



Gamblers Anonymous

England, Wales & Ulster

Climbing The Twelve Steps

A grateful member tells their personal story.

www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk

How does a person stop gambling through the GA Recovery Programme?

This is done by bringing about a progressive personality change from within. This can be accomplished by having faith in, and trying to understand, the basic concepts of the GA Recovery Programme.

There are no shortcuts to gaining this faith and understanding. To recover from one of the most baffling, insidious, compulsive addictions will require diligent effort. Honesty, open-mindedness and willingness are the key words in our recovery.

1. We admitted we were powerless over gambling, that our lives had become unmanageable.

Don't be fooled. You are being asked to admit BOTH that you are powerless over your gambling AND that your life is unmanageable. Admitting one without the other is to deny the extent of your problem.

From the moment I arrived I felt at home, and for the first time in my life among people with whom I identified, but I hardly noticed the full wording of this first Step. Admitting I was powerless over gambling seemed obvious, but I brushed aside the full implications of the second part of this Step.

My life was certainly unmanageable where gambling was concerned, but “my life” meant everything else, and my ego was not ready to admit to this. In any case, I had come to stop gambling not turn into a saint.

The admission that my life was as unmanageable as my gambling took longer to be made, but after a few weeks in GA, I found I could accept it willingly.

ADMIT that I am powerless over gambling and that my addiction has made my life unmanageable.

2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to a normal way of thinking and living.

You have probably tried to stop gambling before, but the difference this time is a willingness to accept help. The source of this help may not be clear yet, but take a chance and give GA an opportunity to show you that it works. Even if you cannot accept this Step at once, be patient; regular attendance will lead to its acceptance.

This did not make sense. My gambling was mine. How could something outside of me stop me gambling? And I only wanted to stop gambling, not to be preached to about the way that I lived my life.

I kept coming back to this step to try and understand it. Finally the penny dropped. This was neither complicated nor difficult. I just had to hold on to the warmth and friendship that I found when I arrived in GA. I just had to remind myself that it was through sharing that I had managed to stay stopped for the first few days and weeks. I just had to stop fighting and start sharing.

***STOP being afraid and stop feeling alone.
Accept that sharing is not a sign of weakness.***

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of this power of our own understanding.

This Step is only possible after the ADMISSIONS of Step One and the WILLINGNESS of Step Two. If you cannot yet give yourself fully to GA, then look again at the first Steps and talk about your reluctance in the meetings. A firm foundation is essential for a strong recovery.

Decisions, decisions. I had spent my life avoiding them, and now I was being asked to hand over my whole life to something; but what was it?

I had absolutely no idea. I knew that I had stopped gambling for the first time in my life by sharing and listening in the GA room. The problems I had caused had not gone away, but there was definitely SOMETHING outside of me that was helping me, one day at a time.

So I took a chance, and decided to let this SOMETHING into my life. I was nervous and expected to get hurt and laughed at, but it did

not happen. All I had done was to make a decision. Nothing had changed except my attitude. I was on the way!

DECIDE to let go and to believe that there is a better way of life possible through the GA Recovery Programme.

4. Made a searching and fearless moral and financial inventory of ourselves.

These words are clear and obvious, but frightening. Dealing with everyone owed money is essential and urgent. Dealing with your personal inventory is a lifetime's job, requiring honesty. This is not easy, even for a recovering compulsive gambler.

Searching. Fearless. Moral. These words could have frightened me, but strangely they did not. I had already admitted I was powerless to stop gambling, and admitted reluctantly that my whole life was a mess. I had stopped running away, and had made that simple decision to give GA a chance. It was quite logical that the next Step would have me look at myself a bit closer.

I soon learned that making a searching inventory could be done, one day at a time, in the same way as I was staying away from gambling, one day at a time.

So I broke down the inventory into separate chunks: *Character* (both defects and strengths), *Priorities and Responsibilities*, *Feelings* (good and bad), and *Financial*. And within each of these chunks, I tackled the easiest bits first, and put off the hardest. Why should I tackle the most painful first? I had a whole lifetime to work on myself.

I also realised (after looking at the rest of the GA Recovery Programme), that this Step only involved looking. Doing something about each problem follows, in the next FIVE Steps.

As painful as some of the discoveries about myself may be, I am learning to deal with them slowly and surely.

LOOK at myself and my finances realistically.

5. Admitted to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

The first look at this Step is as frightening and impossible as Step Four, but once you learn that you do not have to admit ALL wrongs ALL AT ONCE, taking this Step became manageable.

Don't try to avoid this Step on the grounds that you cannot find anyone to confide in. If you are having difficulty, ask to speak to someone in your group or your sponsor. Or choose a trusted friend, someone you respect, or a professional. Try to avoid a member of your family or spouse.

The very first time I chose a friend, but I did not have the courage to admit everything. But then I had not written everything down while doing my inventory. However, as I gradually did more of my inventory, I became more willing to share more. The release I felt each time I “got it off my chest” was wonderful. The old saying, “a problem shared is a problem halved”, was certainly true for me.

It was also important that I did not choose anyone who would be hurt by me unloading my guilt. Recovery is a slow process and part of my recovery is the acceptance that I will not recover overnight. I had always wanted the results of everything I did to be visible instantly, and now I was learning that even recovery itself would be slow.

SHARE my innermost weaknesses with another.

6. Were entirely ready to have these defects of character removed.

Now it is time to review what you have learned about yourself and ensure that you are prepared to change. If you have been tackling your inventory and sharing as you go, then you should be ready to give away at least some of your worst character defects.

This is not an active Step; it is, however, an important moment of decision. If you don't think you are ready to move on, then do not hesitate to go back and redo part of your inventory and share your thoughts. Recovery has no time limit. Take your recovery one day at a time.

I had made a start on my personal inventory and shared the wrongs with someone else, but, what was I expected to DO in order to carry out this Step?

When I looked forward at the next few Steps, I could see that I was going to be led gently towards putting right the wrongs I had done. This Step, therefore, is a "time-out" to reflect on my admissions and to ensure I am ready to change. It is the opportunity to remind myself that only by giving away my defects, can I distance myself from that next bet.

BE READY to improve myself.

7. Humbly asked God (of our understanding) to remove our shortcomings.

*The act of giving away your shortcomings.
This is not just defects of character, but all your
weaknesses. If you have truly accepted that
humility, honesty and sharing are the basis of
your recovery, then this Step will be taken in
your stride.*

Once again I am being advised that I can get help from that SOMETHING that is more than just me.

The key word here is “humbly”. In this Step, I am guided to look outwards and to practise compassion and tolerance, and to stop thinking about myself alone. It is only through behaving responsibly and with honesty, that I can expect my shortcomings to drift away. Doing nothing to help myself, will result in nothing happening to me.

LET my better nature and instincts work on me.

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

This should include those hurt by bad behaviour as well as those hurt financially. Don't leave anyone out!

This Step is frequently misunderstood. Once again, I am helped by the authors of The Recovery Programme not to go too fast. This Step asks only that I make a list and be **READY** to make amends. Making amends follows later.

I made new lists frequently, even after the first one had been dealt with. New names keep appearing, and old ones (dealt with in Step Nine) drop off.

LIST everyone I've hurt.

9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Start putting things right as soon as possible. Don't use the word "except" as an excuse for putting off genuine debts or emotional damage.

Making amends to those we have hurt seems obvious and sensible. If the person knows they have been hurt, either financially or emotionally, then the sooner contact is made the better. You cannot expect to regain trust by avoiding what has to be done.

I realised that I could use the words "wherever possible" and "except" as an easy escape to avoid my more painful debts. I also (accidentally on purpose) interpreted this Step as meaning that I should repay money I owe and ignore the emotional hurts.

I did learn though that I cannot use this Step to unload my guilt for past actions. I learned in Step Five that sharing guilt is good, but not with

those I had hurt directly. For these people, actions speak louder than words. I try to let them see me changing my ways and simply behaving properly and responsibly.

RIGHT the wrongs I've done whenever possible.

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

This Step can be used in two ways. Firstly, an opportunity to review how you are working the Steps, especially the moral inventory. Secondly, it can be used each day as a reminder to try and keep your worst characteristics in check.

I was told never to look back (except during my therapies in meetings), but I use this Step to look over my shoulder and see how I am getting on. I try to be encouraging to myself and look back to last week to see how I was getting on then. Did I meet any emergencies with poise?

Did I behave as if I was the arbiter of the universe? If I find I behaved badly about something, then I try to learn from it and do better next time.

REVIEW continuously my personality and my faults.

11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God (as we understand him), praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

This step is NOT about who or what your God is.

If you have accepted Step Three, then you have a pretty good idea that there is definitely “something” helping you in your recovery.

Therefore, this Step is not complicated; it is just the words that make it seem so. You are simply being reminded to keep in touch with your inner feelings on a daily basis and trust your more honest instincts.

The words “prayer” and “meditation” put me off at once. I could understand meditation as I could learn the technique from books, but prayer seemed to be directly connected with religion and this was more difficult for me. As a result I missed the real point of this Step.

I had discovered that during periods of calm and relaxation, I seemed to be in touch with the best parts of my character. I would think, almost unconsciously, about what I could do to help those around me.

Where did these thoughts come from? I have no idea, but I certainly like having them. I believe that if I am feeling good about myself, then I must be working this Step.

THINK about myself as part of mankind and how I can improve my tolerance, honesty, and humility.

12. Having made an effort to practise these principles in all our affairs, we tried to carry this message to other compulsive gamblers.

It's never too soon in the Programme to want to share that wonderful release with others, but do not get carried away and try to convert other gamblers.

After what I have got from being part of this fellowship, my greatest pleasure is giving back, just by showing that I have learned something from this Programme. I don't mean just that I do not gamble, but that I am learning daily how to live properly and usefully.

HELP others through my example to see that they too can enjoy peace of mind.

1. **Admit**
2. **Stop being afraid**
3. **Decide to let go**
4. **Look at yourself**
5. **Share with another**
6. **Be ready**
7. **Let go**
8. **Make a list**
9. **Right the wrongs**
10. **Review**
11. **Think**
12. **Help**

This booklet was approved for issue
by the National Committee in August 2023.

God grant me the
serenity to accept the
things I cannot change...

Courage to change
the things I can...

and wisdom to
know the difference.



Gamblers Anonymous

England, Wales & Ulster

www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk

National Information Line: **0330 094 0322**