



GAM-ANON® INTERNATIONAL SERVICE OFFICE, INC.

P.O. BOX 307

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SOME IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES

The Fellowship of Gam-Anon is guided by the Twelve Unity Steps. Our growth and perhaps our survival depend upon adherence to them. One of these steps includes the principle of anonymity. Unity Step Eleven states: “Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion: We need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of Press, Radio, Films and Television.”

We have no rules, regulations, or any sort of compulsion in our Fellowship. We, the Board of Delegates, have no authority to compel or punish; we do not admonish or rebuke; we have faith that every member cares about the Gam-Anon program as we do. We rely on the membership’s willingness to become aware of and practice these principles in all their affairs.

That is **ATTRACTION** at work and indicates where our efforts and finances in Public Relations can be most productively spent.

- FIRST AND SECOND:** Living by the program principles is attractive to all who we meet, particularly those at the group level.
- THIRD:** To enlighten professionals as to Who, What, and Where we are, so that they may inform people seeking help.
- FOURTH:** Through press, radio, and television, to inform the public of our existence.
- FIFTH:** Circulating Gam-Anon literature in such places as libraries, bulletin boards, and reading racks, etc.

ANONYMITY

Maintaining anonymity is vital if Gam-Anon is to give support to its members and attract newcomers to the Fellowship. Due to personal growth in the program, Gam-Anon members expect no recognition or compensation and therefore desire to remain anonymous. **AT THE GROUP LEVEL**, members’ names are expected to be kept in strictest confidence and not to be discussed outside the meeting. **AT THE PUBLIC LEVEL**, press, radio, films, television, anonymity is always observed.

Gam-Anon members appearing in films or on television may never permit their faces to be shown, but should sit with their backs to the camera or in some other way conceal their identity.

In regard to hindering our ability to do television: we do not wish to hinder our ability to carry the message through the media. However, the principle of anonymity does take precedence over that consideration. It has been our experience, that if our principle is clearly understood and diplomatically communicated to the media representatives that they are willing to cooperate. In the instance of the program's format making it impossible to comply, of course we could not participate, but at least respect for our program has been gained by the member's adherence to our principle of anonymity. THAT IS ATTRACTION.

Professionals and members of the press attending meetings at the discretion of the group ought to be informed clearly on our principle of anonymity.

PRINTED MEDIA

Articles intended for publication perhaps ought to be news type telling simply Who, What and Where we are. Try to have a feature article reviewed by members of the local Public Relations Committee before publication. This tends to prevent breaks in anonymity or misrepresentation due to misunderstanding on the part of the writer.

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

1. Some Gam-Anon members accept engagements to speak to various groups and organizations and make presentations about what led them to the program and what the program as and is doing for their lives. Speakers are usually volunteers on a Speakers List, coordinated by the Public Relations Committee of Intergroup (Unity).
2. Intergroup (Unity) Public Relations Committees have meetings and set up data regarding speakers lists and qualifications, training, etc.
3. Some Intergroups (Unities) maintain an Answering Service listed in phone books and try to see that this number is known to Professional and Mental Health Agencies, Hot Lines, etc.

PROMOTION, ENDORSEMENT

Gam-Anon does not actively seek publicity, as is apparent in Unity Step Eleven. Gam-Anon Public Relations is concerned with acquainting the public and professionals, agencies, and organizations with the help available to persons who may be seeking help with the problems of compulsive gambling affecting their lives. However, they take no sides on public issues, nor do they engage in promotion of any kind or affiliate or endorse any agency, group, person, or project.



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SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR RETENTION

Retention as described in the dictionary is the power to keep and hold. The following are suggestions on retention as offered by other self-help groups. Although they may not apply in all instances, they offer some new insights into combating the problem of retention.

1. WELCOMING COMMITTEE

This committee, made up of two members (one old and one new), is devoted to making the new member comfortable after the meeting, i.e., coffee break. Their purpose is one of easing the new member into the group. It was suggested that the welcoming committee be on a rotating basis, such as one month, so that all members be given a chance to participate. It was also noted that the welcoming committee be one of social involvement and not essentially therapeutic, thus leaving this committee open to participation by all members.

2. NEWCOMERS MEETING

After a new member has been introduced to the meeting, it was suggested that they then be encouraged to attend a special newcomers meeting. It was also noted that they “lovingly” be told that they are always welcome at your meeting, but perhaps for the first month they should attend this special meeting. Many groups have felt the strain of new members week in and week out. Our meetings should be places where all members, new and old, feel free to participate. At a meeting strictly geared to the newcomer’s problems, the meeting would be entirely directed toward them.

Once again, this type of meeting may not be available to all areas, but perhaps the necessity of it warrants special consideration. Also of note, these meetings be chaired on a rotating basis of older members, but be open to all members who feel they could offer some help to the new member.

3. MEETING DURING THE DAY WITH FREE BABYSITTING

To keep members we must help to bring our meetings into their life-style. The lack of money for a babysitter is a very real problem, and it cannot be ignored. This type of meeting offers a member with young children a special incentive. The group caters to their needs at this time in their lives!

4. OPEN MEETINGS

This was described as being the best possible way to bring a large group together to share thoughts and feelings. It was noted that the suggestion for open meetings also include that these meetings be held on different nights and at different locations, thus giving all the groups a chance to host or guest an open meeting.

5. **INVOLVEMENT**

Everyone should participate in his/her group and thus be given a sense of belonging. Any job, no matter how small, is a way of saying we need you. Jobs suggested for the new members: taking roll; helping set up coffee, etc.; and cleaning up after the meeting. If you think about it, you could add to this list.

6. **COMMUNICATION COMMITTEE**

Once again, on a rotating basis, this group would call new members. Their function is one of caring and listening. Many of us can relate to the feeling of release offered us by an understanding member. Pent-up emotions are finally given an outlet. Once this is accomplished outside of the meeting, it gives a new member the ability to use the room for constructive purposes and not just unloading.

7. **SPONSORSHIP**

When this method for retention was offered, many warnings were also added. Not every group felt that this was constructive to the mate of a compulsive person. It was felt that as our needs change, so should the sponsor. We should make clear when using sponsors that both parties should be assured that their relationship is of a temporary basis. No one person has all the answers and it is also good to note that placing all the responsibility on one person can be very difficult for the sponsor.

8. **SOCIAL ACTIVITIES**

It is good for groups to get together on a social basis occasionally. Combining social activities with workshops, such as a mini-conclave luncheon, gives a growing and sharing opportunity for all involved. One group suggested a "brown-bag" lunch and chat, which would allow all to participate. It is important to remember that most new members have limited funds, and therefore some activities should be geared to them to not make them uncomfortable because of limited spending money.

9. **TOPIC MEETINGS**

These meetings can give members a chance to work on the theme prior to the meeting. If the topic is announced a week or two in advance, it affords the members sufficient time to really explore the subject and sort out their feelings. Another suggestion given was that questions concerning the topic be employed. Not only are the questions an aid to the member, but can also help produce an orderly meeting.

10. **MONTHLY ANNOUNCEMENT CALENDAR**

This calendar can allow all members to know who is celebrating an anniversary and upcoming special events. As the name suggests, the primary purpose of the calendar is to inform, but it can also achieve other results. Seeing on paper the success of others can give courage and hope to new members. In addition it allows members the time needed to make arrangements so they may attend these meetings.

11. **RECOGNITION MEETINGS**

Important events call for special meetings. Anniversary, birthday, or stoking meetings give appropriate recognition for a personal success. When we share these meetings, we also share growth.

12. **SPECIAL FOCUS MEETINGS**

This is an excellent way to bring selected groups together. For example, a "Five Years Plus Meeting" would allow members with more than five years in Gam-Anon to share their personal experiences with each other. There are many groups that could benefit from these meetings. Parents of compulsive gamblers may also find this type of meeting helpful. We must understand that although we share the same common problem, these meetings can give individual attention to particular groups.



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GROUP UNITY: TOWARDS MORE HARMONY AND PRODUCTIVITY

When we keep in mind the goals of Gam-Anon, we can work together to accomplish our common purposes. We are forever aware that principles must come before personalities. Since we advocate appropriate discussion of ideas, we listen to one another's ideas.

We are open to disagreement. Whether we agree or not we can extend to one another the courtesy of uninterrupted discussion time. If we hear a person to the end of a thought, we derive a more thorough understanding of what the person is really trying to say. Differences of opinion are part of our individual makeup and can add a more creative approach to ideas and problem solving.

We are more productive when we keep on track. Our time is limited during business and therapy meetings. Please keep personal stories and other unrelated sharing for open discussion time after our meeting is finished.

It's more comfortable not to control other peoples' choices. We all have the right to make our own choices. Serenity is ours when we don't try to make other's choices for them.

We draw strength from our differences. We all bring to Gam-Anon a rich diversity of ethnic, cultural, and religious heritages. Our diverse experiences, occupations, lifestyles, and education bring to our group different slants on any subject imaginable and fresh approaches to life. Each of us has walked a different path in different moccasins, and only an open mind can understand the scars that some paths bring.

It's okay to make mistakes. We all make mistakes. In fact, that is how we learn and improve. Let's care about one another and support each other's efforts. There is work to do. Through our association and cooperation, much can be accomplished.