

The 12 Steps of Recovery

Step 1

WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS OVER GAMBLING - - THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE.

In the 1st step of the Recovery Program, members admit their powerlessness over gambling and learn to accept the truth about compulsive gambling - - that it is an incurable progressive illness which only can be arrested through total abstinence from gambling. Members acknowledge that they were powerless to control their lives when gambling dominated their actions. Through this admission, members gain the inner strength to deal with their problems and face responsibilities.

In Step 1, compulsive gamblers are asked to accept the fact that their lives had become unmanageable. Members acknowledge that the gambling illness disrupted their financial stability and many other aspects of their lives, including family, work and other personal relationships. The admission and acceptance that come with Step 1 are prerequisites to controlling the destructive behavior caused by compulsive gambling.

The 1st step of the Recovery Program is just as important to someone who has abstained for a considerable period of time as it is to a newcomer. By regularly reviewing Step 1, members are reminded of the past so that they will not repeat it.

Step 2

CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO A NORMAL WAY OF THINKING AND LIVING.

Recognizing the nature of the compulsive gambling illness, members realize that alone they are powerless to establish a normal way of thinking and living. Therefore, compulsive gamblers understand that they need help from a power greater than themselves. In Step 2, members are asked to believe in a Higher Power, which is a source of strength external to oneself and greater than one's self-will and self-determination. The Higher Power can be anything a member wants it to be, such as God or the psychological and emotional support from the Fellowship or the group. This step does not ask for belief in any organized religion but, more simply, a commitment to personal spirituality. Belief in a Higher Power enables the compulsive gambler to realize that a better way of thinking and living is possible than that offered by gambling.

Step 3

MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR LIVES TO THE CARE OF THIS POWER OF OUR OWN UNDERSTANDING.

Once members commit their lives to the care of a Higher Power, a great burden is lifted from their shoulders. Free from the limitations of ego, members try to live by the ideals of the power greater than themselves. Faith alone does not lead to a normal way of living, but faith coupled with the positive decision to commit oneself to the care of a Higher Power leads the members toward recovery.

Step 4

MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL AND FINANCIAL INVENTORY OF OURSELVES.

In order to attain a more meaningful life, the compulsive gambler must undergo a complete and thorough self-appraisal. Acceptance of one's shortcomings is a prerequisite to correcting them. Members strive to find the truth about themselves, for in the truth is freedom to choose the many alternatives and opportunities that life presents.

In order to make a complete moral inventory, members must examine, to the best of their ability, all aspects of their character. All negative characteristics should be examined, such as:

- selfishness
- greed
- procrastination
- anger
- envy
- pride
- laziness
- resentment
- self-pity
- jealousy
- insincerity
- self-deception
- impatience
- intolerance
- pessimism
- dishonesty

Equally important, however, is the acknowledgement of all one's positive characteristics, such as:

- friendliness
- optimism
- empathy
- industriousness
- humility
- kindness
- dignity
- tolerance
- honesty

Members are urged to make a written inventory; nothing should be withheld.

In Gamblers Anonymous, the financial inventory is as important as the moral inventory. members make a list of all monies owed as a result of gambling activities, such as loans, bad checks, thefts and other debts. In addition, they itemize their financial assets and income.

The moral and financial inventories are as important to established members as they are to newcomers. By making these inventories an ongoing process, members continually assess their character. In this way, new defects can be recognized and growth can be measured. Because money is an integral part of gambling, the compulsive gambler must use the financial inventory, together with the moral inventory, to begin a true character change.

Step 5

ADMITTED TO OURSELVES AND TO ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF OUR WRONGS.

In Step 5, the member is truthful not only to himself, but to someone else, either on an individual or group basis. By revealing to another person the full extent of one's shortcomings, one gains an objectivity and perspective not otherwise available.

After making a thorough moral and financial inventory, it is imperative that the compulsive gambler share the findings with someone else. The admission of wrong-doing brings immense relief. Keeping the facts of the moral inventory locked inside oneself imposes a burden heavier than any person can bear. By sharing, pressure and anxiety are released.

Step 6

WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER REMOVED.

In this step, members are asked only that they be ready and willing to have their character defects removed. This is a step of preparation in that it does not ask them to remove their character defects but simply to open their hearts and minds and to be ready for change.

Members are often reluctant to make necessary changes in their personality because of the security they experience from deeply ingrained character traits. In this step, the member is encouraged to be open to shedding his or her character defects, and to have faith that a new and better self will emerge.

Step 7

HUMBLY ASKED GOD (OF OUR UNDERSTANDING) TO REMOVE OUR SHORTCOMINGS.

In the same way that members of Gamblers Anonymous understand that they are powerless to control their gambling problem, they also realize that by themselves, they are powerless to remove their defects of character. Once members are willing to have their character defects removed, the next logical step is to seek help.

Just as members come to accept a Higher Power, it follows that only that power can remove their shortcomings. Casting aside the pride that let them to believe that they could live exclusively by their own intellect, strength and will power, members come to learn true humility.

Humility before one's God means not only modesty, but complete lack of wrongful pride in oneself. Members candidly admit all frailties, holding back nothing. Strength lies in the belief that it is possible to change our character with the help of the God of our own understanding.

Rather than an overnight remedy, the action of this step is an ongoing process of striving. Working toward change is most important. Members continue to let go of the old ways and allow the God of their understanding guide them toward peace and serenity.

Step 8

MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD HARMED AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO THEM ALL.

Most compulsive gamblers are aware that they have financially damaged many people, but they are seldom aware of all the emotional harm they have caused. The extent of emotional and financial injury they have caused is made evident only by writing a complete list of those they have hurt. The success of Step 8 is in the individual's willingness to make amends to everyone on the list.

Step 9

MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE WHEREVER POSSIBLE, EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS.

In this step, the member is asked to carry out the intention of the preceding step to the best of his or her ability. By making amends, members free themselves of the burden of wrongdoings. In this way the negative behavior of the past is transformed into the potential for acting positively in the future.

There are different ways of making amends. Some may be financial while others may be of a more complex and personal nature. Similarly, some amends may be made immediately, while others may take a number of years. There are also cases where no amends can be made because to do so would be harmful to another person.

Sometimes amends cannot be made because of the inability to communicate with the aggrieved person. Where amends cannot be made directly, an alternate method of restitution maybe called for, such as an act of kindness or service to Gamblers Anonymous.

Common sense, the knowledge of when to act, and courage are essential for the successful execution of Step 9. In any case, amends should be forthright and honest, no matter what the conditions surrounding them. A member should not avoid making amends by rationalizing that an amend will injure someone else if that decision is made to spare his or her own feelings.

Step 10

CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY AND WHEN WE WERE WRONG, PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT.

Personal inventory is a continuing process of self-evaluation, encouraging the individual to make self-searching a habit, thereby increasing self-awareness. This personal inventory is a repeated assessment of one's attitudes and actions towards others as well as towards oneself. This should not be limited to an analysis of negative aspects of character but should include an appreciation of positive traits as well.

Step 10 calls for members to continuously evaluate themselves for wrongdoings that they commit. Once recognized, member find it beneficial to promptly admit to these wrongdoings. The timely acknowledgement of the wrongs that a member has committed leads to a catharsis of the anxiety, depression and sense of loneliness experienced prior to recognizing the wrongdoing.

In this step, members are enabled to make choices, find solutions to problems that arise, keep things in perspective, develop self-restraint, accept what they don't have and take responsibility for their own actions. Practicing the 10th step of the Recovery Program helps change behavior patterns, discourages harboring negative emotions and encourages the development of self-esteem and other positive emotions. The ongoing process of self-appraisal promotes emotional health and maturation.

Step 11

SOUGHT THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION TO IMPROVE OUR CONSCIOUS CONTACT WITH GOD, AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM, PRAYING ONLY FOR KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL FOR US AND THE POWER TO CARRY THAT OUT.

Continuing contact with one's God, achieved through prayer and meditation, enables the member to grow personally and spiritually. One's God need not be a deity, therefore this step benefits not only those who believe in God, but also those who are agnostic or atheistic. The Gamblers Anonymous program is based on personal spirituality, and as such, give members the freedom to choose by what means they contact the God of their own understanding. Whether by formal prayer or meditation, members are encouraged to make daily contact with their God. Through this continuing contact, members become more receptive to the potential experience of God's will for them and the strength to live accordingly.

Step 12

HAVING MADE AN EFFORT TO PRACTICE THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS, WE TRIED TO CARRY THIS MESSAGE TO OTHER COMPULSIVE GAMBLERS.

The 12th step is the culmination of the entire Recovery Program. The success of this step is determined by the effort of the members to practice these principles in their lives and in their efforts to convey to other compulsive gamblers that they can stop gambling through the practice of the Gamblers Anonymous program and thereby achieve self-respect, personal and spiritual growth. The emphasis here is not on the results, but on the effort a member makes.