



GAM-ANON®

SCHOOL KIT

FOR
ADMINISTRATORS
SUPPORT TEAMS
TEACHERS
STUDENTS
PARENTS

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THE SCHOOL KIT

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INTRODUCTION TO THE GAM-ANON SCHOOL KIT

This School Kit has been designed by Gam-Anon for the school community — its administrators, support staff, teachers, parents, students — as it considers gambling-related issues.

In addition to the pages in this kit, there are links to specific pages of our website www.gam-anon.org in the Appendix. We invite you to visit the website to learn more about Gam-Anon — a 12-Step self-help fellowship of men and women who have been affected by the gambling problem of another — Personal Experiences, Meetings, Literature, etc.

Every page of this kit and every linked page in the Appendix may be reprinted in its copyrighted form for your newsletters, mailings, bulletin boards, presentations, websites, etc.

Please know . . . Others have walked this path before; you are not alone.

For more information, please contact the
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FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND SCHOOL SUPPORT TEAMS

Dear School Administrator/School Support Team/School Leader,

The experience below confronted a school administrator, who is also the adult child of a compulsive gambler. Please read it for insight into a situation that you may face some day. Will you know what to do?

From day one as principal, she instituted an open door policy for her rather large and diverse staff, having frequent meetings and making it clear that she was a working administrator, that she was in the trenches with them, encouraging them to speak with her about anything — professional or not professional, the good news and the not-so-good. As in most schools, the staff had become “family,” supporting and encouraging each other on a daily basis.

So on one particular day, a staff member came to work early, obviously distressed. She came to speak to her principal, crying, as she told this story — her husband gambles excessively, is in debt, does not support the family, can't be trusted, and with two daughters now in college, how will she pay? How can she go on ...?

Without hesitating, the administrator said: You need to get to a Gam-Anon meeting to get support from people who have been through the same thing. Let's find one in our area, and if you'd like, I'll take you there.

This administrator knew what to do and say because her own father is in recovery from the illness of problem gambling. Her own parents have been attending Gamblers Anonymous and Gam-Anon for over 40 years. (Gamblers Anonymous for those with a gambling problem; Gam-Anon for those affected by another's gambling.) Because of her own personal experience and background, her response was a given: “Go to a Gam-Anon meeting!”

How many school administrators have that knowledge and/or compassion and confidence to say and act as she did?

What would you do if . . .

an employee came to you because he/she was struggling with someone else's gambling problem?

Would you be able to understand . . .

the common effects/experiences of those affected by the gambling of another?

Would you be able to offer . . .

help? purposeful information? where to find a Gam-Anon meeting?

Is your school guidance/psychology team aware of problem gambling, called the hidden addiction, and the resources available for those affected?

Look at the website www.gam-anon.org for all the information to help you help your staff, your students, your community . . . including meeting lists and the Gam-Anon Public Relations Kit.

FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Dear Classroom Teacher,

Please read this true experience shared by an experienced Gam-Anon member, who also is a classroom teacher.

It happened in my fifth grade classroom. We were planning a field trip, and I was collecting parent consent slips and chartered bus expenses from each student. For over a week, I kept reminding Bobby (not his real name) to bring in his envelope. Finally, out of frustration, I told Bobby that if I didn't get at least his consent slip the next day, I'd have to exclude him from the trip.

Before lunch, Bobby asked if he could stay behind and talk to me privately. He tearfully explained that his mother had thrown his father out of the house because he had been gambling away all of their money. Every time he asked his mother to sign the consent slip and give him the necessary \$5.00, she said to him, "Go ask your father, if you can find the bum. He's probably at the racetrack or the casino."

Now I understood. Because of my own experience, I realized what a terrible secret Bobby had been harboring. Bobby wasn't nearly as concerned about the field trip as he was about his parents. How difficult it must have been for him to share that with me. And how, because problem gambling is a hidden addiction, I had so insensitively badgered him.

Without hesitation, I knew what to do. With Bobby's consent, I got his mom to see our school social worker, who guided her to services available for problem gamblers and their families. Mom was also told about Gam-Anon, the same 12-Step self-help group that had saved my life many years prior to this incident. The social worker helped her find a local meeting to attend. Bobby went on the field trip with his classmates and continued to have a successful school year.

What would you do if . . . a student came to you because he/she was struggling with someone else's gambling problem? A parent? or classmate?

- What are the recognizable signs of student distress?
- How would you implement a plan to discretely help that student?
- What resource people in your school should be alerted and involved?
- Do you know about the resource of Gam-Anon?
- How would you find a Gam-Anon meeting for the student and his/her family?

Please look at our Gam-Anon Public Relations Kit on our website — www.gam-anon.org to find the answers to the above questions.

FOR PARENTS

Have you ever found yourself in any of these situations?

- *You're the parent of a college student and you are frantic — frantic with worry and confusion. Your son at college needs money to pay off a debt for a bet he made on the Super Bowl. It's not the first time he's come to you in trouble. It's not the first time he needs money to pay off a debt. What's the extent of his involvement in betting?*
- *You are confident - your child does not drink or use drugs. Your son stays home at night, playing poker with his friends. You think, "Better than running around out there. At least I know he's home, safe, and not putting anything into his body. I don't think poker can hurt him. Can it?"*

Or . . . have you ever said or thought these thoughts?

"My family is so into watching sports - we gather Sundays in front of the TV — that's what we do — in football season, baseball season, you name it. We watch for fun or we make friendly family bets — this is what we do . . . But, sometimes I wonder: is it okay for my kids?"

"My parents love going to the casino. And my 8 year old daughter can't wait to go there, too. She thinks it is so cool — what Nana and Grandpa do! But sometimes I wonder is it 'cool' or a problem? What message is she getting?"

"Will they kill him . . . or us?" wonders the mom whose gambling son owes book-makers.

"He's always on his computer — seems so distracted by it. Or his smartphone. I know for sure he doesn't use drugs or alcohol. Thank goodness. But, he's so different now, keeping to himself, moody, and why are his grades dropping?"

"I am sure I had more money in my wallet," I tell my husband. "Am I losing my mind? Where did it go?"

"What happened to your allowance?"

"We got you a tutor, but your grades are still dropping. What's going on?"

“I got a recorded message from school saying you were absent today. Where did you go when you left the house?”

“I used to worry about underage drinking. Now there is legalized sports betting! Do I have something else to worry about?”

Compulsive gambling is a hidden addiction. That’s why all of the above scenarios end with a question. How do you know when “gambling for fun” has turned into an addiction?

If you think your child may have a gambling problem, you are welcome to come to a Gam-Anon meeting. The Gam-Anon members, including parents, will share their experiences with you. Gam-Anon is a fellowship of those affected by someone else's gambling problem whether or not the gambler acknowledges the problem.

Please visit our website www.gam-anon.org, its Gam-Anon Public Relations Kit, and these links for additional information:

COULD YOUR CHILD BE A COMPULSIVE GAMBLER —

What are the signs that your child may have a problem with gambling?

<https://www.gam-anon.org/gam-anon-can-help/could-your-child-be-a-compulsive-gambler>

GAM-ANON MEETING DIRECTORY:

<https://www.gam-anon.org/meeting-directory>

FOR STUDENTS

Have you ever spoken these words or had these thoughts?

“It is fun.”

“It is exciting.”

“I can win money.”

“I can fit in with the group.”

“I can play poker in my house. And we do not drink or take drugs.”

“My parents say it is okay. They are happy I am at home with my friends.”

*“Everybody does it. — lottery tickets — scratch-offs — casinos — fantasy sports.
What’s the harm?”*

“What a cool gift! A lottery ticket.”

“Can’t wait to go to the resort with my family — there is a casino there! So exciting!”

Or perhaps these are some of the words you have spoken or the situations you’re facing . . .

“My parents fight about dad’s gambling every night. Mom cries that she can’t pay the bills, and that makes him yell louder. They think I’m asleep. I wonder if I did anything wrong to make them so angry with each other.”

“My brother busted open my piggy bank when he came home from college for the weekend. When I confronted him, he warned me I better not tell our parents. What’s wrong with my brother?”

“My girlfriend desperately wants me to lend her money for some kind of games she’s playing on the internet. She’s cutting classes too, and wants me to join in the group she plays cards with. She’s threatening to dump me if I don’t give in to what she wants. She says I don’t love her.”

“My mom is just not around the way she used to be. I think she goes to a casino. Sometimes she is asleep in the morning when I get up to go to school. She used to make breakfast for me all the time. What’s happening?”

- For some young people, gambling becomes an addiction similar to alcoholism or drug addiction. But sadly, since it is easy to hide, it becomes a problem without even knowing when that happens.
- For some young people, problems arise at home when a parent, or a loved one, or a friend gambles.

Maybe you need to engage in conversation with your teacher, school advisors, or parents about these or similar thoughts and situations. Gambling activities of your family or friends may have become a distraction for you, affecting your schoolwork or extra-curricular activities.

There is help available for someone with a gambling problem or for someone who is affected by another's gambling.

Please visit the Gam-Anon website www.gam-anon.org for more information.

APPENDIX

THE GAM-ANON PUBLIC RELATIONS KIT

https://www.gam-anon.org/images/WEBSITE_-_PSA_packet.pdf

COULD YOUR CHILD BE A COMPULSIVE GAMBLER?

<https://www.gam-anon.org/gam-anon-can-help/could-your-child-be-a-compulsive-gambler>

ARE YOU LIVING WITH A COMPULSIVE GAMBLER?

<https://www.gam-anon.org/gam-anon-can-help/are-you-living-with-a-compulsive-gambler>

DID YOU GROW UP WITH A COMPULSIVE GAMBLER?

<https://www.gam-anon.org/gam-anon-can-help/did-you-grow-up-with-a-compulsive-gambler>

GAM-ANON MEETING DIRECTORY

<https://www.gam-anon.org/meeting-directory>