

Life-Line Bulletin

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Trustee Line for November 2016

A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 11/30/16.

Thoughts From The Trustees - Current and Past

Disclaimer - The Trustee Line is a function of the Board of Trustees of Gamblers Anonymous. It is intended solely as a forum for members of the Board of Trustees to share opinions on issues related to Gamblers Anonymous. Any postings in this or any other edition of the Trustee Line are not to be construed as the opinion of Gamblers Anonymous, as a whole. The publication of any items on the Trustee Line do not constitute an endorsement or statement of approval or acknowledgement by Gamblers Anonymous of what the contents are.

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.

Item	Subject	Last Entry	Entries
1.	I Can't Believe He Just Said That	11/29/16 1:48 PM	5

I Can't Believe He Just Said That

11/11/16 - 10:56 AM

I had a very disturbing evening last night. I ended up meeting another GA brother for a quick dinner before going to a meeting I seldom attend. Although I didn't know it at the time, that was going to be the best part of my night. As the meeting started, in walked a member with a few more years in the program than I have, and my heart immediately sank. I had not heard his therapy for many years and my sincerest wish was that he not spew the venom of discrediting the GA program that I remember from my last encounter with him.

Sadly, his therapy was more vicious of the program than I remember. I had to close my eyes and was wincing in pain over the negative words about the program that just seem to intensify as he continued. I am not going to go into therapy, but here are the bullet points of what unnerved me.

The program is a joke
The steps are worthless
Pressure relief doesn't work
Bankruptcy is fine
People should not give any advice
The 800-GAMBLER number is the GA hotline
And other such pearls of 'GA wisdom'.

Strangely enough, his stories about the detrimental effects of gambling are clear and very supportive of why people should stop, but that's where it ends. This room had a limit of 2 comments per therapy. I waited to hear the first comment to see if someone whose home room that was, would clear the air, but it turned into something similar to "It's good to see you and I don't agree with what you said, but keep coming." I raised my hand, but the second and final comment was given to someone else. It too was a softball and was punctuated by saying "Well at least you are talking about how you feel." I was called on next to give therapy and did not give him a comment, as we in NJ do not allow members to do that.

Here's the point of this posting. I felt immobilized that I couldn't actually stop his therapy, because the room had numerous members under 6 months who were struggling with their recovery. One person like this can provide all the reasons why they should take back their wills and ignore Recovery Step 3. I am reminded of the first paragraph on page 2 of the Combo Book.

“Gamblers Anonymous is a Fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from a gambling problem.”

This man and his pernicious words about the very essence of the Gamblers Anonymous program are detrimental to Gamblers Anonymous as a whole. New members struggle for many reasons. Therapies and comments are supposed to be constructive in the learning process. People who struggle and speak to the difficulties and frustrations they face in the program are a necessary part of bolstering all of our recoveries. Comments are the helping hand of others who have walked in their shoes. We cannot allow members to send very direct messages that sabotage the very reason we exist and the efforts we extend to carrying the message of hope. The question is how.

Obviously, there is nothing in any of our literature that helps a room deal with this type of member. Numerous rooms will just not comment on this person's therapy and explain how damaging it is. He hides behind his justification for saying these things by adding in that “At least he is telling the truth about how he feels.” I know that people have spoken to him about this poisonous attitude and have told him that if he doesn't believe in the program's core principles, then stop coming to GA and making it unbearable for others. Nothing seems to have gotten through to this guy. It's truly like talking to a wall. Group conscience meetings have tried to get rid of him, but Unity Step 5 is always the bedrock reason for the rooms not banning him from the meeting(s) he attends.

I'm looking for some answers from those current and past Trustees on how to remove this cancerous situation from all the well-intentioned efforts of everyone else who is working the program. Please do not tell me to give it up to my higher power. I also don't want to hear that I should ignore it and just worry about myself. That is not going to do anything to change the detrimental issues this person brings into the meetings. I am a Trustee looking to follow the Responsibilities For International Trustees.

2. Be a living example of the precepts of Gamblers Anonymous
5. Be available to all members and groups in my Trustee area for advice and guidance
7. Offer assistance to any group that has a problem

No doubt, others of you have encountered such discourteous members. How about some help?

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

11/11/16 - 11:08 PM

"Unity Step 5 states that "...Gamblers Anonymous has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the compulsive gambler who still suffers...". Since none of the bullet points you attribute to him are consistent with Gamblers Anonymous, I think it would be fair to say that he is not part of Gamblers Anonymous and hence, is not entitled to the protections conferred by Unity Step 5. Use this pretense to re-visit the group conscience and send him packing.

Jack R. - Area 1A, Orange County, California

11/12/16 - 3:08 PM

I, too, have been in Gamblers Anonymous rooms where a share violated the Unity Program. When I point out the situation I have NEVER had another member agree with me and chime in that the speaker is not within the Unity Program.

No one, no matter the length of abstinence or the length of recovery wants to “get involved” in anything controversial (my observation) to speak for the Unity Program or the Guidance Code.

It is overwhelming, I vs. all.

I have been told by members who I respect to talk to the person after the meeting and not interrupt sharing. What good would that do? If the person

violates the Unity Program and/or Guidance Code, how will anyone in the room know?

How many members really care about this?

Most members have no knowledge of the Guidance Code and or really know the meaning of what the 3rd line is of Unity #4.

The Principals of the program represents the foundation where all building begins.

I'm tired; I'm worn.

Bill B. - Area 6, South Florida

3/12/16 - 3:12 PM

David,

This issue may be 1 of the single most difficult to deal with in Gamblers Anonymous. I was recently elected to be Secretary in my home group again. I have discussions with people all the time regarding what is and isn't appropriate therapy aside from if you believe it isn't, what should the response be?

Although not necessarily "best case", when Secretary I employ the following:

Try my absolute best not to be too quick to interrupt someone's therapy. Giving therapy is where it all begins and on a certain level I'd rather be a moment late than too fast. None of this means, if a person is given latitude and abuses it that I won't step in explain why I stopped the person and welcome them to continue in another direction. If something was inappropriately touched on and the person moved on, I would make a general announcement to the individual if in fact they said something inappropriate.

If I am not the Secretary and a boundary was crossed, I would most certainly try to make a comment (if they are allowed) to cover the same ground.

Lastly, if I am not able to do either of the above I would most certainly bring the matter up in Good And Welfare. I am not sure all areas have it but in NY, it provides an opportunity at the end of the meeting to voice concerns.

Make no mistake in situations that are chronic, the Officers and Members of the room need to be diligent otherwise the fabric of GA will continue to be eroded.

Your Brother in Recovery,
Steve T. - Area 14, Long Island, NY

11/29/16 - 1:48 PM

Whatever Gamblers Anonymous Room I walk into I consider to be my meeting. I will abide by that rooms format.

I'm baffled that no one stopped this foul ball! If I wasn't called on for a comment after his therapy I would have made some of the following, but not limited to, observations during my therapy.

The program works if you work it, obviously a member here has never worked it! Some of us are sicker than others! Finally if you don't have anything positive to say about Gamblers Anonymous then you shouldn't waste your time or ours coming here. In conclusion don't let the door hit you where the Lord split you!

Ronny W. - Trustee, Area 17, Connecticut
