help each other keep the demon silent. No matter how much it can scream at us ferociously and violently. Male, female, young or old. If you find GA, you're one of the lucky ones and I have honestly struck gold. Nights like tonight help me keep my eyes open wide.

I saw members getting recognition with proudness, happiness and pride not ashamed of being an addict, accepting that they are living life one day at a time and even though they may still carry their emotional scars they are proud they are a GA members and part of this fellowship.

Many others aren't lucky enough to find it and their addiction will continue to grip them. It destroys lives without a care at all. I will fight against it, work my recovery and stay on the ball. It is possible to manage and tonight was proof of it. A much better feeling than horses, poker, slots, roulette or spoils. I need just keep going, one day at a time I know it's worth it, better than any win, pound, dollar or dime.

**Jordanne, Beaconsfield**



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## Never Safe

My dad used to gamble, mostly on horses and in the days when betting shops were called ‘Turf Accounts’ and the only communication with the racing going on was a crackly speaker in the corner of a smokey midden of a shop. He would spend hours scanning the odds, forecasts or whatever a punter did in those days.

I was always aware how he could work out odds in a second, but as a family we always struggled. He wasn’t a compulsive gambler despite all I saw. My mother hated it though and how she kept us fed and clothed I will never know. It was his drinking and his propensity to violence when he was saturated with drink. Yet the next morning he got up and did an honest day’s work. Fair enough Mum always got her housekeeping despite his rants.

I grew up thinking I was better than him and vowed I would never be like him and for many years I wasn’t, but as I was to learn I would never be safe.

I was always careless with money all my life. The only thing that hid it was that I earned good money and the bills somehow always got paid. So how did I come to realise I was and always would be a compulsive gambler? I used play the fruit machine in the mess room where I worked, but only on nights when all was quiet and my office assistant would come for me if we had a problem. Yet looking back I was never in control. I was soon to learn that I had a compulsive nature and it settled upon gambling later in my life.

I had a mid-life crisis at the age of thirty-nine and left a well-paid job in transport to go off to university. As I was about to go off to college, I was offered a weekend job in a local newsagent. Someone who worked there was an occasional gambler on the horses. We’d pick two horses each, every Saturday and it seemed okay.



Then I left college and struggled to get a job in my new profession. Supported by the weekend job I began to get greedy and want all the winnings. So I put the bets on twice! One for us and the other all for me and it grew and grew from there. That was around the time of the millennium, but by 2009 I was betting heavily and on every race that ran. I was convinced that eventually a large accumulator would pay off all my debts one day... they never did.

I entered GA in the later Summer of 2009, expecting someone to sort out all my problems and give me all the secrets to get debts written off. I was shocked to find a brutal honesty and no easy answers. That was the turning point. I had reached the lowest point of my life, but the meeting rooms gradually helped me turn around. The brutal honesty and truths were to be my saviour.

My marriage was hanging by a thread then and I had to face the fact that I had been a bit of a mess all my life. I began to work the Steps and as true recovery kicked in I realised it wasn't just gambling that was the problem it was me – all of me. I have worked the Steps ever since.

I pray I will never stop working them for there is always a part of me that needs examining. Gamblers Anonymous let me down – gently and as I woke up to reality, I began to realise that it had saved me far more than money. It gave me a new lease of life, a marriage that is stronger than before and honesty and that is the gift I treasure above all and it was coming into the rooms that saved me and those around me.

The betting shop was a place to hide, but it was a lonely place. Now I have REAL friends and people who understand me.

**Anonymous**



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## 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.

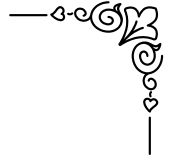


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10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
  11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God (as we understand him), praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the 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



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## Keep It Straight, Keep Going Forward

Lurking in the shadows  
Waiting with menace  
Lurking, intent on pain  
My demon past still mocks  
I must keep moving forward

The crooked lies I told  
Wait to bend and break me  
Oroboros in making  
Endlessly circling  
I must keep moving forward

The hollow zombies  
Won't stop running  
It's straight to Hell  
If they catch me  
I must keep going forward





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## Moving On

Moving on from matchsticks in a card game at home  
To a pound in a puggy, with friends... on my own,  
To all of my change from a pint in the pub,  
To money for holidays ... money for grub.

Moving on from the highlife to be left high and dry,  
Ever clinging to dreams which are pie in the sky;  
Moving on as the trouble begins to unfold,  
Moving on through the stages as addiction takes hold.

From the shadows of dusk to the darkness of night  
With eyes ever closed to the glimmer of light;  
From ankle deep water to knee-deep in mire,  
From the heat of the frying pan into the fire.

Moving on, moving down, moving nearer to Hell,  
Only digging hole, not a life-giving well.  
Moving on from a want to a need to a must  
'Til hopes are diminished, 'til life becomes dust.

Until just at the last, a mere flicker of light  
Shows a path to recovery out of night;  
Real hope that tomorrow can be a good day,  
Not the dream that deluded my thoughts yesterday.



A path full of hope instead of despair,  
Guided by people who've walked it, who care;  
A ladder of hope to get me out of the hole –  
Steps I must climb to recover my soul.

Moving on from the terrors from which I once hid,  
Becoming the adult, moving on from kid;  
Moving on from the immature person I knew,  
Moving on, growing up, yet more growing to do.

Moving on from a life full of dreams and despair  
To a life in the real world surrounded by care.  
Moving on from escape in my gambling realm  
Finding strength to accept real life on life's terms.

**Alasdair**  
**GA Scotland, Sunday Telephone Meeting**

**Reflections from the GA Convention,**  
**“Therapy and Recovery”**



## No Need

No more rushing to be away  
No more losing a min, an hour, a day  
No more waiting for a team to score  
A horse to jump a fence  
A fly to climb a wall  
I have bet them all

I sometimes wish I had known  
The seeds I had sown  
Through all those years  
When I hid my fears  
Kept back my tears

But now there is no need  
To know the reasons why  
As now I have chosen  
To live one day at a time  
And that's just fine  
to be free  
And that is simply  
enough for me

**Paul, Ulster**



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## This Mortal Coil

This day I have the peace I prayed for  
Yesterday's pleas seemed cold ignored  
My tears and aching soul cried a sad lament  
A new dawn calls me forth in hope  
It is not in self I should seek any pleasure  
Crave material wealth in any measure  
In giving my self to others expecting naught  
I find the comfort I always sought  
It costs me only selfless thought  
A reoccurring story of recovery begins today  
And if I am granted breath tomorrow  
I have no need to borrow  
In this temporary mortal coil  
I've found hope anew

**Anonymous**



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## A Wheel That Spins

A wheel that spins,  
Red, black, green and white,  
Numbers on a table,  
Is this the answer for life?

The wheel keeps spinning,  
Morning, noon and night.

It was red 14 tonight,  
Left red-faced with shame,

Back again.  
This time it's different - you'll see,  
There's no devil inside of me.

Days become years,  
Have I been sentenced for life?

The wheel keeps on spinning,  
Morning, noon and night.

A place of dark thoughts,  
I hope that I'll pause.  
I want to hold the white flag,  
I want to see the light,



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Cos' that wheel keeps on spinning,  
Morning, noon and night.

A chance of new beginnings,  
A different way of life,  
Trust takes time to heal,  
But it's gonna be alright.

One day at a time.  
Just for today I say.  
Creating new memories,  
With the occasional cloudy day.

Today will never come again,  
Today will judge you for now, not then.  
But you're strong,  
Strong enough to fight.

Because the wheel keeps on spinning,  
Morning, noon and night.

**Tom, compulsive gambler**



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## End of the Year

As we come to the end of another exhausting year,  
I'm sitting here totally full of fear,  
Tomorrow New Year's Eve the last day of December,  
The pain of 2022 I will always remember,  
Gambling addiction has took me to hell,  
The grim reaper smirking ringing his bell,  
I had to gamble at whatever cost,  
Serious consequences and sanity lost,  
I've let down my daughters and let down Annette,  
All to gamble and place that bet,  
I feel so numb have failed again,  
Remorse anxiety self pity and pain,  
I sat in church and I prayed so hard,  
But that black jack hand the high face card,  
The horses I backed they lost each time,  
I've made mistakes I've committed a crime,  
Sat in casualty with self-harm scars,  
Dreaming of money houses and cars,  
I hold back the tears, my body is broke,  
My mental health is no serious joke,  
I'm desperate , I'm in shock I'm so down so hurt,  
Blood from self-harming on my jeans and shirt,  
I just want to stop, I'll never win,  
Gluttony is evil it's a deadly sin,



Rock bottom I've hit, overwhelming grief  
A sinner a gambler a no good thief  
I've considered suicide almost every day,  
Researching which is the least painful way,  
I cut my arms with a knives sharp blade,  
I'm beat I'm battered my bed is made,  
Horse after horse, bet after bet insidious action,  
Staking thousands and returns only a fraction,  
The fraction is then used to bet even more,  
Then there's no more action, a permanent closed door,  
I dreamt of winning and overall wealth,  
It's given me pain anxiety and serious mental health,  
40 years a failed struggling gambler,  
40 years a stubborn old rambler,  
But the addiction is in me, I dream of winning,  
That fast 5 furlong sprint or the roulette spinning,  
The black jack hand with a queen and an ace,  
The Cheltenham buzz in the grade one race,  
Standing at Chester screaming one home,  
Then a bus journey back skint and I moan,  
This insidious addiction has brought me to my knees,  
A whirlwind brain full of buzzing bees,  
Mentally unstable it's taken my pride,  
On my own again I've cried and I've cried,





I'm back at ga 6 weeks recovery hard in a way,  
But one day at a time just for today,  
This rock bottom is the worst and I must clearly remember,  
This awful year and the last day of December.

**Nick, Wrexham**

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](http://www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk)**

Visitors to Scotland can find meeting details at: **[www.gascotland.org](http://www.gascotland.org)**

Visitors to Ireland can find meeting details at: **[www.gamblersanonymous.ie](http://www.gamblersanonymous.ie)**