

Trustee Line – Current Issue

February 2019

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Thoughts From The Trustees – Current and Past

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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

Subjects that receive submissions from at least 13 different people, will trigger an email blast to all the current and past Trustees, signifying a 'Hot Topic Alert' on the Trustee Line.

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Women in Meetings

2/1/19 – 12:00 PM

What are you doing to encourage women to come back to your meeting. Often women don't come back when they clearly need to be there (if going by the 20 Questions). We've tried phoning, offering rides, sending encouraging texts, and even asking them to bring cookies for the next meeting (for those who indicated they like to bake)! Most of our meetings are predominantly male. This can't be helped (lol). We have great meetings, everyone is always respectful, and we go out of our way to make everyone comfortable.

Nan V. – Area 13A – Maryland

2/2/19 – 11:59 AM

"Nan, this is an issue that plagues meetings all over the country". In order to address this issue in our area, a well-respected member with a number of years in the program decided to start a "Women Preferred" meeting on Saturday mornings. Not only is this meeting popular among women in Area 1A, it has engendered a tremendous "can do" spirit among its members such that they are always the first ones to volunteer to be on the various Intergroup committees.

Jack R. – 1A, Orange County, California

August 2016 – Is It That Some Trustees Don't Care About the Guidance Code?

2/1/19 – 12:00 PM

Thank you for boiling down the issue of the guidance code to a few simple questions. Re-reading the Aug 2016 discussion, as well as other comments on this subject, I would like to weigh in with a first timers perspective. First, I like the idea of having a place to toss around ideas, but am disappointed with the limited participation. (Usually the same cast of participants) but can see why there is a reluctance to provide any input. The Orlando conference demonstrated to me that newcomers were intimidated and fearful (personal experience and discussions with other new Trustees during breaks). Also, I hope that when two days are allotted for a meeting that we use them so we all can be alert and connected to the business at hand. There was really no reason to go as late as we went.

There is a perception by other "twelve-step" programs that GA is the most over-regulated recovery group out there. Our "Guidance Code" is very restrictive, misinterpreted, and depending on which area you reside in, viewed as merely a suggestion. Over the years I have attended several birthdays with members of long standing including a recent "50 year celebration" and have never seen a guest denied the right to share what this person has meant to them during the meeting. Article VII Section 4 (abstinence and pinnings) seems to be the only issue that continues to plague meetings and garner any discussion at Intergroup meetings.

I hope my first submission to the Trustee Line was helpful. I look forward to the next Trustee meeting and will be ready to stand at the microphone and voice my opinion. I hope some of the more experienced Trustees will be more patient with us as we "learn the ropes"

Bob C. – Area 3A – San Diego

2/2/19 – 4:17 PM

Bob,

I am personally thrilled that you are using the Trustee Line to give us all a view of how the new Trustees are feeling. I remember very clearly my first Trustee meeting, in which I came prepared to vote on the 29 items on the agenda for the Montreal '00 Trustee meeting, which took us 2 days to work through. What was so remarkable about it for me, was the exchange of opinions both pro and con on each item. Coming in with an open mind, my opinions were pushed around like balls on a pool table. I was forced to dig deeper and deeper to render what I thought was the right opinion for a vote. What I do remember, was how important it was for me to get up to the microphone and try and add something new to the discussion. It served to solidify my thoughts. It also gave me the understanding that by saying something, it might change the course of the discussion and help others to galvanize their position on any item.

To address the limited participation issue that you raised, it is understandable that new Trustees can be intimidated by the procedures of a Trustee meeting and choose not to render a verbal opinion. However, as we go through the next 3 Trustee meetings, you will notice that many of the once new Trustees, will not get up to the microphone. Worse than that is watching some of the Trustees who are not going through their first term, never get up to the microphone. When asked why they didn't get up to the microphone to render an opinion, you will hear that someone else said what they would have said. My response is always to ask why they weren't the first ones up to the microphone? That generally results in a blank stare.

I agree with you about allotting 2 days for a Trustee meeting and finishing in 1, and that it might be better to spread the meetings out over 2 days with fewer hours to avoid agenda fatigue. That is a matter left up to the BOT Chair, as such a decision can only be made by the Chair. It is a judgment call. I have watched the fatigue fall heavy on the Trustees as the night wears on. I believe discussions in the late night hours are shorter and many decisions are made with a condensed amount of information. 2 such decisions that I believe were subject to that in Orlando, were the approvals of plaques and wristbands as appropriate literature. I intend on revisiting both of those items in Louisville for the Trustees to have a more comprehensive understanding of the risks with each item.

We may indeed be the most regulated Fellowship, but it is necessary because many of our members and rooms take liberties that are a direct result of using the Guidance Code as a roadmap to justify conduct that should not be happening. Our Fellowship is steadily under attack because very little information from the Trustee meetings makes it back to the area Intergroups. Even less information makes it back to the rooms. I would venture a guess that very few people even know what color cover the Guidance Code has. Our literature library is sparse, at best. In the absence of such gaping holes in the knowledgebase of the Guidance Code and other important literature, we see members in the rooms who overpower the rooms' members. The influence of members from other Fellowships who try to run the meetings the way their Fellowships do, is one of the biggest contagions that threatens the viability of GA.

Guests are people who are not GA members. Only GA members can speak at GA meetings. That means no friends attending an anniversary meeting can speak during the meeting. If the meeting is concluded and then a medallion or pin is to be presented, it is then allowed to have others speak. Trustees who sit idly by and let such people speak during the meeting, should not be Trustees. Members who don't want to abide by the Guidance Code will resort to terms like 'suggested' or 'GA Police', to name but a few. Suggested is used in 2 areas, 1) suggested meeting procedure and 2) suggested room format. For more proof of this, look at #3 of the Responsibilities for International Trustees in the Information Packet. "Uphold the Guidance Code, and all decisions made by the Board of Trustees (not fulfilling this affects GA as a whole)"

In closing, I generally have many items on each Trustee agenda. A good number of them are to try and plug the holes in old wording and take away the ambiguity, so that those who would take advantage of the structure of our Fellowship, have little or no ground to stand on. I implore all the Trustees not to look the other way when problems arise, but to plug the holes with credible action through the Board of Trustees.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

2/2/19 – 6:16 PM

David,

Thank you for your honest and open feedback to a newcomer. As you know, San Diego has quite a few “open” and “closed modified” meetings, as well as “gay”, “woman”, and “young bucks” preferred meetings which continue to grow and thrive. This is a new age that we are moving into and our great program has to adapt or we will become stagnant. The comment you made, “Guests are people who are not GA members. Only GA members can speak at GA meetings. That means no friends attending an anniversary meeting can speak during the meeting.” has me confused. I cannot find this anywhere in the Guidance Code. I will submit a change to the Group Handbook for the upcoming conference which will permit guests to speak following a pinning or celebration after a group conscious is taken. Hopefully this will bring people to the microphone.

Bob C. – Area 3A, San Diego

2/14/19 – 10:34 PM

This topic really hits home for me.

I have read the August 2016 line and the January/February. This is a lot to process. The guidance code is still yet being processed in my thick head.

#1. My interpretation of the Guidance Code is a document produced by the Board of Trustees from the conscience of all the members within our fellowship. I am one that continuously processes the Guidance Code for the understanding of what I am to do as a Trustee and as a member within this fellowship. It's my structure! It's my recovery. It's my growth. It's my message to NOT gamble today! At times I still feel like a stranger to the Guidance Code. I have learned through the Board of Trustee members and through my research and reading of literature how The Gamblers Anonymous program benefits me. I feel like I am on ICE when engaged with the BOT members. I'm still yet to learn more than I've ever dreamed of and I am learning each and every time I step up and be of service within this fellowship. My time in this fellowship has been a really trying and telling journey. This journey has taken me down a road within this fellowship which no fellow Gamblers Anonymous member should have to endure, Growth is painful I have found. To me, the Guidance code should be of a strict nature structured with the principles of The Gamblers Anonymous program. Also referencing and working in conjunction with all literature that the Gamblers Anonymous provides within the fellowship to include the Red book, Blue Book, Group Handbook, Combo book and so on.

#2. Strict? I'm laughing out loud on that!!! I say “NOT” strict enough. My thoughts about changes, YES we need to make changes! Serious Change! The fellowship depends on it! Change is the Board of Trustees!

#3/#4. This question abolishes the Board of Trustees! Now to answer the question, you notice not many members spoke up for this question? No hands in the air singing and such. You know why?

This question will pull ego and rogue controlling members right out of the wood work. I see it this way, if any GA member feels changes shouldn't be made to the Guidance Code should reconsider their position as a Gamblers Anonymous Member. Then I think what an intergroup or a group of members changing the Guidance Code at that level would be like the Gremlin movie "When does it stop?". FYI, the day the rooms make changes to the Guidance Code on their own is the day I reconsider working on recovery without a room. You want to talk about an end all! Cut and dried. Yet I feel that the majority of rooms have already made their changes without going to the Board of Trustees about presenting a change to the Guidance code. That's why we are having this conversation. That's why you are asking these questions. I learn more from a Board of Trustees meeting of how The Gamblers Anonymous program works than I do in these meetings in the state of Oklahoma. It's tough at times for me to stay engaged. Sometimes I don't want to be in the fellowship. Sometimes I just want to give up. This is how important it is for me and that's why I wanted to be a Trustee and need to be around fellow members who call me out when I have that stinking thinking. I want to carry the message to Oklahoma that this program works for anybody who will look this compulsive addiction straight between the eyes. I learn something from the elders of the fellowship East coast and West coast. As Oklahoma's trustee I attend a meeting and within the first 10 minutes of attending the meeting there is a guidance code violation within the group and I don't even have to say a single word Then I introduce myself and my status as Trustee the room and people tense up and they're ready for confrontation not that I am a bulldogging or anything. Depending on what's going on I say what I have to say right then and there when the room engages in blunt violations of the Gamblers Anonymous Guidance Code. Especially Oklahoma Problem Gambling Association (outside issues). I have wayyyyyy too much I could add to this feed. I do my best to talk to the group of what I see is wrong with asking and talking after their meeting. I don't want to see groups shut down for not adhering to the Guidance Code.

#5. I disagree and I have NO right, but to only follow the Guidance Code of Gamblers Anonymous. I have already experienced unknowingly followed an Alcoholic Anonymous program and them calling it Gamblers Anonymous when I have never been an Alcoholic nor do I drink. AA has different beliefs. I know we took after AA. I also know that the BOT has worked hard

I have experienced more people in the fellowship violating the guidance code, then members of the fellowship upholding the guidance code and protecting the Guidance Code in Oklahoma!

Jim G. – Area 7C, Oklahoma