

**Main Menu**

Select Language | ▼

- [Home Page](#)
- [Trustee Guidelines](#)
- [GA Reference Material](#)
- [Keyword Search](#)
- [Download Center](#)
- [Contact Administrator](#)

**Phoenix, Arizona - Spring 2016  
Information Section**

[Phoenix Conference Info](#)

**Rolling Agenda**

- [Phoenix Absentee Ballots](#)
- [Agenda Information](#)
- [Conference Bids](#)

**Submit an Agenda Item**

**BOT Committees**

[Monthly Committee Reports](#)

- [Blue Book Revision](#)
- [BOR/BOT Revenue Review](#)
- [Conference Oversight](#)
- [Digital Media](#)
- [Hotline Implementation](#)
- [Hotline Files](#)
- [Intergroup](#)
- [International Relations](#)
- [Literature](#)
- [Pressure Relief](#)
- [Prison - Canada](#)
- [Prison - US](#)
- [Public Relations](#)
- [RSO](#)
- [Telephone Conference Call](#)
- [Trustee Election Guidelines](#)
- [Trustee Removal Merit Panel](#)
- [Trustee Website](#)
- [Video Meeting Format](#)

**International Areas**

- [Africa](#)
- [Australia](#)
- [Eastern Asia](#)
- [Europe](#)
- [Pacific Rim](#)
- [South America and Mexico](#)

[International Event Flyers](#)

**Trustee Line & Other Features**

- [Trustee Line Home Page](#)
- [Login For The Trustee Poll](#)
- [Trustee Poll](#)
- [>>Trustee Information Update<<](#)
- [Trustee Website Tutorial](#)
- [Area Event Flyers](#)
- [Local Area Questions & Answers](#)
- [Local Area Website Guidelines](#)
- [Local Area Help Flyer](#)
- [New Area/Trustee Accommodation Fund](#)
- [Board of Regents News Page](#)
- [Trustee Memorial Honor Roll](#)

**Future Conferences**

[Upcoming Conferences](#)

**Trustee Line for December 2015**

A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 12/31/15.

**Questions and Answers Involving  
Individual BOT Committees**

Any GA member can contact the Chairs of the Committees listed below with any questions or concerns they might have. The Chairs will answer the emails and the resulting issues will be posted under each committee involved in the email. This will serve as help for other members, Intergroups or areas, who may be going through the same situations. The emails will not breach anonymity and will be redacted to make sure names and areas are not included in this section. You are also invited to click the individual committee links on the left margin, for more information.

1. [Blue Book Revision](#)
2. [BOR/BOT Revenue Review](#)
3. [Conference Oversight](#)
4. [Digital Media](#)
5. [Hotline Implementation](#)
6. [Intergroup](#)
7. [International Relations](#)
8. [Literature](#)
9. [Pressure Relief](#)
10. [Prisons - Canada](#)
11. [Prisons - US](#)
12. [Public Relations](#)
13. [RSO - Regional Service Offices](#)
14. [Telephone Meeting Conference Calls](#)
15. [Trustee Election Guidelines](#)
16. [Trustee Removal Merit Panel](#)
17. [Trustee Website](#)
18. [Video Meeting Format](#)

**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.	<a href="#">Monthly Bulletin</a>	12/8 10:22 AM	3
2.	<a href="#">Health Insurance and Matching Retirement Contributions</a>	12/11 11:43 AM	3
3.	<a href="#">Wristbands</a>	12/7	3

		3:18 PM	
4.	<a href="#">Fantasy Sports</a>	12/30 12:14 PM	26

<b>Monthly Bulletin</b>
-------------------------

12/7/15 - 12:34 PM

The bylaws currently require the International Executive Secretary to publish a monthly bulletin. The cost of that bulletin is about \$60,000 per year according to the ISO. I have submitted an amendment to the bylaws that would allow each lifeliner either to: 1, get it in hard copy, as is; 2, get it electronically, either by posting or email; or 3. not to get it at all. Further, I have suggested instead of sending 2 copies to each meeting, only send 1. In our current state of financial affairs, it only seems fiscally prudent to take those actions that help reduce the excess of expenditures over income, without significantly harming the fellowship.

Jim G. - Area 6 Trustee, South Florida

12/7/15 - 5:35 PM

Hi Jim,

I can't see anything in the By Laws re: Bulletin requirements, I may well have missed it if it is there, but I do see this in the Guidance code.

Article XVI Section 5:

The International Executive Secretary shall be responsible to publish a monthly Gamblers Anonymous Bulletin and distribute (via US mail, email or other secured means) copies of same to each group in our Fellowship. Number of copies sent to each group shall be set by the Board of Regents

I'm not sure if that's what you meant to refer to. In any case I presume there is a reason it's not already done electronically, I can't think of that reason or put my finger on it at the moment.

I'm interested in your proposals but not totally in agreement at this time, obviously I am only going on your initial thoughts and I'm glad that the Trustee Line is serving a purpose to have an opportunity to tease out an item in advance of it being presented or even put on the agenda, especially given that one of my own items only drew one brief unchallenged comment from the floor before crashing, so I'm all in favour of an item having the opportunity of initial discussion, given the two year rule.

I'm not aware of any written guideline or decision by the BOR as to the amount of copies to be sent, again I may be missing something and hopefully someone will let me know if I am.

As things stand, of your three proposals, I can vouch for the fact that two already exist and I would be in favour of the third, ie. Receiving the bulletin electronically, if there were no other impediments to that being an option.

Again, as it stands, I know for a fact that the members in my area are satisfied that the ISO has met their requests on Bulletin matters and as such see no reason to have a By law change for options that already exist.

I suppose we have probably all recently had several warnings to maybe consider unintended consequences more carefully, however, I definitely hope that it will be possible to have the bulletin delivered electronically and support your concept of fiscal responsibility and also leading by example.

Odie. B. - Area 36, Republic of Ireland South East, Current Trustee

12/8/15 - 10:22 AM

Jim,

I struggle with those who think everything about GA is just right. These same people don't think any change is warranted in the Combo Book to sections similar to page 11, where references are made to mink coats and nice clothes, to name a few. These references are a throwback to the early days of GA. We struggle with relevance and that ties into this subject.

The Lifeline Bulletin is becoming less and less of an item that people use for purposes other than to check and see if their own anniversary date is listed. Over the years I have given it to countless people in the rooms I have attended. They look at a few pages and then hand it back, never to look at another issue.

We need to completely stop the printed version and if it is still deemed to be an

important part of GA, then we need to publish it digitally. Of course the cost for something like this is probably going to drop the annual cost by 90%, but doing it digitally is what could help to turn the tide of member sentiment and make us a bit more relevant. Smart phones, and the IOT (Internet of Things) has planted its roots in our society and those roots for printed material are quickly rotting.

We need to stop the subscription service of the Lifeline Bulletin. At best, it is a \$3,000 income situation. We should give those subscribers a pro-rata refund for the unused portion of their subscription.

Some will complain that they don't have an Internet connection, so they would be deprived of the Bulletin if it were no longer printed. Aside from those people becoming more and more of a minority, what's to stop them from going to someone in their room and asking them to print a copy?

The overriding question is whether our shrinking membership and low member retention rate, is directly contributing to a lack of contributions, in order to keep up with the increase in expenses the ISO has every year.

The Board of Regents is responsible for this potential move. We can't do it in the middle, because there would still be costs involved that are part of the printing and delivery of the Bulletin. True, our unit cost would increase with fewer issues to print, but why cater to a small group people who could get the Bulletin through someone else.

The Board of Regents is dragging their feet on this, and instead pushes up the cost of literature and presses the membership for more and more money. I'm in favor of the literature price increases, as the formula the BOR uses was too low to begin with. However, that hits the rooms and the members. The incessant solicitation for money is not the image the ISO should be pushing with the members.

Taking \$50,000 plus off the expense side of the budget, is a no-brainer. This doesn't affect anyone in a negative net result, unlike the call from those who say the salaries are too high for the ISO employees, and we could save money as a corporation by cutting benefits, etc.

Topics like this need to be forced on the Board of Regents, as they are classically slow to make moves like this on their own. 9 people are making decisions that do not include a full range of options and opinions on each item. You want proof of that? Why hasn't the BOR made the changeover to QuickBooks, instead of continuing to use the current 'One-Write' pegboard system, that is a huge cost of time, resources and money? The BOR is going ahead with eReaders for the Kindle and Nook. Who reads these, talking about relevance. Where are the iTunes, Google Play and other platforms that ARE being used by the world?

I guess I shouldn't stray off topic. So Jim, submit your item, but make it for a complete shift to digital format. The Trustees who see that and are tired of getting hammered for more contributions, and understand that dropping \$50,000 in annual expenses would probably take us into a monthly cash positive status. Those Trustees, who I think constitute a very large majority, would help you get it passed.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

---

### **Health Insurance and Matching Retirement Contributions**

12/7/15 - 1:56 PM

Currently the ISO pays for health insurance for employees and matches the employee contributions to a retirement plan. I have submitted an amendment to the bylaws that would only permit such payments when the income of the ISO exceeds the expenses of the ISO by an amount equal to those expenditures. I am not aware of many organizations the size of the ISO, 4-5 employees and an annual budget of about \$500,000 that provide either or both of these employee benefits. Again, until such time as the ISO is able to meet all its financial obligations in a timely manner, I think it is fiscally prudent for us to refrain from those expenditures that are not integral to our mission.

Jim G. - Area 6 Trustee, South Florida

---

12/10/15 - 8:41 AM

Hi Jim,

I'm presently strongly opposed to your proposals as outlined in this topic, for the following reasons. 1 ) It is ultimately we members who pay or should pay and I'm never in favor of using terms like fiscal prudence to remove or cover over taking responsibility. In fact I believe, regardless of whether the membership can

or will pay, removing the responsibility is neither the solution to the problem nor reflective of recovery and seems clearly to be outside the guidelines, suggestions, etc. contained in our literature and indeed general experience as a Fellowship.

2 ) I'm not convinced your example compares like with like by stating the amount of employees and annual budget, that seems to omit at least one crucial factor, who the International Service Office actually serves.

Given that the ISO serves not just the existing membership worldwide as well as an unquantifiable number of people who are not yet members but may need to be in the future, I refer to what seems to have been our original primary purpose, stopping and helping others to stop.

3 ) Given the variable nature of self funding, amending By-Laws to make timeliness compulsory for the ISO would be unreasonable and doesn't fit, in my view. It also seems unreasonable to ask employees to guess whether they will have these fundamental "Benefits".

4 ) I think the expenditures you refer to can never be described as anything other than responsibilities which are fundamentally integral to the basic Tenets of Recovery.

Again I refer to our purpose in the first place and can't emphasise how strongly I feel that the functions performed by the ISO are vitally integral to our very existence, to countenance removing such fundamental "Benefits" from the undoubtedly dedicated and arguably underpaid and overworked employees of the ISO would be unconscionable, in my view.

I fully support your search for a solution and am a big supporter of fiscal and other areas of responsibility, I just don't think removing the responsibility is a recovery or unity based answer. I'd much rather see an attack on this fundamental problem focusing on encouraging membership to step up to responsibilities.

Odie B. - Area 36, Republic of Ireland, South-East, Trustee

---

12/11/15 - 11:43 AM

I agree we should look into These 2 costly items

The ISO should have 1 full time employee with benefits and the rest part-time employees. Most folks I know, in small business companies, pay into their health benefits and have no retirement accounts. I'm not saying we should do the same now, but a least be open to the idea as part of a cost savings measure.

We currently have a negative cash flow and should look into raising revenue and cutting cost. That is business philosophy 101.

Regards,  
Joe B. - Area 15, New York

---

<b>Wristbands</b>
-------------------

12/7/15 - 2:16 PM

The bylaws specifically allow for a category of literature called "appropriate literature".

I have submitted an amendment to the bylaws that would specifically allow wristbands to be categorized as appropriate literature only if they contain one, or more, of the 9 sayings approved by us; example: day at a time, etc.

Many of us wear wristbands with one or more of these sayings without conscious thought. Right now, if a room distributes or sells them, it would be in violation of the bylaws. This doesn't seem to make much sense to me since it is the medium that is wrong, not the saying. There currently are rooms that give out wristbands, and unless this change is approved, they will continue to be in violation of the bylaws. The consequences of that are the Board of Trustees will have to determine if they will continue to be GA rooms. I think we need to be inclusive of all compulsive gamblers. The bylaws should accommodate that thought process.

Jim G. - Area 6 Trustee, South Florida

---

12/7/15 - 3:10 PM

Regarding Jim G's proposal regarding "Wristbands", it is a Guidance Code item, not By-Laws.

Bill B. - Area 6, South Florida, BOR, PT NJ

---

12/7/15 - 3:18 PM  
Hi Bill,

Here is my submission:  
item = To classify wristbands with one, or more, of the 9 slogans of GA as follows:

One Day At A Time  
Keep Coming Back  
Let It Begin With Me  
I Can Only Change Myself  
It Works If You Work It  
Help is As Near As My Phone  
Work The Steps  
Get Involved and Be Of Service  
Be A Lifeliner

as Appropriate Literature under Article VII, Section 8 of the Bylaws

Jim G. - Area 6, South Florida

---

<b>Fantasy Sports</b>
-----------------------

1st Current Trustee  
12/8/15 - 4:46 PM

I have been quite perplexed to learn that there is a growing group of members that think fantasy sports is not gambling, and have been participating.

Our definition aside, I think this is a very dangerous situation that has to be addressed. The future of the program is at risk. I'm anticipating new members coming into rooms (and they will come) hearing that members with some time are gambling on Fantasy sports will be turned off and never come back or worse.

That's the scenario.

My question is how do we handle senior members that are gambling and refuse to admit it and show up every week and announce themselves?

Any feedback would be greatly appreciated.

Regards,  
Joe B. - Area 15, New York

---

12/8/15 - 10:17 PM

The definition of gambling on page number 14 of our Combo Book is my reference point to separate gambling from non-gambling. I would not enter a Fantasy contest even if prizes were not offered. As I interpret the definition of gambling there is no question that Fantasy Sports is gambling for me.

If a member asks me if Fantasy Sports is gambling, I would answer "it is gambling for me." It is not my place to tell any member they are gambling, if they are gambling and do not choose to admit it they are only fooling themselves.

The new or newer members know right from wrong and can make any decision they want to, they will be accountable and responsible for their individual actions. If they want to have abstinence & recovery they will figure it out fairly quickly.

Our fellowship puts forth that the individual defines if they are gambling and states whether or not if they gambled is by their own admission.

Members may shop for advice and question others until they find what answers they are looking for and do as they please.

The only requirement to be a member is a desire to stop gambling.

Members may choose to play golf for money or drinks or lunch, members may choose to bowl in a league with prizes at the end of year dinner, members may play in Scrabble Tournaments for money but defend themselves that they will not take the cash prizes, and on and on. Those members may state they are not gambling. I would not engage in any of those situations.

For me, I will continue to set an example and be of service and continue my abstinence and recovery one day at a time. Last bet July 15, 1970.

2nd Current Trustee  
12/8/15 - 11:59 PM

I was going to sit this segment out and hopefully watch all the support come in for Joe's topic, and then Bill sent in his response.

I take a very different slant on this issue. Fantasy sports is gambling, pure and simple. The definition of gambling is crystal clear in the first 4 words. ANY BETTING OR WAGERING... One or both of these conditions has to be met to have something called gambling. Everything that follows in the definition are further clarifications of the first 4 words. Just because something involves chance or skill, by itself, doesn't make it gambling. However, if someone makes a bet or wagers, then it is gambling for the compulsive gambler.

I take exception to Bill's passive approach of how he sees this issue, by saying that he can't tell others what is or isn't gambling, but he knows what is gambling for him. We have a responsibility to everyone who walks into the room and tell them what is gambling, as per the definition. The point that I agree with Bill on, is that it is 100% up to each member, as to whether they admit that they are gambling. They can't be asked to leave the room if they don't admit to being a compulsive gambler, but they have to admit to having a desire to stop gambling, if they want to stay in the room. Yes, that sounds harsh, but if you are running anything other than an open meeting, that process should be invoked for those who don't have admit to being a compulsive gambler.

Getting back to our responsibility, let's take a new member walking into the room who has been plagued with fantasy sports. Do we just say that it's up to them to figure out if it's gambling? I understand the subtlety of that procedure, but what if we said to that same member that it was gambling, as per the definition of gambling on page 14? Not giving the member a firm idea as to why we are all in the meeting and leaving that call up to the new member, is the best way to have that be his first and only GA meeting. Put the answer right in his face, and it confirms that he has taken a very different path by coming into the GA room.

Existing members who don't admit to gambling with activities like that, have to be called out in the room, when they talk about these situations. Whatever their reasons are for not admitting that they are gambling, the room can't condone their complete dismissal of the definition of gambling.

I especially like the examples Bill cited of how members let their egos get away from them by not admitting to gambling over golf, bowling and Scrabble tournaments, to name but a few. When people rationalize why acts like that are not gambling, I am reminded of 2 posters I saw on the walls of a rehab facility I have spoken at, as part of a GA speaking engagement in NJ. The first one said: This is not Burger King – you can't have it your way. The second one said: Denial is not a river in Egypt.

Let's stop being so passive about this subject and give the new and existing members the guidance they so desperately need.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

---

3rd Current Trustee  
12/11/15 - 5:57 PM  
Joe,

Thanks for concern about the fantasy sports league issues within our program. As we have talked about and I went to Cancun to discuss, I believe this a huge opportunity for our program. The Trustees from Maryland/Virginia had their agenda item pass the first vote in Cancun, to add fantasy sports to the end of first paragraph at the top of page 14, after "office pool".

The opportunity is for all members to have this discussion in their rooms about this addition to our combo book. Younger members totally understand and want to speak about it. That open discussion at intergroups, format meetings, weekly topic meetings, etc, I think that involvement will answer some of your concerns.

I think the next meeting I chair, my topic might be "do you think as a Trustee I should vote yes or no during the second vote in Arizona to add fantasy leagues to our yellow book " I think the therapy that night will be intense.

Thanks,  
Kent D. - Area 15, New York

---

4th Current Trustee

12/11/15 - 6:17 PM

Like David, I was going to remain quiet on this subject, but the discussion has drawn me in.

Post:

During my first couple of years in GA, I was in a fantasy league at my job with my co-workers. It was a great social event with a mock draft and we kept our teams throughout the season. No money was wagered and it was all about bragging rights and good natured teasing. I never even considered it gambling, there was no betting or wagering. This behavior did not cause a "growing or continuing problem in any area of my life". This type of friendly social interaction was not what drove me to GA – spending way too much time and money at casinos is what drove me to GA.

I stopped the league after I became a supervisor of those co-workers because it was not appropriate to be trash talking with my employees. I was no longer at the same social level in the workplace. I didn't stop because I thought it met the definition of gambling for me. That never entered my mind until these new types of daily leagues came into existence and the promotion of how much money could be made. I would never enter these types of daily leagues because that would be gambling for me.

Since then, I have joined a golf league at work with my peers. It is a great way to relieve stress from the daily grind of work, get to know my peers better and network for the advancement of my career. This league does have a banquet at the end of the year and there are cash prizes for the top teams. I don't consider this "betting or wagering" for me. I don't care about the cash prizes; that is not why I play. I don't need someone else to define what is gambling for me, but some people feel that GA needs some universal, all-encompassing definition. The best I can offer is what it says in the combo book on page 9: "...a person whose gambling has caused growing and continuing problems in any department of his or her life." What a great statement; I apply it to many areas of my life to keep me in balance.

This kind of debate is not new. In other 12 step programs people question whether drinking non-alcoholic beer/wine or eating food cooked in alcohol is considered a relapse. There is no yes or no answer, it goes back to the individual. If any behavior creates within me a desire to return to the casino or start gambling again, I have to stop that behavior...for me. If I applied the rigid standards of GA to my AA program, I could not attend a GA conference where alcohol is served. But, through both programs, I have made peace with the fact that I cannot drink or gamble safely - but others can.

We need to stop trying to tell other people what to do and instead focus on telling them how the 12 steps, service work and the fellowship has removed our own obsession with gambling. This is a spiritual program where the strength comes from one compulsive gambler talking to another, no amount of written "guidelines" will replace that. If we are living an honorable life and displaying the human qualities of kindness, generosity, honesty and humility, other compulsive gamblers will ask us how we got there and they will be inspired to take the steps we have taken to get to that same place.

Paul S. - Area 17, Connecticut

---

Well, well, well...

I finally get the opportunity to offload a few things from my shoulders. That is namely the frequent references to GA versus AA. Paul, this response is going to cover a few things, so get a cup of coffee and grab a seat.

I was fine with what you wrote, until midway through your third paragraph. I by no means am saying that whatever has been submitted has to be acceptable to my way of thinking, but you did leave a rather large handle for me to write a response with my own personal feelings.

You may not need someone to define what gambling is, but the definition of gambling is very clear. As I said in my previous post, it's the first 4 words. Any betting or wagering... Without this definition, our members would thrive in taking back their will, in defiance of recovery Step 3. For the newer members who don't understand the steps, it needs to be stated so people know where the line is. That's as far as we can go. If the person doesn't want to admit to the fact that he or she is gambling, that is no longer the room's problem. Without the challenge from the members, what message are we saying to the newer members? It's clear, we are telling them you can do what you want until you feel like you are gambling.

Your reference to the quote on page 9 of the Combo Book, is not usable,

because you left off the beginning of the sentence. It refers to a description of a compulsive gambler, not what gambling is. I agree it is a great statement, but doesn't help to make your point.

To you point about drinking non-alcohol beer. In the US, beer/wine that has less than 0.5% alcohol by volume can legally be called non-alcoholic. That alone brings a parallel to me for a sports bettor who bet \$100 on a every game, who now thinks he can now bet \$5 and it would be ok. I would think that anyone in AA would know this from other members. Making the decision to drink that stuff is a choice of that member. Whether they care to admit it, is their business.

I can't speak to the cooking wine or any other alcohol aspect, but I would think if someone was serious about their sobriety in AA, they would confirm with the server that no alcohol is used before the order goes to the kitchen. Again that is a choice.

Your last paragraph is very solid regarding people focusing on the Recovery Steps, along with all the other references. However, there is a span of time that is quite long from the time a new member comes into the GA rooms and they begin to grasp a hint of what the Steps really are. This is the time in which we try to help the members to understand who they are and what is dangerous behavior, in addition to what gambling is. It's the good old experience, strength and hope, at work.

New members have to understand what gambling is. They have the option to declare themselves as a compulsive gambler. Many times, a member will make an admission without saying he/she is a compulsive gambler. There will always be someone to break in and ask the person if they are a compulsive gambler. If that admission is not forthcoming, some in the room will not allow the person to speak, which is completely wrong. But how many would then ask if the person has a desire to stop gambling?

The point of all this is that we have a definition of gambling. New members who are in fantasy sports are gambling if they make that all important bet or wager. I know of people who come in with a sports gambling problem and put many years together, but then say they are day trading. While they sit there and say it's not gambling, because we all know when we are gambling, they are gambling – period the end. If new members come in doing fantasy sports, they need to be told it's gambling.

The real problem is dealing with members who have time in the program and have decided to take back their will and play fantasy sports. They will defend it as a non- gambling situation. That's because their egos will not allow them to admit this and lose their time in the program. It happens all the time. We have many people who are gambling, but won't admit it. We don't have to put them in a torture chamber to force them to admit they are gambling. But we also can't just sit there in silence, because silence is consent.

Fantasy sports has been touted by the lawyers in the field, as a game of skill and therefore it can't be considered as gambling. They can call it what they want, but for a compulsive gambler, gambling is defined as follows...any betting or wagering... which is what we look for. If someone is going try the skill pathway in program, we deal very directly with skill in the definition of gambling. Look at it next time on page 14, it's the only word in the definition that has quote signs before and after the word. Using quote marks is appropriate for words of questionable value.

Gamblers Anonymous is at a very serious cross road with this Fantasy Sports issue. It will either serve to distill what true recovery is for those who are involved and care to admit it as gambling, or it will spotlight those who are just counting days, months and years, by justification and rationalization. Unfortunately, there is no in between. We will see how galvanized the rooms are on this issue, as the controversy will continue to occupy many more discussions. Are we going to allow those who will tell others that Fantasy Sports is ok without saying anything to the contrary, or are we going to give the people the help they need with their recovery?

We can ease this shocking transition for many and not have to feel uncomfortable about it in the room. In Phoenix, we will have a second vote on adding it to the Combo Book. Let's hope it passes. Until then, remember – any betting or wagering. Where are you with that phrase?

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

---

12/12/15 - 4:11 PM

Paul I'm surprised by your post. Fantasy sports is gambling.

How can we tell a new member that some folks can gamble and they can't? We



had a young man show up last Wednesday night who was in bad shape caused by fantasy sports. We have a concrete definition that we read at every meeting. How can we get around it. I would be interested to know what suggestion you would give this new member.

This is the new world of gambling. The young persons will be coming in and we need to have an unambiguous line in the sand. Any betting or wagering for self or others, whether for money or not.

I agree we should send the message about service and the steps as this is the backbone of who we are, but leaving the door open to gamble would be detrimental to the future of the program.

Joe B. - Area 15, New York

---

12/12/15 - 9:27 PM

Joe,

Again thanks for opening this discussion about fantasy leagues and the profound effect it is having on our program today. Reading the posts above, it is clear that all GA members hopefully will participate in this dialogue within the rooms. Prior to the Cancun conference, rooms I visited the newer people who knew what fantasy was, were adamant that it was the worse type of gambling of all. What has slowly becoming apparent, is that members with a lot of clean time in GA were suggesting it wasn't gambling. Many having no clue what fantasy leagues were, or possibly were in leagues. Our society has created national holidays out of the Super Bowl, NCAA brackets, and every pro football game that gets played. Fantasy leagues are welded to all those games, and every other sports type game that is played. As a matter of fact, there are now new and growing Cinema MOVIE fantasy leagues, 5,6,7,etc movies handle gambling. (the demographic that doesn't watch sports) Joe, please keep talking about it until 2nd vote in Arizona

Kent D. - Area 15, New York

"Elves don't make scratch offs, so Santa doesn't give them"

---

12/12/15 - 9:54 PM

Gamblers Anonymous and abstinence & recovery has even made it through the Bridge Tournaments, Scrabble Tournaments, Bowling Leagues, who winds up with the centerpiece at a wedding, peel offs at fast food restaurants, business card drawings at a luncheon, board games with dice, spinners, or coins, board games with paper "money" and day trading, online poker and other forms of gambling without our fellowship ending.

New forms of gambling for members will sprout, especially from "Wall Street" where new games of chance are invented with new, sexy names.

When New York Intergroup 40 years ago brought forth a definition of gambling for the compulsive gambler it was broad enough to include all of the above and anything from the past and anything new that will be invented. In all that time only one revision was added and the definition has held to the test of time.

The problem regarding Fantasy Sports as to if it is gambling or not comes down to how one interprets the definition of gambling. There is no reason to define Fantasy Sports as a specific form of gambling. Could it possibly be that some members will defy and say that since they are not having a problem or wagering money, it does not apply to them? Probably, but, so what?

Members, whether they are Trusted Servants, Trustees, Officers of local Intergroups need not define to others what gambling is, just refer the questions to the definition on page 14.

As the English language is so broad, with some words with the same spellings with different definitions, the use of words in different order in a sentence or the tone changes meaning of what is said, the individual always knows what is gambling or not. Surrendering and acceptance for the individual is the key, not specific or added words to the definition or page 17.

If I remove my EGO, control and non-honesty issues and read the Gamblers Anonymous definition of gambling it explains to me what gambling is for me, not what gambling is for you.

My EGO and control issues used to jump to the forefront and tell any member that this and that was gambling. It is not my place or, in my opinion, to tell anyone that they are gambling. Are we a self-help group or a "tell-help" group?

In over 45 years of attendance, abstinence and recovery I have not met a member who did not know the difference between right or wrong. If I am correct, how can anyone, if being honest, say they do not know what is or is not

gambling?

I always answer the question posed to me as how that situation would and does apply to me. For me, I totally understand what gambling is for me.

I truly believe that "Honesty, Open-mindedness and Willingness are the key words in our recovery".

Bill B. - Area 6, Southern Florida, PT NJ  
Past & Current BOR

---

12/13/15 - 6:14 AM

Really great discussion on this topic and I appreciate the participation. I hope other Trustees whose typing fingers are itching will keep the dialog going.

As for adding fantasy sports to the combo book, I voted in favor of including it because of what is happening in the media today. I absolutely agree that the companies that we have seen all over the TV and the type of fantasy sports they promote are gambling. I do think it is going to hit young people hard and I think it should be addressed in our combo book.

I spent all day yesterday reflecting on defining gambling as "any betting or wagering..." and, if that definition includes all the items in Bill B's first paragraph above, I disagree with the definition. I disagree because it means ANYTHING. Have you ever driven 5 miles per hour over the speed limit? By the GA definition, you are gambling. You are betting on the probability of being seen by a trooper and whether or not you will get pulled over. If you enter your child into any type of competition where there is a prize, you are gambling. "Any" is a big word in our definition.

When a newcomer shows up at our GA meeting, I will always refer to our literature and point out what GA defines as gambling, and I try to encourage them to avoid or give up risky behavior. But if someone approaches me and asks for my experience or opinion on playing board games or a competitive sports league that may or may not have awards at the end, I will share my choices and always make it clear that if it created within me a desire to gamble, I would have to stop the activity.

I am a compulsive gambler, when I start betting, I cannot stop and I obsess about it when I am not gambling. Somewhere in that first year, the obsession was removed, I rarely think about gambling. Playing a board game, that has dice or play money, with my grandson is a non-issue for me when it comes to gambling - it does not cause the obsession to return or caused me to return to the casino and start gambling again. Am I missing some basic concept of GA here? Or are there other members who feel this way. If so, please speak up.

My fear is that we are pushing people away from GA who really need us when we make this broad judgement of what constitutes gambling. I fear that if someone in Joe B's meeting tells this young man that he can no longer play board games or cards with his child, which has nothing to do with his problem with compulsive gambling on fantasy sports, it will force a tough decision on this new member.

These younger people who are coming to GA today may have not gone to the depths of misery as the gambler who spent four decades gambling. I fear it is the egos of long time members trying label some activity of the new member's life as gambling is driving them away from GA and that saddens me. That new person knows what brought them to GA, address that issue and give them time to figure out what other behaviors have to change to prevent a return to gambling.

Paul S. - Area 17, Connecticut

---

12/13/15 - 10:49 PM

Are we now comparing driving over the speed limit with (daily) fantasy sports leagues. The thing that makes me sad is folks in the program a long period of time think that the definition of gambling is does not apply to them.

During my 1st sit-down one of the questions I asked was, "do I really have to stop gambling forever"? I was told for compulsive gamblers like us the 1st bet is the one to avoid. I am so grateful I had the right people with me that day.

The question I ask is "What do we say to a new member when another member is in fantasy sports leagues?" Thanks for taking part in the discussion.

I would personally ask that member to leave the room siting actions detrimental to the room and GA as a whole.

Thanks for taking part in the discussion.

Joe B. - Area 15, New York

---

12/14/15 - 1:53 AM

Hello GA fellowship,

Thanks for your post Paul S. As well as everyone else. There are a million forms of gambling. I suppose we can add to our list every time there is a growing trend among society with a particular form of gambling. For me I knew exactly what my problem was and why I was walking through a gamblers anonymous door for the first time. Trust me no one in GA had to spell out what my problem was for me. I think we are pretty smart people, even newcomers. We might be sick but we are not dumb. I wish more time was spent in the GA rooms talking about the solution. We all know what the problem is! I don't think GA's survival depends on an ever improving definition of gambling. I think it depends on sponsorship and the recovery program. At least that's what I got from you Paul S.

Joe T. - Area 2, Northern CA, former Trustee

---

12/15/15 - 6:35 AM

My apologies to Joe B. since I did not really address the question he was asking. Based on the vote in Cancun, my feelings, and my personal discussions with GA members, I have no doubt that these recent fantasy sports are a form of gambling. Any newcomer should be encouraged to avoid this type of activity, especially if it is what brought them to GA.

Not everyone in GA follows the rules, that should be clear just from this topic's discussion. Just because someone is playing fantasy sports does not mean you can't tell the newcomer to avoid this behavior. I still maintain that GA members sharing their personal experience with the newcomer is what has the most impact. The newcomer knows what brought them to GA and must face squarely the facts of their illness. If they are a compulsive gambler, any return to gambling, in whatever form, is going to continue the downward spiral eventually.

So Joe, I would tell the newcomer it is a form of gambling. As for the members who are playing these fantasy sports, I would ask that they do not share that in the rooms and cite unity step one, since the disagreement will affect the group unity. They should not need, nor will they get, the group's acceptance of their behavior, in my opinion. As far as asking them to leave, as long as they say they have a desire to stop gambling, they are a member of GA. I don't know how we can ask any member to leave the room, hopefully it will never come to that.

Paul S. - Area 17, Connecticut

---

12/15/15 - 7:24 AM

Paul, does our Fellowship now encourage seasoned members to lie to "protect" the new member? How refreshing to see a new interpretation of honesty that I am not familiar with. Let me figure this out, with 45 years of non-gambling, I can now gamble on Fantasy Sports and "keep it quiet" so I do not "affect group unity".

Joe, "what do we say to a member".... How about "take a look at the definition of gambling and you will be able to figure it out".

Bill B. - Area 6, Southern Florida, PT NJ  
Past & Current BOR

---

5th Current Trustee

12/15/15 - 9:03 AM

Bill, I didn't read that at all in Paul's post, I'd humbly suggest a re-read on your part. Also, it's ironic you earlier referred to NY as the source of the definition of gambling, saying it has stood the test of time, when the actual topic is surrounding problems a member in NY wants help with, just ironic.

Paul,

Thanks for, in particular, your second post in this topic, which clarified for me that you saw Fantasy sports as gambling. I don't agree with Bill's reading of your recent post at all, I read it as you suggesting, in the spirit of unity, that members think of the consequences for the group before they share outrageous information in their therapy, in a manner that would give the impression, particularly to the newcomer, that such outrageous behaviour is part of the message of GA, just because one or more "Senior" members say so. It clearly is not. How anyone could read that as you suggesting a "A new form of honesty" is beyond me, in any case, I did not read it like that at all and I read the desire for unity in your post. I'm with you on that.

Paul, you also brought up the old chestnut of AA somehow having dealt with

this, so I will comment on that first.

No they did not, there is no reference point in the fellowship of AA or any other fellowship for the opinions of a very small minority of their members who choose to give the impression that their "Other fellowship" supports their views. Nor did AA or anyone else decide for G A what our policy should be. Saying or inferring that they did is exactly the same as these Senior members referred to by Joe in this topic using their therapy in a G A room to infer to the new, vulnerable member that their outrageous behaviour reflects G A policy. So I humbly suggest to any member who feels a constant reference to "Their other fellowship" and a constant invitation to members to divert from their primary purpose by sending them in search of this "Superior platform" to please consider the detrimental effects to the unity of this fellowship.

That's not about whether or not there is something out there that helps or not, it's actually about exactly what this topic is about, people, "Senior members of G A " in this case, using the benefits of their membership to spread some other message.

I will also take this opportunity to reflect my opinion that, comparisons of Fantasy sports with monopoly or, just as ridiculously, with " Non alcoholic beer" do not stand up to scrutiny and if anything, belittle the illness of compulsive gambling.

As there is still a propensity to quote "Other fellowships" let's broaden the knowledge base a little to prove the point in a way that is actually directly connected with this topic.

AA members know all too well that their literature states clearly that there is an unwritten rule in EACH group that, where a member turns up drunk and disrupts group unity, that member should be asked to leave.

So, how does that differ with the suggestion by Joe B that he would ask someone who is gambling, sharing about it as if it's ok and clearly disrupting Unity, to leave ? The point I am making is not whether it is correct or not to ask someone to leave a group, the point is this, how can the minority of members claiming their "Other fellowship" guidelines should be followed in G A, but only when it suits their point of view.

Joe (B) I'm glad you clarified and expanded on your question and re – focussed the topic. I would not have thought of asking the member to leave as an option, but now I'm thinking you may be on to something. For the moment all we do here is trust that groups will, at the very least, ensure that anyone who is gambling ( including fantasy sports ) will not even be asked to chair a meeting and the 90 day qualification for comments or feedback be respected. Obviously, you have the added problem where these are "Senior members" and probably well versed in how to propagate Dis – Unity.

As far as basic concepts of G A go and whether they are being missed by anyone who refers our members elsewhere, here's one basic concept worth looking at, The original intent in G A was to countenance against a sudden and spectacular " Spiritual awakening" not because there was anything wrong with that, quite simply it was to reflect that such a spectacular event to a compulsive gambler would mimic the Euphoria of winning the lottery.

The simple reason it is completely out of order for a small minority of dual addicted members to to use their membership of G A to divert members elsewhere can be seen also in this topic, but it is another topic really.

Odie. B. – Area 36, Trustee, Ireland South East

---

12/15/15 - 10:02 AM

Joe,

Again thanks for moving this important thread forward. As I am reading, it is very very clear this conversation needs to and hopefully will expand to the rooms.

As I mentioned in Tampa, Cherry Hill & Cancun, fantasy leagues are the perfect storm for sports gambling in the sports entertainment society we live in. It does not equate to any other form of gambling, it has ALREADY SUNK its claws deep into the under 18 demographic. Dozens of 24hr radio sports shows, hundreds of TV shows, Internet, phones, etc & WiFi has kicked into another gear, on all levels. I will continue to ask people in my rooms if I should vote yes or no and why?, for adding "fantasy sports" to page 14 after "office pools" during the second vote in Arizona. Just in this thread alone the reading has been very interesting, and clearly important to discuss.

Kent D. - Area 15, New York

"For a compulsive gambler, abstinence without recovery, means you're gambling that you don't gamble"

---

6th Current Trustee

12/15/15 - 9:41 PM

The colloquy pertaining to whether fantasy sports might or might not be gambling is baffling to say the least. Fantasy sports involves putting up money to win more money down the line. Fantasy sports is not an "asset" like a stock or a parcel of real estate that can be purchased for investment purposes with the caveat that it "might" go down in value. It either performs to a measurable positive endpoint (against great odds) or it disappears entirely. If that is not the true definition of gambling, I don't know what is!

One other thing about the so-called slippery slope of innocuous amounts of a potentially addictive substance to an addict. As a former regional pharmacy director for a chain of hospitals specializing in chemical addictions, I can tell you unequivocally that one of the tenets of addiction medicine is that you NEVER expose an addict to even miniscule amounts of whatever it is the addict is addicted to for fear of keeping those parts of the brain "in action" (how's that for a gambling term?). At my hospitals, this included stocking only non-alcoholic cough syrups and alcohol-free mouthwashes. David M's example of non-alcoholic beer and cooking wine is thus, completely on point.

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

---

12/16/15 - 12:32 PM

To all of our Trustees and Former Trustees:

Unity Step 10 states that 'Gamblers Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the Gamblers Anonymous name ought never be drawn into public controversy.' I can just see our newspaper editors and TV/Radio stations salivating over getting our opinion on fantasy sports, if they haven't done so in many areas - just as they did try to get our opinions on card rooms and casinos. In a GA meeting, I would have to stop the person speaking and advise they were addressing an outside issue and thus would be in violation of Unity Step 10. I'm not sure I would ask them to leave the room - they might need help - and I don't want someone to feel they could never return to a GA room. We are supposed to lead by example.

Fantasy sports is a new issue for many of us in GA, and we will undoubtedly have to face other 'new' issues in the future. How we react is of greater importance. I have been told not to sit in judgment of anyone (one of my greatest character defects), and concentrate on my own flaws as well as clean up my own back yard. If I want to become a better individual, I have to change many of my past behaviors. I read the Definition of Gambling, not only to accept what wiser members have felt, but also to remind myself of the illness I have. My choice.

I'm an old bat, and that's okay. I have been a football fan for 63 years - since I was 11 years old and we got our very first TV. I watch college football and pro football - and I can because I would never bet on one. Before coming to GA I used to participate in the weekly football pools and Super Bowl pools. I've given that up and don't miss it a bit. I watch in disappointment when I see and hear sportscasters advising whom to place on one's fantasy sports team. To me, I don't care how sports' 'lawyers' spin the gambling issue. In my opinion, it IS a gambling issue. The Serenity Prayer tells me I cannot change someone else - I can only change how I react.

With love, hope, faith and respect for our Fellowship,  
Linda S., Member of Area 7C, Oklahoma  
Former Trustee, Area 3A, San Diego

---

7th Current Trustee

12/17/15 - 10:24 PM

To My Fellow GA Brothers and Sisters,

Wow! 4 years as a Trustee, another 3 or 4 reading the Trustee line before that and a sitting member of the Trustee Website Committee, I couldn't be any more thrilled for the spirited, healthy debate going on regarding this highly controversial subject.

There is a lot to chew on here and I'll do my best to keep it short:

Fantasy sports is gambling. Period. The most concise way to describe it is people are betting on players as opposed to teams. The fantasy sports companies will tell you the picking of players is a matter of skill which I think most of us could say we felt the same way when picking horses, teams and the like.

Do we tell someone (of any length of abstinence) what is or isn't gambling? We have as much of a responsibility (or more) of telling them this than how many meetings to go to, whether or not their spouse belongs in Gam-Anon, how much money to walk around with or any of the multitude of "suggestions" we make. If a person is not abstinent, there is no hope for recovery.

What do we do if a person refuses to admit they are gambling? It's been said we can't take someone's abstinence away. That said, the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop gambling. On a side note (and in a closed meeting), if someone is not willing to say they have a desire to stop gambling (and like anything else, this is based on self admittance) then that person should be told that if they want to go to GA, it would only be appropriate at an open meeting.

Does declining cash or prizes from events constitute not gambling? Someone posted that they golf in a league that offers cash prizes but didn't say whether they accepted them or not. Like many things, there are varying thoughts but the prevailing sentiment from many is that it is ok to participate in these events provided the league or person running the event knows that the compulsive gambler is exempt from accepting any cash or prizes irrespective of where they finish. For me, collecting the prize whether you care about it or not is definitely gambling.

Thanks for the provocative discussion and Happy Holidays to All!

Steve T. - Area 14, Long Island

---

12/18/15 - 6:11 PM,br> IN LOVE...ALWAYS IN LOVE...THE TRUTHS!

I've been reading all of the Posts on this topic of "Fantasy Sports Leagues" and all pretty much say that participating in a "Fantasy Sports League" is a form of Gambling for ourselves and also is supported by the definition of Gambling as stated in our Combo Book [I do agree!!]. So it must be a TRUTH [RIGHT!!]. So if it is a TRUTH then what is the problem?

I believe the problem lies in the fact that we encounter many so called "truths" in our Fellowship as we allow each Member to decide what Gambling is to them. Thus we have thousands of different "truths". Is that being considerate, kind, understanding or the "right thing to do" for the Member? Perhaps... But that type of thinking and attitude is called relativism and will "water down" any TRUTH. TRUTHS are not changed because someone may feel good or bad about the TRUTH or even personally disagree with the TRUTH. Thus, it can and has lead us to a much deeper problem. We "enable" the Member to retain a focus on themselves ONLY and thus Recovery is about "I" rather than the Member finding Recovery through "We". Our Fellowship is based upon many principles including the Steps of Recovery and Unity [especially look at Steps 1 and 11 of the Unity Program] and thus our Members are eventually called to find Recovery within themselves and also among Others ["We"]. This reminds me that if I am giving therapy in my bathroom to myself and never come into the Fellowship of GA to give and hear therapy, I will probably still be in my bathroom giving therapy to myself and will NEVER change. Thus, I will continue to live in a sad and lonely state of being. What is it about the rooms of GA or any other Fellowship of Recovery that enables us to CHANGE and be transformed into a Grateful and Joyful person. It is a loving and merciful God as Bill W so pointedly and boldly stated that allows us to have a spiritual awakening.

We have all been around life and also family in one form or another. Thus, do we allow our children to "run our homes" and tell us what is right or wrong... good or bad? I would hope not! As any family psychologist would encourage us we have to, through care and kindness, "parent" our children because we want the best for them as we love them. [Believe me I am not literally saying that we "parent" Members in our Fellowship but the same principles do apply]

Our Fellowship is a family based upon the many principles handed down through decades of wisdom and I believe inspired by God. If you question as to us being family, then please attend the meetings that I go to. Part of these principles is that there are certain TRUTHS and we must embrace and vigorously defend these TRUTHS. Such as the TRUTH of what is Gambling. [*...If it looks like a duck, quacks like a duck, it must be a duck...*]

Yet in reading the Posts we somehow are concerned about HOW to express or even whether we should impose this TRUTH as to what is Gambling onto another Member of our Fellowship. Either we are too NICE or too JUDGEMENTAL, or too EVASIVE or that we will be TAKING ANOTHER MEMBER'S INVENTORY or HURT THEIR FEELINGS or CREATE CONTROVERSY or CONFLICT in the rooms or GOD FORBID they leave the Fellowship, etc., etc. Well guess what ALL of the above may very well happen. So, because we have what appears to be issues does it mean we simply ignore

these TRUTHS.

So what is the common thread about all of the above that is paramount and paradoxical. It is that we are focused on our own finite selves and the finite limits that we observe in facing these challenges rather than the essence of the Steps of Recovery and Unity which is that we surrender to a loving and caring God.

This topic is NOT so much about myself or the other person per se and whether the Member is Gambling. It is really about the UNITY of our Fellowship and WE are ALL being affected. When I give therapy and live a life of Recovery, I affect every other person around me. I am no longer living in an isolated or self-absorbed world [as the outside world would want me to be...] BUT I am now APART of you and you are APART of me. That is GOOD and that is what happens in Fellowship. However, any and all circumstances of the world such as "Fantasy Sports Leagues" is just another activity that is and will, if we allow it, create DISUNITY. Why because we would rather ignore the TRUTHS that are the basis of our Fellowship than embrace the Steps of Recovery and Unity and especially Steps 11 of the Recovery and Unity Program. The Steps require Patience, Care, Wisdom and most important Honesty among us.

When I hear a Member expressing a lack of Honesty or care toward another Member in the rooms, I am called to approach that Member because what they say or do affects us ALL. I do not have the luxury to justify that this is okay and just walk away. As a result, I have had many challenging interactions in our Fellowship. BUT I am reminded that exchange must be in Love and at times, if necessary, I ask the help of other Members.

Step 11 of the Unity Program states in part that "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion..." and what is that attraction. Again, I believe that ALL of us hear these TRUTHS when we came in the rooms of GA and that these TRUTHS were expressed and transmitted in a Loving and Kind way. WHY? Because in spite of our human frailties and shortcomings TOGETHER in the rooms we begin to allow God to change our lives through the care and understanding of other Members and we TRUST that God is GOOD and will not fail us.

So do we ignore, become complacent, rationalize or even allow fear to control our lives when a Member ignores the TRUTH in giving Therapy and does not acknowledge they just Gambled after participating in a "FANTASY SPORTS LEAGUE" or for the GOOD of our Fellowship [all of us] and to accept our responsibility we in a Loving, Humble and through the wisdom of the Steps and the various principles already displayed by our Fellowship and, if necessary, with the help of other Members, call the Member to accountability.

To Love is to will the good of another. So let us make that better choice.

Lou W. - Area 3B, Colorado, Past Trustee

---

12/20/15 - 11:25 PM

Lou, I'm presuming the Bill W. you refer to is he of other fellowship fame, on that presumption, I'd have to straight away tackle the fairly liberal dose of mis-information in your post, in the hope you'll be open minded enough to simply see it for what it is and also see why it would only add to dis-unity. Despite that, I did enjoy your post and love the enthusiasm.

You wrote this above " It is a loving and merciful God as Bill W so pointedly and boldly stated that allows us to have a spiritual awakening."

You don't mention that the same guy clarified it as "A god of our own understanding as he presents himself in our group conscience" That's according to his fellowships literature, so it must be true.

There's no reference to any of his mind changes between the first occasion in 1939 that he wrote the steps, turning the 6 Tenets of the Oxford group into the initial 12 steps and the 1955 re-writing of the steps, again by the same guy.

There's no reference or discussion about his journey from Atheist to believer and on to Agnostic, or his three day journey from being cured to knowing there was no cure, etc. etc. All this before he "Turned" the fellowship over to the members.

You see Lou, the Internet isn't big enough to have the real discussion, so I believe our fellowship has it right, No Opinion and let's do what we do, without all this nonsense from a small minority of members, and sometimes non-members, of other fellowships.

I'd also be concerned about denial being called dishonesty in any form, not one of us can deny denial as our greatest enemy but I quote from our literature "without this delusion our misery would be unfathomable" or words to that

effect, memory defects taken into account. The point is, whether a new member or someone reverting to old behaviour, denial is a self protective mechanism, to protect from the pain, hardly a conscious attempt to be dishonest. I don't like denial in or out of the rooms but I don't bandy the words dishonest around when I encounter denial.

I think the real issue lies in Joe B's question, "what can we do" rather than what we can make others do. I support the calls for our fellowship to nail down it's position on Fantasy sports.

Given that they first appeared in Chicago ( The Center, right ? ) reportedly around the time our fellowship started, it's amazing they are only now coming fully into our consciousness as the big problem. No time to be wasted, let's focus on the real job.

Odie B. – Area 36, Ireland, South East, Trustee

---

8th Current Trustee

12/21/15 - 4:04 PM

I appreciate all the comments regarding a topic that is currently affecting our fellowship, problem gamblers and especially our youth.

Although engaging in fantasy sports may be seen as "a non-gambling" activity, my thoughts on this issue is that, for a compulsive gambler in recovery, the definition of GAMBLING according to Gamblers Anonymous, gives no justifiable reasoning for any G.A member to think or to believe that this type of activity is not related to "gambling". Our self-destructive addictive personality, while we were active in our disease, led us to believe that our gambling behavior was acceptable; that we deserved to have some fun, to enjoy ourselves, etc. we continued to deny the fact that we were destroying ourselves until our lives became unmanageable. Through Gamblers Anonymous we have learned that only one can tell whether one is a compulsive gambler, however, the explanation of 'GAMBLING' applies to each member of our fellowship; this statement is not negotiable once a person enters G.A and makes a decision to stay in the fellowship

One can fool oneself by seeking ways to justify one's behavior in relation to gambling activities, and that, I believe is a personal choice; however, Trusted Servants are called to adhere to the Principles of G.A to the best of one's abilities and to demonstrate with our behavior that our program works. New members are concerned about finding the way to stop gambling, it is the Trusted Servants and Sponsors to lead these new members through the path of recovery; if or when a Trusted Servant is manipulating his/her own "perception" of what gambling is, as in the case of Fantasy Sports, he/she is not only diluting the content of G.A but also misleading the new member.

I really find very disturbing the fact that, within our Fellowship, there are active members that think, feel or believe that betting on Fantasy Sports is not gambling; this I believe, is a self-defeating thought originated by one's self-destructive, addictive personality.

At all times, the main concern is to carry a message of hope to those who are afflicted by a gambling addiction...what we share about our program does impact those who are listening; how we live one's life, does affect those observing our behavior....

Sue F. - Area 3D, Arizona

---

12/22/15 - 12:49 AM

Joe,

This thread is so important, thanks, the sharing has been informative for this all important subject within GA. Many in my rooms know my story when it gets to fantasy leagues, many missed it in Cancun.

As quick as I can.... April 29, 1996, two days before I was going start a week of celebrating 90 days of not gambling in 3 different GA rooms.

I had gone to my baseball fantasy draft, the week prior. Back in those days there were 2man teams, I figured if I DIDN'T put up any money , and just consulted with him over our team/draft picks I was good. Fantasy league draft use to be the best part of playing fantasy, it was 5 hrs, dinner, etc.

The chairman of my Sunday night GA room asked me that miracle night "if I was still in baseball fantasy ?"...I said to myself after 3 hardcore months of going to GA (not gambling on nothing in my mind, and I didn't consider lotto gambling)..I gotta be honest"....so I said "yes"...he then said to me ..."if your partner wins, will he give you something?"...this was the moment of my life, I KNEW if I said no I



would be lying & keep my abstinence.... I said "of course he will, that's my boy", he then said to me "I think your gambling and I can't let you celebrate 90 days next week".....it was the FIRST time I had been HONEST in as long as I could remember, and I was totally devastated!!!! I put my jacket on!!! I had enough of this GA bu..... They left me alone, for awhile, I sat there past pissed, a crying, 220 lb, horse racing, poker playing stick of TNT. I knew my family, friends and myself were so happy just in those 90 days in GA. My sponsor signaled to me to take off my jacket... I did. He said to me "this program is about being honest, I will remind you of this moment at your 10 yr anni, which he did, and hopefully again at my 20 yr....May 1, 1996.

Along with many other unsettling things about fantasy, this GA conversation about fantasy leagues will hopefully continue and extend to our rooms before the 2nd vote in Arizona.

Kent D. - Area 15, New York  
"Pain is inevitable but suffering is optional"

---

12/22/15 - 6:37 PM

When I first began attending International Conferences and representing my Area as a trustee, I discovered a strange phenomenon among some of my brothers in the program. Occasionally, I would be asked what kind of gambling I engaged in before joining Gamblers Anonymous. When I would disclose this, I would sometimes get a distinct feeling of approval—as though my gambling method gave me more credibility in the program than others. I felt very uncomfortable about this, because I had been taught that gambling of any kind had the potential to ruin lives, destroy relationships and threaten the lives of those who suffer from compulsive gambling.

In my mind, it violates the basic premise of our program that there should exist any kind of hierarchy of gambling, as though the seriousness of the consequences of gambling are worse or more significant depending on the type of gambling that brought us to the rooms.

Those who enter our rooms do so because there is something very wrong in their lives. It makes my blood run cold to think that any member would minimize another's addiction by talking about engaging in that form of gambling. Like, I am sure, many others, I have heard members talk about how other forms of gambling don't put them into "action". This is dangerous territory and should never be overlooked, as it minimizes the very real struggles that others in the room may be having with that very form of gambling. I was never tempted by scratch-offs, but I know members in the program who were brought to their knees by that form of gambling. If I were to engage in that form of gambling--because it didn't put me into action--and spoke about it at a meeting, I would expect that another member would say something to me about it! How can our members learn about the program if it is not upheld in the room? How can someone who is struggling with a very real addiction feel safe and included if their form of gambling is condoned, even if only through silence?

I am perplexed that members talking about participating in fantasy sports—and that it's OK for them to do so--is even a topic of therapy.

This program works because we work together on our common problem. What form of gambling brings someone to a room is far less significant than the recovery that happens after they cross the threshold of their first meeting. Sharing our experience, strength and hope with newcomer and veteran member alike is what keeps our program alive and vital.

Jeannie B. - Area 8A, Minneapolis, MN

---

9th Current Trustee

12/23/15 - 5:36 PM

Hi All,

Last night (12/22/15) New York Intergroup passed the following motion:

"New York Intergroup takes the position that all fantasy sports leagues are considered to be gambling".

Happy holidays and happy new year to all!

All my best,

Tom Z. - Trustee, Area 15, New York, NY

---

10th Current Trustee

12/28/15 - 11:35 AM

Happy Holidays...

For one that has never gambled on sports, I see that this time of year offers both old and new potential compulsive gamblers an easy way to get hooked without thought on a seemingly harmless and low risk gambling alternative because the government says it's not gambling.

This idea of fantasy sports being a harmless and free or low wagering idea to have fun and be free from the gambling connection is a misdirected and dangerous introduction into the dream world of compulsive gambling.

Don't forget the GA definition of gambling, " Gambling for the compulsive gambler is defined as follows, any betting or wagering for self or others whether for money or not, no matters how slight or insignificant, where the outcome is uncertain or depends upon chance or skill constitutes gambling ". For it is so easy to get into and over your head without trying under the right set of circumstances.

For all you sports enthusiasts out there, go get a pizza, read a good book, use your telephone list because in the end your life depends upon it, gambling is gambling and don't forget that!

All the best as we find the New Year in 2016 and its life challenges...

Barry H. - Area 12, New Jersey

12/30/15 - 12:14 PM

Joe,

I think a couple of your questions were answered in my last post above. A few things happened that night in 1996 when I lost my abstinence because I was participating in a baseball fantasy league. A couple of them are:

1- The chairman KNEW what fantasy leagues were and KNEW I was gambling because I was involved, and promptly let me know. 2- I knew that if I was DISHONEST about being in a fantasy league just to save my 88 days of abstinence, I would be leaving the door to being in "action" cracked open ever so slightly.

That was almost 20 yrs ago, no doubt for me, not being in a fantasy league all these yrs has saved me on many issues, one being not losing thousands of hours watching useless professional sports, while lying to myself that I'm am not in action and gambling.

Kent D. - Area 15, New York

"It ain't how much clean time you got, but what kind of clean time you got"