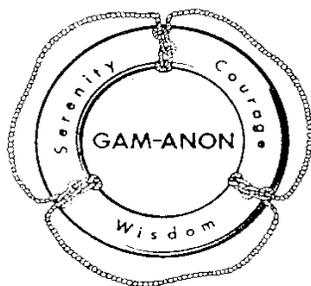


SUGGESTED NEW MEMBER PACKET

CAN BE USED AS SINGLE SHEETS OR AS ONE PACKET.

ALL CONTENTS MAY BE COPIED.





GAM-ANON® INTERNATIONAL SERVICE OFFICE, INC.

PO BOX 307

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ARE YOU LIVING WITH A COMPULSIVE GAMBLER?

If you are living with a compulsive gambler, you will answer “YES” to at least six of the following questions.

1. Do you find yourself constantly bothered by bill collectors?
2. Is the person in question often away from home for long, unexplained periods of time?
3. Does this person in question ever lose time from work due to gambling?
4. Do you feel that this person cannot be trusted with money?
5. Does the person in question faithfully promise that he or she will stop gambling, beg, plead for another chance, yet gamble again and again?
6. Does this person ever gamble longer than he or she intended to, until the last dollar is gone?
7. Does this person immediately return to gambling to try to recover losses or to win more?
8. Does this person ever gamble to get money to solve financial difficulties or have unrealistic expectations that gambling will bring the family material comfort and wealth?
9. Does this person borrow money to gamble with or to pay gambling debts?
10. Has this person's reputation ever suffered due to gambling, even to the extent of committing illegal acts to finance gambling?
11. Have you come to the point of hiding money needed for living expenses, knowing that the family may go without food and clothing if you do not?
12. Do you search this person's clothing or go through his or her wallet when the opportunity presents itself or otherwise check on his/her activities?
13. Does this person in question hide his or her money?
14. Have you noticed a personality change in the gambler as his or her gambling progresses?
15. Does the person in question consistently lie to cover up or deny his or her gambling activities?
16. Does this person use guilt induction as a method of shifting responsibilities for his or her gambling upon you?
17. Do you attempt to anticipate this person's moods or try to control his or her life?
18. Does this person ever suffer from remorse or depression due to gambling, sometimes to the point of self-destruction?
19. Has the gambling ever brought you to the point of threatening to break up the family unit?
20. Do you feel that your life together is a nightmare?



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DID YOU GROW UP WITH A COMPULSIVE GAMBLER?

The following questions may help you identify with others who grew up with compulsive gambling in their homes.

1. Were you often missing money?
2. Did you hide your money?
3. Were you ever asked to lend money to a parent to pay a bill or debt?
4. Did you know that if you loaned money to a parent or paid a bill that the money would not be repaid?
5. Were you told that there was a bank account for you and when you were older discovered that the money was removed?
6. Were you promised gifts or necessities that were never given?
7. Did your family activities revolve around playing cards, watching sports on TV, participating in the lottery or other gambling activities?
8. Did your family vacations center around gambling activities?
9. Was a parent away from home for unexplained periods of time?
10. Do you remember many family activities where both parents were not involved?
11. Did your parents fight about money? Did you feel responsible?
12. Do you become entangled in your parent's money or financial issues?
13. Did you stay alone a lot so you didn't have to explain your home life to anyone else? Did you avoid bringing friends home?
14. When you were growing up, did you ever feel that everyone depended on you to hold the family together?
15. Did your parents use you as a sounding board for their marriage?
16. Do you feel more like the parent than the child?
17. Do you feel your relationship with your family is a lie?
18. Are you attracted to people who gamble, or have other compulsions, or are needy?
19. Is it difficult to trust people? Do you feel that you can never trust anyone totally?
20. Do you obsess about money? Do you feel that you can never have enough money?



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COULD YOUR CHILD BE A COMPULSIVE GAMBLER?

Parents (and educators) will list drugs, alcohol, bullying, sex, and grades among their concerns for their children. The list is incomplete if it does not include gambling. Could your child have a gambling problem or the beginnings of one? We know that many children are introduced to gambling at a young age, often innocently, since the adults in their lives have no knowledge of the potential consequences.

Gambling may be part of their parents' social lives or vacations, or perhaps members of the family gamble on sports, play poker, buy lottery tickets or "scratch offs", go to racetracks or casinos, or gamble on the internet. Children receive the message that gambling is great fun and if you are lucky or good at it, you can make lots of money gambling.

Even if there are none of these activities in the home, our children receive this message through a variety of media. Even seemingly harmless internet games introduce children to the "fun", "challenging", and "winning" experiences of gambling. Gambling is easily accessible on computers, tablets, and mobile phones in formats that many adults are not even familiar with.

Some children may be unaffected by all of this. It is very difficult to know in advance which ones may be affected. When the invisible line is crossed from social gambling to problem or addictive (compulsive) gambling, it is a life altering change for the gambler and loved ones. Compulsive gambling is not just about the money won or lost, but also about the drastic changes in behavior and the growing unmanageability of everyday life.

Our experience with our own compulsive gamblers has taught us that compulsive gambling can begin at any age. Many of our gamblers, men and women, began gambling in childhood. Based on our experience and the numbers of parents of teens and young adults joining our meetings, we believe that gambling has a place among the list of parents' concerns.

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



1. Are you concerned about the amount of time your child spends on the computer, on mobile devices, watching sports, playing cards, etc., or how often these activities distract from family activities, sleep?
2. Are you uncomfortable with your child's friends or their activities together?
3. Are you aware of bets your child is making with friends or classmates?
4. Has your child lost interest in activities he or she once enjoyed?
5. Have your child's grades slipped or does your child miss school or classes?
6. Does your child work but never seem to have money?
7. Does your child have more money or unexplained money, or does your child spend money beyond his/her apparent means?
8. Have you experienced money or items missing from your home? Do you suspect your child might be stealing?
9. Has your child asked to borrow large amounts of money?
10. Do you find yourself rescuing your child from financial crises resulting from gambling?
11. Does your child have an intense reaction during sporting events when one team is either losing or winning?
12. Does your child promise to never gamble again – and then gamble?
13. Have you noticed changes in your child's personality, including mood swings?
14. Has your child become secretive?
15. Does your child lie about money or about gambling activities?

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 experience with you. Gam-Anon is a fellowship of those affected by someone else's gambling problem whether or not the gambler acknowledges the problem.



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GAM-ANON

Gam-Anon is a 12-Step self-help fellowship of men and women who have been affected by the gambling problem of a friend or loved one. We understand as perhaps few can. We are familiar with worry and sleepless nights, and promises made only to be broken.

We may have become fearful and uncertain as to how to cope with the deterioration in our lives and our relationships, the financial problems, and the debts caused by the gambling. We know that living with the effects of another's gambling can often be too devastating to bear without help. We in Gam-Anon strive:

1. To welcome and give assistance and comfort to those affected by someone else's gambling problem.
2. To communicate Gam-Anon's understanding of compulsive gambling and its impact on our lives.
3. To share our experience, strength, and hope in coping with the gambling problem.
4. To use the Steps and Tools of the Gam-Anon program which nurture our spiritual and emotional growth and recovery.

With the help of Gam-Anon, we find our way back to a normal way of thinking and living, whether or not our loved ones continue to gamble. We believe that a change in our attitudes is of boundless help to us as well as to our gamblers.

Gam-Anon is not a religious organization or a counseling agency. It is not a treatment center nor is it allied with any other organization offering such services. No dues or fees are required. Membership is voluntary, requiring only that one's own life has been affected by someone else's gambling problem.



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GAM-ANON IS

Gam-Anon is a worldwide organization that offers a self-help recovery program for the families and friends of compulsive gamblers whether or not the gambler seeks help or even recognizes the existence of a gambling problem.

Members give and receive comfort and understanding through a mutual exchange of experience, strength, and hope. Sharing of similar problems binds individuals and groups together in a bond that is protected by a policy of anonymity.

Gam-Anon is not a religious organization or counseling agency. It is not a treatment center nor is it allied with any other organization offering such services. Gam-Anon family groups neither express opinions on outside issues nor endorse outside enterprises. No dues or fees are required.

Compulsive gambling is a family disease. Living with the effects of someone else's gambling is too devastating for most people to bear without help. In Gam-Anon we learn individuals are not responsible for another person's disease or recovery from it. We let go our obsession with another's behavior and begin to lead happier and more manageable lives, lives with dignity and rights; lives guided by a power greater than ourselves.

Welcome!!!



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GAM-ANON MEETINGS

We hope you enjoyed your first Gam-Anon meeting. Since this is new to you, there may be a few things you may be wondering about. The following explanations may help you, but if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

Perhaps some of the things you hear at Gam-anon meetings or read in our literature may not seem to apply to your particular problem. Do try to attend at least six consecutive meetings, so that you will get to know what Gam-Anon can offer you. If you will continue to attend, you will hear about situations much like your own. Take from the meetings what you need and put the rest aside. As your knowledge of Gam-anon increases, you will appreciate the widely divergent ideas presented. You will realize that in Gam-Anon, as in everything else, individual circumstances alter cases. We are all individuals striving to become the best people we can be – each in our own way. That way is not the same for everyone, but there is help for everyone here.

Emphasis on Anonymity: In any discussion of Gam-Anon, particularly outside the four walls of our meeting place, we urge members to respect the confidences of each other and especially to guard the anonymity of Gamblers Anonymous members. In other words, whom we see, or what we hear in the Gam-Anon room, remains in the room. This includes telling your spouse or loved ones.

Gam-Anon is a Spiritual Program: This means only that we accept the idea that we are all dependent on a Higher Power for help in solving our problems and achieving peace of mind. A member's religious beliefs are a personal matter and we make it a point to avoid discussion in terms of any specific faith.

Group Participation: Anyone may express an opinion or answer a question upon being recognized by the chairman. Those who would rather just listen are free to do so.

Contributions are Voluntary: This is a Gam-Anon tradition. The money contributed is used to buy Gam-Anon literature, for expenses of the meeting place, and for periodic contributions to the Gam-Anon International Service Office, which is headquartered in New York. Gam-Anon is a nonprofit fellowship.

Telephone: It is a very important tool in our program, so we urge you to use it. It is your lifeline to serenity.



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SPONSORSHIP

Sponsors are members in our program who are willing and able to share their experience, strength, and hope with the newcomer. They keep regular contact with the newcomer between meetings. A sponsor does not have to have all the answers, but a sponsor is the link to the program, where all of our answers are found. Most important, a sponsor listens and is objective. This offers the new member an initial sense of belonging and trust, and the older member a renewed sense of sharing and worth.

When using sponsors, both parties need to be assured that this need not be a permanent relationship. As our needs change, our sponsor may change. Sometimes the sponsorship relationship goes on for many years and can become a deep and lasting friendship.

Asking a Gam-Anon member to be one's sponsor is a special honor that acknowledges a meaningful connection in the journey to recovery. Being a sponsor is the perfect way to give back to the program all that it has given to us.



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PRESSURE RELIEF MEETING

Most of us come into Gam-Anon with issues of debt and financial pressures. Sometimes the debts are overwhelming and in the name of the gambler; other times the debts are held jointly or are in the name of the Gam-Anon member. Regardless of how debts are labeled, how much debt there is, or the financial capability to address the debts and budget a lifestyle, the Pressure Relief Meeting is an invaluable tool in getting the finances in order. The goal of the Pressure Relief Meeting is to relieve the financial pressures by suggesting a budget that prioritizes the normal needs of the family, which addresses all debt, and is livable.

When the gambler attends Gamblers Anonymous:

The gambler in Gamblers Anonymous is urged to have a Pressure Relief Meeting after attending a few meetings. The Gam-Anon member is encouraged to be involved in this meeting so that he or she will gain the knowledge needed to act independently and decisively if necessary. Having a Pressure Relief Meeting is a critical moment on the road to recovery because it is a chance to come clean, admit all debts, and start fresh. Money for the home and children comes first. Gambling debts are listed and will be paid slowly over time. The Gam-Anon member is assured that he or she is not responsible for resolving the financial problems of the gambler and is encouraged not to finance, sign for, or help consolidate the gambler's debts. When one can finally begin to live normally, fearlessly, and appropriately make restitution, then and only then can healthy self-respect and recovery follow.

When the gambler does not attend Gamblers Anonymous:

It is important, though difficult, to understand that money is not the real problem ... gambling is. Solutions to money problems that do not realistically consider the circumstances of gambling are at best band-aids and accomplish nothing in the long run. The Gam-Anon member attending alone can address financial issues in the Gam-Anon meeting and receive additional guidance in the literature. A Gam-Anon "Budget Meeting", given by experienced Gam-Anon members using the Gamblers Anonymous budget guidelines, without considering repayment of gambling debts, is available and can be helpful. Though the behavior of the compulsive gambler cannot be controlled, the member can exert some control over his or her finances.

DEAR LOVED ONES,

I am a compulsive gambler and I need help.

Don't allow me to lie to you. By accepting my lies for truth, you encourage me to lie. The truth may be painful, but accept it.

Don't allow me to outsmart you. This only teaches me to avoid responsibility and, at the same time, lose respect for you.

Don't lecture me, scold me, argue with me, or moralize to me when I am gambling. I won't be listening; you will be wasting your time.

Don't lose your temper with me and make empty threats. To do so will destroy you and any possibility of helping me.

Don't allow your anxiety for me to compel you to do what I must do for myself.

Don't cover up the consequences of my gambling. This may reduce the crisis but perpetuate the illness.

Above all, don't run from reality as I do. Compulsive gambling is an illness; it gets worse as my gambling continues.

I need help from other compulsive gamblers in Gamblers Anonymous and from God. I cannot do it alone.

I know that someone must be firm with me, even to the point of seeming cruel.

If you love me, or if you only have compassion for me as another human being desperately in need of help, you are in a position to help me - PLEASE HELP ME HELP MYSELF !

*Thanks for your help, but the less help I have with my problem,
the more it belongs to me.*

from page 28 - Insights Into Recovery