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Trustee Line for February 2015

A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 2/28/15.

Thoughts From The Trustees - Current and Past

The subjects listed below are themes that have been submitted by other Trustees. You may respond to any of them, or start an entirely new subject

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Committee Updates

2/10/15 - 8:28 PM

Here we are at the 10th of the month with no postings for the Trustee Line. I'm not at all sure why we don't have more participation by the current and past Trustees, but it is what it is. It's also strange how I have received nothing less than 3 dozen emails or instant message notifications about how there nothing on the Trustee Line. Stranger still, is that none of these people want to get the ball rolling with a posting of their own. Since I enjoy writing, it seems that I'm the sacrificial lamb that sticks its neck out and writes something to hopefully 'break the seal'.

So let's talk about how people find out about Gamblers Anonymous. Back in the olden times, the telephone hotline was all that really was available. That continues today, but the volume of calls is diminishing. When the Internet came into its own, that was the next platform for awareness of Gamblers Anonymous. Although it is still an important part of getting the message out, it seemingly pales in comparison to what is going on with the smart phone markets. Yes, people can access the Internet through their phones, but everyone immediately looks for an app on their phone. We have been left out of that market since the technology was developed, but that is not going to last for long.

Money was approved in Tampa to deploy a Gamblers Anonymous phone app. Hopefully, in Cherry Hill, the Trustee Website Committee will be able to showcase that app. It will follow what was submitted in Tampa, as an attachment. Its sole function is to get the user to a meeting. The system will be updated each time the ISO modifies the list of meetings that is presented on the ISO website. This will be a very exciting time for the Fellowship, as we will be connecting to the general public in a manner that has never been so comprehensive in the history of our Fellowship.

Maybe those of you who are reading this can take a moment and submit your thoughts about this topic and how you see this new platform, as one that will reach more people more effectively.

While I'm on the subject of reaching out to more people, the weekly Telephone Meeting Conference Call, held each Wednesday at 9:00 PM Eastern Time, is going to reach its first full year of operation on Thursday, February 12th. As a member of the Telephone Admin team for that telephone meeting, I want to thank Pete K. from Area 13B, Jeannie B. from Area 8A, Steve T. from Area 14 and Karen E. from Area 8A, for their dedication and commitment to the continuity of the platform. The system has evolved into a much more involved

platform, that caters to all compulsive gamblers, both new and old.

Our weekly statistics show that roughly 50% of the callers are women and about 33% are under 90 day. It is not uncommon to have 4 or more new members at a meeting. We have developed a new member room for those callers, if we get multiple new members. The rest of the attendees have the option to switch back and forth between the regular meeting and the new member meeting, if it is used.

There is room for 167 more meetings on the platform, before we go the next level of service. If you are interested in starting a Telephone Meeting on this platform, send an email to address listed on the Trustee Conference Call committee website page. All this is being done at no cost to GA. It is not a gift or favor from the service provider, because all such conference call meetings are free to everyone.

The access number is 605-562-3140. The system had local access numbers for over 30 different countries. Telephone lines open at 8:45 PM Eastern Time. Give it a call and witness a miracle happening for people who have no ability to get to a physical GA meeting. It's a good way to spend 90 minutes on a Wednesday evening.

Finally, as the Combo Book says on page 17 – 'Get Involved'. Take some time and write to the Trustee Line.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

2/15/15 - 7:41 PM

Hi David,

You know It is my opinion that: People do not say anything on the Trustee Line for fear of What happen to me, will happen to them. Most people can't take criticism. They really don't want it in front of everyone. I don't care because none of us is God and your opinion is just what it is. My mother use to tell me an opinion is like and A—holes everybody has one. It doesn't make it right or wrong it is what you think.

How people find out about G.A.? People use all kinds of ways to find G.A. internet, hot line, phone, court order, it is my opinion that we should try to obtain every way possible to reach out if we can. I would love to see a billboard about G.A. There are so many people out there who need help but it is entirely up to them. I feel being able to access G.A. when they are at their lowest point, any way they choose, will get them in. Keeping them in is something that only the gambler can do. I do feel that once they have been to G.A. They keep what they learned and it is up to them to use it or not.

The new phone app. is great. I hope it help us to reach out to the younger generation. There are many young people out there that need help and this is the way to reach them. I hope that it brings in more of the younger generation and they can keep their money and not give it away. I don't know about other areas but San Diego doesn't have very many young people in G.A. I know they are out there because I hear them talking about it in the stores with their friends. I am amazed at the number of people who talk about Casino's and gambling. People I don't know just talking while in line, some old some young it is affecting everyone. I hope that we can try to reach out to them in every way possible.

Karen T. - Area 3A, San Diego

2/17/15 - 6:04 AM

Karen,

By virtue of the fact that you were allowed to express your opinions, controversial or not, and encouraged to keep doing so, that others chose to give counter opinions supported by solid facts, shows really that, rather than you suffering undue criticism, what really happened last month was the Trustee line provided an opportunity for all of us to engage constructively.

I think what happened last month, as you referred to, was simply this.

Steve opened a topic about something he was unhappy with and supplied his opinion backed up by facts and reality, clearly stated from the perspective of his considerable experience in the matter about which he wrote. As former Chair of

the IRC and being fully aware of the workload involved in hosting a conference, he was in a position to comment factually (knew what he was talking about)

You responded with an opinion and drew some conclusions, the facts or sometimes lack of facts, behind your opinions, were challenged, that's all.

The response from Trustee, past trustee, executive board and former executive board quarters was a provision of fuller, pertinent facts and the outrageous conclusions were unilaterally rejected, rightly so.

Conversely, one of the benefits of the Trusteeline is that we can throw something into the pot and seek out others opinions, knowledge and experience on such matters, that benefits everyone.

Here's why the crude saying about opinions and A H'S, so frequently mis – used to justify groundless opinions based on un – supported facts, belongs with outside literature and is totally out of context here.

Group conscience spoke on the Trusteeline last month and concurred with a conventional wisdom that we can all use when it comes to opinions and entitlement, we are all entitled to our own opinions but are not entitled to our own set of facts. Reality must prevail.

I totally agree with the comments about the App and the Conference call meetings being very positive developments and sincerely hope people keep reaching out by posting on the Trusteeline.

David,

Quite astounding the amount of latent interest, by email, in the Trusteeline, hopefully current and past trustees will step up and post, even a short email sized post has the capacity to open up a topic that can benefit us all, how hard is that ?

I note that the APP will have the capacity to be up – dated as changes occur, this is very important.

There exist some un – authorized APP's on google play at present, which includes old and outdated information purporting to be representative of this fellowship and, despite carrying the name of G A, the fact is that the members of G A have no ability to up date that illegitimate APP, nor does the developer himself.

Of particular note is the absence of the word “ Internet “ in Unity step # 11 on that APP and the associated failure of the developer and some of his supporters (including a current member of the B O T) to abide by that very step. How damaging is that to the fellowship as a whole ?

Peace people,

Odie. B. - Area 36 Trustee. Ireland S / East

2/25/15 - 12:27 AM

It is very interesting to think of how we used to learn about Gamblers Anonymous and all we had was a phone number to call for help. That is how I found my first meeting. However, I learned about GA watching a movie about gambling. I was taken away with the world of gambling until they showed a GA meeting with people giving days of abstinence and talking about their recovery. I did not find a GA meeting for the next few years because I was just not ready yet.

I would also like to express how anxious I am about the development of the APP for GA, like it has been said I agree that it would reach out to the younger compulsive gambler. In my area we have quite of few members who are very young. At my home meeting of Burbank Monday, we have quite a bit of members in their 30s and and a few in their 20s, who have 2 or 3 years already in the program. The app will bring a new group of maybe even younger members because I know they are out there and they need to relate to us.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone in Cherry Hill, Be safe.

Ara H. - Area I Trustee, Los Angeles

Unity

2/11/15 - 12:06 PM

It has become apparent recently that unity in our Fellowship is under attack. Or at least misplaced. I've been hearing a lot, both locally and nationally, that the biggest threat to unity is geared at those members, both Trustees and not, that actually follow the Guidance Code and past decisions of the Board of Trustees. This is what is misplaced. Those who follow what number 3 states for Trustee responsibilities on the Trustee Website (Uphold the Guidance Code, and all decisions made by the Board of Trustees (not fulfilling this affects G.A. as a whole) are being vilified as being this threat to unity. However, my belief is it's the membership who acts contrary to number 3 that poses an even bigger threat.

Both sides can claim group conscience rules the day. In a certain respect, this is true. But, if we take number 3 of the Trustee responsibilities and number 4 of the Unity Program, we can see that if there is any difference between what the BOT has passed and that of a room, the BOT decision wins out. This is because its already been said that not following BOT decisions is deemed to affect GA as a whole.

I maintain that we, as individuals, don't have the right to allow rooms or members or Trustees to act in such a way as disrupt unity by doing things contrary to what the BOT has passed. When it comes to group conscience, which I am a firm believer in, what about the group conscience of the Board of Trustees? It seems that this is ignored by those who have a different opinion. And then when called out on it, those claim the ones who follow the Guidance Code and past Trustee decision are affecting unity. When the exact opposite is true. I don't like everything the BOT has passed. Do I have the right to ignore this and do my own thing? The answer is no. What I can do is try to change things on the floor at a BOT meeting. If the argument is persuasive enough, things can change. If not, then I have to live with the decision of 140 plus Trustees. That is group conscience at its highest level. This isn't about rules. It's about the group conscience of the BOT. Why some have an issue with this is their own problem. But to say that those who follow the BOT decisions and Guidance Code are a threat to unity is perverse.

Pete K. - Area 13B, South Jersey

2/26/15 - 7:26 AM

I whole - heartedly agree with the sentiments expressed in this topic. I have no doubt it was food for thought for a lot of people and areas, I would safely add internationally to the areas where it is clearly a problem.

At this stage of the month I will only add that, while there has not been discussion here, nonetheless, at the very least, the highlighting of this issue gives hope and strength to those of us who continue, to the best of our ability, to do things as they should be done and it also sends a clear message to those who don't.

Thanks Pete.k. for highlighting this issue.

Odie B. - Area 36 Trustee, Ireland S - East

Gambalog

2/11/15 - 8:28 PM

Gamb-a-log is when a member shares at length about the horrors of their gambling days while not discussing efforts toward recovery. This term can be used derogatorily out of the notion that we all know how to gamble and focusing on gambling stories is of little benefit to anyone. 12 step meetings have been used to collectively share experience with recovery, doing the 12 steps, and helping others...so some feel it inappropriate to take up meeting time recounting "the old days."

I hear a lot of these "Gamb-a-logs in my 10+ years going to GA meetings. It's not uncommon sometimes for these shares to last 15-20 minutes. This occurs in other 12 step meetings, but I seem to see more of this in GA meetings. I'm sure this is going to offend a lot of old timers in GA, but I have stopped going to a lot of GA meetings because of this. I don't think we as a whole should be sensitive to such criticism but should have open dialogue about uncomfortable things

about our fellowship. So hopefully this is a start.

Joe T. - Area 2, Northern CA

2/12/15 - 1:08 AM

Joe,

I am thrilled you began this topic. There's a lot of meat on this bone.

Unfortunately, you can't stop someone from talking about the horrors of their gambling, as opposed to all aspects of recovery. However, topics set by the meeting chair for that night, can help motivate members to talk about recovery related therapies, providing there is a topic. Unfortunately, the vast majority of the GA rooms do not suggest topics. For many members, it is easy to follow the mantra of 'Don't gamble and come to meetings'. Challenging the members of a room to concentrate on growth is as easy as giving the room a thought provoking topic.

I feel one of the biggest problems we face in meetings is how the chair handles the opening of the meeting. I've seen it happen more times than I can count. The chair will say that the suggested topics are the reading from the Day At A Time book, a specified suggestion or the crushing blow for the meeting when these fateful words are spoken..."or you can talk about ANYTHING you want." This leaves the door open for members to talk about the concerts they went to, work, dating, or anything that they want.

I maintain that I am a compulsive gambler. I go to meetings because I am a compulsive gambler in recovery. I have weaknesses and seek strength in the rooms from others sharing their experience, strength and hope. Talk about anything you want, as long as it ties into gambling related issues. Some will argue that people have other problems that could ultimately take them back to gambling, and they need to talk about it. That may be true, but that kind of material is for the resources out of the room. Use the telephone list, call other members, talk to your sponsors, see a therapist. Just don't waste everyone's time with non-GA related therapies.

My home room has a clause in its opening announcements that states; "We are here to share our experience, strength and hope with each other that we may solve our common problem and help others to recover from a gambling problem. Please confine your therapies to gambling related issues." With that announcement and a challenging suggested topic, seldom do we have anyone, other than a new member, speak about non-GA issues.

Another problem you bring up is how people run on for 15-20 minutes with their therapies. That's probably because the group conscience hasn't agreed on putting a time limit on members' therapies. Our room uses a 6-minute timer. It is read in the opening announcements that its purpose is to allow as many other people an opportunity to speak. The timer is a reminder to make sure the member is not wandering and to try and wrap things up. However, if the member needs more time, they can take it. Reminders go on every minute after that. New members and returnees do not have time limits. If enough people get pissed off at these Gambalog therapies that run on without any message, then get them together for a group conscience meeting and change the parameters of how things run in that room. Make the effort and make a difference.

As far as the 'long timers' being sensitive to, as you put it, such criticism...I thought there was a 3-word concept in GA called Honest, Openmindedness and Willingness. That over sensitivity goes hand in hand with many in that time bracket who feel they have a different program, one that allows them to do whatever they want, because they know better. Did I leave out the concept of Humility? Why don't I save that for another time.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

2/25/15 - 10:32 PM

Joe,

In such a concise post, you really touched on a number of different discussion items.

I think of Peoples' Therapy sort of as the first amendment of GA. People can surely share on whatever is most important to them but undoubtedly, there are times when you can listen to several speakers and wonder if you are even in a

GA meeting. I tend to share on average for 5-7 minutes with the first portion on my back therapy followed by equally mixed parts of how I recover in GA and also where my life is today because of GA.

Unless someone has a pressing problem or something serious in their lives, I am a firm believer in unity and people making their best effort not to drone on for an excessive amount of time especially at the expense of other potential speakers in the room. It's really as much a matter of courtesy as anything else.

As for you not going to meetings or at least as many meetings as you had been, I hope you reconsider. Perhaps, like David said hold a Trusted Servants (or business) meeting to try and address these issues or possibly start a step meeting. While there are some instances of sharing gambling stories, the emphasis at step meetings is definitely more based on recovery.

Lastly I know for me, I wholly believe not only that I am a compulsive gambler but that Gamblers Anonymous is the only option anywhere that has allowed me to arrest my addiction. Not coming to meetings is not an option for me.

Steve T. - Area 14, Long Island, NY
