



GAM-ANON® INTERNATIONAL SERVICE OFFICE, INC.  
P.O. BOX 307 MASSAPEQUA PARK, NY 11762  
718-352-1671 [gam-anon.org](http://gam-anon.org) [gamanonoffice@gam-anon.org](mailto:gamanonoffice@gam-anon.org)

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE GAM-ANON PUBLIC RELATIONS KIT**

This resource provides information about Gam-Anon for all community groups and agencies. Gam-Anon, a 12-Step Recovery Program, offers hope and help to those who are affected by someone else's gambling. This "tool kit" is designed for use by Parent/Teacher Organizations, Educational Groups, Clergy/Religious Institutions, Health Centers, Hospitals/Medical Institutions, the local media, and other service agencies.

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For more information, please contact:  
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## **WHAT IS COMPULSIVE GAMBLING?**

Compulsive gambling is an illness that causes the gamblers to experience irresistible urges to gamble. This is the term used by Gamblers Anonymous referring to a progressive gambling illness; it is also referred to as “problem” gambling or “pathological” gambling.

Our experience confirms that compulsive gamblers can neither control nor moderate their gambling activities, even after they express the desire to do so.

When compulsive gamblers reach the point where they are willing to examine loss of control over gambling and the unmanageability of their lives, they may finally be ready to accept help. This help can be found in Gamblers Anonymous.

To contact Gamblers Anonymous:  
Gamblers Anonymous International Service Office  
PO Box 17173  
Los Angeles, CA 90017  
626-960-3500 phone  
626-960-3501 fax  
Website: [www.gamblersanonymous.org](http://www.gamblersanonymous.org)  
E-mail: [isomain@gamblersanonymous.org](mailto:isomain@gamblersanonymous.org)



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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 (a) to accept and understand the gambling illness; (b) to use the program and its problem-solving suggestions to help rebuild and refocus our lives; (c) to give encouragement and understanding to the gambler; and (d) to welcome and give assistance and comfort to those affected by the gambling problem.

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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## **HOW SOMEONE ELSE'S COMPULSIVE GAMBLING AFFECTS US**

***Gam-Anon members are familiar with how someone else's gambling problem can affect their lives. Do you identify with any of these situations?***

1. We set aside money to pay bills . . . and we discover the money is missing; we find ourselves hiding money for safekeeping.
2. We feel that our loved one cannot be trusted with money.
3. We find ourselves wanting to search our loved one's clothing, wallets, closets, electronic devices, bank statements, financial statements, etc., for evidence to confirm our suspicions; or we find scratch-off tickets, lottery tickets, loan books, etc. hidden away in the house or even the family car.
4. Our significant other may be inexplicably unavailable and unreachable, neglecting and jeopardizing employment and family responsibilities.
5. We notice a personality change in our loved one as their gambling progresses; perhaps their behavior becomes unpredictable with angry outbursts or moodiness or depression.
6. When confronted, the gambler will either deny that gambling is a problem or will promise to curtail or stop it; however the gambling continues, often in secret.
7. Our gambler justifies that gambling will solve financial problems.
8. We resort to making threats in an effort to control the gambler; we are promised the gambling will stop; we submit to pleas for another chance, but, then the gambling continues again and again. We doubt ourselves and wonder what is wrong with us that we cannot stop our loved one from gambling.
9. Our gambler may not be able to hold on to a job due to gambling and irresponsible behavior; our family's security and financial well-being are jeopardized due to gambling.
10. Our gambler may consider or commit illegal and fraudulent acts to finance the gambling.
11. We are lied to or manipulated by our gambler; things do not make sense; the gambler can make us feel guilty, shifting blame onto us, suggesting we are the cause for the gambling. We lose trust in ourselves as well as the gambler; we wonder if our behavior could possibly trigger the gambling.
12. We worry about how easy it is to gamble on electronic devices and become frustrated at our inability to manage this ease of access for our gambler.
13. We feel hopeless, isolated and alone, too embarrassed or ashamed to confide in close family members and friends.

***If you think you are living with or affected by someone with a gambling problem, we invite you to come to a Gam-Anon meeting whether or not the gambler acknowledges the problem.***



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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. Does your child spend more time on the computer or mobile devices than doing schoolwork, regular chores at home, or sleeping?
2. Have you noticed changes in your child's personality, including frequent mood swings?
3. Are you uncomfortable with your child's friends and their activities together?
4. Has your child lost interest in activities he or she once enjoyed?
5. Have your child's grades slipped?
6. Is your child missing school or classes?
7. Does your child work, but never seems to have money and never seems to buy anything?
8. Have you been missing money, or thought you have been misplacing items in the house?
9. Does your child spend a lot of time watching and listening to sports or playing cards?
10. Does your child have an intense reaction during sporting events when one team is losing?
11. Would your child rather play computer games than participate in family activities or be with friends?
12. Does your child seem to be angry for no reason?
13. Does your child promise to never gamble again and then gamble?
14. Does your child lie about where he or she has been and who else was there?
15. Does your child lie about other things?
16. Has your child become secretive?

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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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### **How do I know if the gambling of my loved one is a problem?**

The information on this website may help you determine if there is a gambling problem. You are welcome to attend any Gam-Anon meeting to listen to experienced members and ask questions. If there is no meeting in your area contact the Gam-Anon International Service Office at [gamanonoffice@gam-anon.org](mailto:gamanonoffice@gam-anon.org) or 718-352-1671.

### **What do we accomplish in Gam-Anon?**

We attempt to find the answers to such questions as: What is my role as the loved one of a compulsive ( problem ) gambler? How can I help my gambler who is still gambling? How can I deal with my anger, fear, and resentment? Will I ever be able to trust the gambler again?

### **What is the cost of attending Gam-Anon?**

There are no dues or fees. Members contribute what they can at their meetings to pay meeting expenses.

### **How can I be the greatest help to the gambler who joins Gamblers Anonymous?**

Gam-Anon values the process of recovery defined by the Gamblers Anonymous (GA) program. Personal recovery in Gam-Anon includes an examination of our actions, behaviors, and attitudes as they affect our gamblers and ourselves. Understanding the Gamblers Anonymous program helps us to be supportive of our gamblers efforts in GA. Our hope is for recovery for everyone affected by the gambling, including the gambler.

### **Can I attend Gam-Anon if my gambler is still gambling?**

Yes, of course. Many of our members have loved ones who are still gambling. Gam-Anon meetings help us realize that we are not alone with our problems. The Steps and tools of the program help us to take control of our lives in spite of the gambling and problems caused by the gambling. We use the Gam-Anon program to build our own inner core of strength and emotional maturity. When we understand the illness of compulsive gambling, and follow the Gam-Anon Steps and suggestions, the resulting change in our actions and attitudes may help the gambler realize that compulsive gambling is a problem and motivate an interest in bringing about a change.

### **What if there is no Gam-Anon meeting near to me?**

Contact the Gam-Anon International Service Office at [gamanonoffice@gam-anon.org](mailto:gamanonoffice@gam-anon.org) for information and assistance.



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## FOR THE MEDIA/PSA

### PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT:

Gam-Anon is a 12 Step self-help fellowship offering hope and help when a loved one has a gambling problem. Living with the effects of someone else's gambling is often too devastating to bear without help. Family and friends are welcomed whether or not the gambler seeks help or even recognizes the existence of a gambling problem. There are no dues or fees required to attend Gam-Anon.

In Gam-Anon, we understand as perhaps few can. We are familiar with worry and sleepless nights and promises made only to be broken. We may become fearful and uncertain as to how to cope with the deterioration in our relationship, the financial problems, and the debts caused by the gambling.

Gam-Anon supports family members and friends in finding such answers to questions as:

- Am I living with a compulsive gambler?
- What is my role as the spouse, parent, or loved one of a compulsive gambler?
- How can I be of the greatest help to the person who joins Gamblers Anonymous?
- Or, if my gambler continues to gamble, how can I live with this problem?

Please visit our website, [www.gam-anon.org](http://www.gam-anon.org) for more information, including local hotline numbers and a national meeting list. Those seeking more information can also contact the Gam-Anon International Service Office at (718) 352-1671 or e-mail [gamanonoffice@gam-anon.org](mailto:gamanonoffice@gam-anon.org).

### INFORMATION FOR THE MEDIA

Gam-Anon welcomes the opportunity to inform the general public about the Gam-Anon program. Our members who agree to be interviewed, or to speak before a group about the Gam-Anon program and how the gambling problem has affected their lives are also representing Gam-Anon and will follow these Gam-Anon guidelines.

Gam-Anon follows the tradition of protecting the anonymity of our members. Members who choose to speak to groups in person do not give identifying information such as full name, where they live or work. Members who agree to be interviewed on television will be shown in shadow, and may ask that voices be disguised. Members who are interviewed on radio may ask that voices be disguised. Members who are interviewed for the print media will not permit a picture to be taken. As Gam-Anon has no opinion on legal or illegal gambling, politics, religion, or the medical definitions of gambling and treatment of gambling, we request that those questions are not asked. If asked, our members will respond with the statement that Gam-Anon has no opinion.

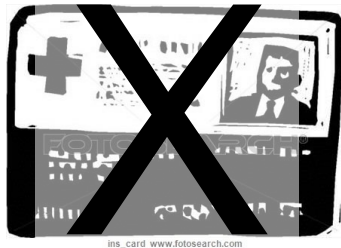
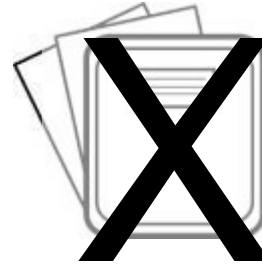
Requests for information about Gam-Anon, interviews or speakers are directed to the Gam-Anon International Service Office Inc. at: [gamanonoffice@gam-anon.org](mailto:gamanonoffice@gam-anon.org) or 718-352-1671.



**Is Your Life Affected by  
Someone Else's Gambling?**

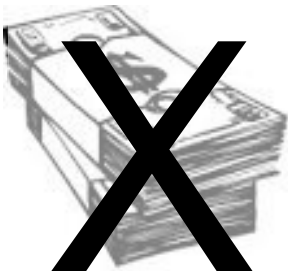
**LET US HELP!**

**No forms to complete.**



**No insurance cards needed.**

**No appointments necessary.**



**No co-pays, no fees.**

**JUST SHOW UP!**

Gam-Anon offers help and hope when a loved one has a gambling problem. In Gam-Anon, family and friends learn effective ways of coping, whether or not the gambler seeks help or even recognizes the existence of a gambling problem.

Local hotline phone numbers and meeting lists are available at [www.gam-anon.org](http://www.gam-anon.org). or call (718) 352-1671.