

Name: **Ben S.**
City, State: **San Diego, CA**
Age: **N/A**
Occupation: **N/A**
His Story: **A liar, a cheat, and a thief.....how the 'nice guy' next door almost lost everything to continue gambling**



BEN'S FIRST PERSON ACCOUNT OF HIS STORY

How much more do I want to lose is a question I confronted myself with one evening when I was alone in the upstairs of my house spread eagle on the bed with not much energy to go on; flat broke, with my wife spending the weekends with her best friend, with not much relationship to speak of between me and my daughters. Life has no meaning.

If I had had a gun I probably would have done the improbable, ending my life. The question was what life; it was not much of a life really when I fully realized the devastation of what my compulsive gambling did to me, to my ex-wife, and my two daughters, and our life in general. One does not have much of a life when today all I have responsibility for is myself and three cats. My ex-wife has remarried and I am estranged from my two daughters. All of these that have happened in my life are as a result of my gambling, directly or indirectly. I have lost my family...do I dare lose more...lose myself?

What is this sickness that had so much power making me do unbelievable things with so much destructive consequences, so much dire effects on my life and those that love me? This sickness compels me to disregard my responsibilities to my family, as a parent, as a husband, and as a human being. It has affected every conceivable aspect of my life including but not limited to financial, marital, employment, and relationships with friends. The devastation of compulsive gambling is so vast that it has been likened to the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina to New Orleans, only perhaps in a smaller scale. Compulsive gambling destroys everything in its path and for the most part the damage it has done is irreparable.

No, don't get me wrong I am not blaming what has happened to me by my gambling. I am taking full responsibility for everything that I have done to me and to my family. I am holding myself accountable for all of the resultant effect of my gambling. I have learned that there are no coincidences. Where I am today is exactly the place my Higher Power wants me to be, it is where I want to be. I am now in recovery.

Compulsive gambling is just a symptom of the disease according to the Gamblers Anonymous Program literature. I am today a proud member of this great program which literally and spiritually saved my life. I first came into Gamblers Anonymous in 1991.

After over 13 months of sobriety I thought I had control over my gambling. How could something I loved doing so much have such devastation? For the next 14 years my gambling became progressively worse. All my credit cards were maxed out. We have had several refinancing of our house all to cover the debts my gambling had incurred. The finances were perhaps the least of the destruction. I have become a liar, a cheat, a thief, and everything I touched did not have any value. I have become a hostage of gambling. But more importantly, I will never be able to bring back the time I did not spend to watch my daughter in her dance competitions, the time when I was in the Casino and my oldest daughter had a reaction to a medication, where my wife had to call for the Paramedics to take her to the nearest Hospital. I was not there when my family needed me most.

I came back to Gamblers Anonymous on January 2, 2005, where I have now become a student and a practitioner of the 12 Steps of Recovery and the 12 Steps of Unity. GA has provided me resources and tools to apply in all my daily affairs. The GA Combo Book talks about the various positions one could end up should one continue to be a compulsive gambler; these are insanity, prison, or death. It also talks about the wonderful recovery one can achieve if one starts applying the principles of the Gamblers Anonymous Program. The GA Combo Book only has 17 wonderful pages; every page contains the story of every member's experience, strength, and hope.

The GA Program is much more than just principles and the belief in the old ancient concept of ridding one self of character flaws; it leads one out of the prison of having been held hostage of the compulsive gambling. It is a journey of finding oneself. When I accepted and admitted that I was powerless over gambling and that my life had become unmanageable, I began experiencing recovering my life back. This is the very first step of a magical journey of recovery. As a self-help program, I needed to work very hard to understand all the 24 steps of recovery and unity. I followed everything that the program wanted me to do. I knew that as a self-help program I could only get out of the program what I put in.

I found the God of my understanding in the GA Program. A key concept in the GA Program is to turn over to my Higher Power, the God of my understanding, my will.

My will which consisted of lying, thieving, and deceiving, which led me to losing almost everything I have now turned over to my God. Today I "Let Go and Let God".

Spirituality as defined in the GA Program are those characteristics that best represent the highest qualities of the human mind which are, honesty, generosity, kindness, and humility. I now live in the moment because it is in the moment that I will be able to do something. The past however important is memory and how ever much hard I would like to change it, shape it, and alter it there is nothing I can do. I live one day at time where I remain focused and very much engaged in the spiritual practice of the principles of the magical program called the Gamblers Anonymous.

Today the question I now ask myself is "How much more do I want to gain"? Only I can know the answer. I am so grateful to GA and its many fine members without whose help I very much doubt if I could appreciate my life today, let alone be around to reap its rewards.

I do not want to lose anymore, little by little, with the help of the Gamblers Anonymous Program and the fellowship of its members, I am beginning to reclaim my life back from that most insidious of addictions, compulsive gambling.

Disclaimer: the above story appears in its original form and has not been edited for content. The above story does not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of The National Council on Problem Gambling.