INTRODUCTION TO THE 12 STEPS

Objective: To live life consistent with our deepest values.
The steps help us discover what those values are and provide a blueprint for integrating our inner values with our outer life (work, play, family, relationships, spiritual practice). With diligence and commitment, you'll be able to identify past patterns of behavior (many of which caused you to act contrary to your deepest values) and develop new, healthy ways of thinking and living.

Step work is self-help AND mutual-help.
Each journey through the steps is a solitary one. What you write will be intensely personal. However, if you tried to go it alone, you might falter, or stop, or decide that it's too painful or too difficult, much as you did when you tried to stop gambling without the help of GA. These writing exercises are designed to be used in conjunction with a Step Meeting (if possible) or a sponsor. Drawing from each other’s strength and experience, we can be supported through the process. A Step Meeting a safe place for us to share our feelings, emotions, strengths, defects, fears and spirituality so we may each move ahead in recovery.

Writing is the foundation for working the steps. Writing makes it real.
Committing to paper (or journal or computer) our feelings, emotions, actions, behaviors, fears and hopes encourages us to be forthright and honest with ourselves, perhaps for the first time in our lives. Please don't be concerned about structure, spelling, punctuation or form; the writing is for your eyes only unless you choose to share it with the group or someone else. Write in whatever way works best for you to capture your thoughts, feelings and emotions and make them accessible for your review and revisitation.

Writing is our touchstone for progress in recovery as we move through the steps. It also helps us to recognize when we are struggling with a step or some portion of it -- signaling that it's time for us to share the problem and ask the group or our sponsors for loving guidance and support. Writing enables us to evaluate the results of our self-examination and formulate new, better choices. Writing provides a pathway to our inner values and connects us to them in direct, fundamental, organic ways. It focuses our attention on what is true and what is real, rather than being distracted by negative influences that might encourage us to stray from our true selves.

Have you forgiven yourself? Forgiveness of self starts with acceptance of the disease as separate from oneself. You didn't choose this disease - it chose you.
Although we are responsible for our actions while we were gambling, they were the result of choices dictated by our disease. Once affected, our brains became abnormal; unfortunately, they will never be normal again. But we may be restored to a normal way of thinking and living. With abstinence, we can move away from illness and toward recovery, one day at a time. With forgiveness, we can begin a process of examining our innermost selves as separate from the disease and begin to make value-determined choices, instead of disease-determined ones.
Step 1, Exercise 1: The Twenty Questions

1. Did you ever lose time from work or school due to gambling?
2. Has gambling ever made your home life unhappy?
3. Did gambling affect your reputation?
4. Have you ever felt remorse after gambling?
5. Did you ever gamble to get money with which to pay debts or otherwise solve financial difficulties?
6. Did gambling cause a decrease in your ambition or efficiency?
7. After losing, did you feel you must return as soon as possible to win back your losses?
8. After a win, did you have a strong urge to return and win more?
9. Did you often gamble until your last dollar was gone?
10. Did you ever borrow to finance your gambling?
11. Have you ever sold anything to finance gambling?
12. Were you reluctant to use "gambling money" for normal expenditures?
13. Did gambling make you careless of the welfare of yourself or your family?
14. Did you ever gamble longer than you had planned?
15. Have you ever gambled to escape worry, trouble, boredom or loneliness?
16. Have you ever committed, or considered committing, an illegal act to finance gambling?
17. Did gambling cause you to have difficulty in sleeping?
18. Do arguments, disappointments, or frustrations create within you an urge to gamble?
19. Did you ever have an urge to celebrate any good fortune by a few hours of gambling?
20. Have you ever considered self-destruction or suicide as a result of your gambling?

As you answer each question, pay particular attention to any defensiveness, guilt, or hesitation on your part. Search your heart. Does your "Yes" answer come from your own experience, or the accusations/anger/frustration of others? Is your "No" answer clear, straightforward and completely without strings or is it hesitant or defensive? Could it be that you're looking for a way to justify/explain/excuse the behavior rather than simply admit it?

If a question pushes a button, there's probably something there that needs to be looked at honestly and squarely. Now is the time to get it out into the open! Write about it in detail; talk about it with others in the Step Meeting. This is the beginning of a process that helps us to identify what's ours and what isn't -- this is the "wisdom to know the difference" that we ask for in The Serenity Prayer.
Step 1, Exercise 2: Moving Toward Acceptance

THE CYCLE OF UNMANAGEABILITY. We think, "It will be different next visit. . . next game. . . next bet." Insanity is doing the same thing over & over and expecting a different result. Below are some cyclic behaviors that may seem familiar to you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In Our Gambling</th>
<th>In Our Lives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chase wins/emotional highs</td>
<td>Need to escape/Need 'time out'</td>
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<tr>
<td>Try to recoup losses</td>
<td>Defensiveness/Manipulation/Lying</td>
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<tr>
<td>Squander wins</td>
<td>Justification/Self-Pity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>Isolating/Emotionless</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emptiness</td>
<td>No Self-Esteem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chase wins/emotional highs</td>
<td>Need to escape/Need 'time out'</td>
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ILLUSTRATE THE PROGRESSIVE NATURE OF YOUR ADDICTION. Documenting the progression of the illness can help us prove to ourselves just how powerless we are over it. Write about specific examples from your life that illustrate how your disease escalated and how each attempt at controlling it failed.

THE ILLUSION OF CONTROL OVER OUR PLAYING. What behaviors/choices/actions perpetuated our illusions that we had some control over the outcome of our play (play only at night, only play slots featuring cherries or other fruits, play quickly/slowly, play $1 machines instead of quarters, change machine after X dollars lost or Y minutes without a hit, never play a machine that hit within the last X minutes/hours, etc.)? What were the results of these "proofs" that we were in control?

THE ILLUSION OF CONTROL OVER OUR ADDICTION. What gambling-related behaviors perpetuated our illusions of control over our growing obsession/addiction (limiting casino visits, never using credit card for cash, limiting ATM card use, leaving with some winnings, "big shot" behavior, etc.)? What were the results of these "proofs" that we were in control?

THE ILLUSION OF CONTROL OVER OUR LIVES. What behaviors/actions perpetuate our illusions of control over outcomes in our everyday lives (i.e. attempting to control other people or events, if/then thinking)? What are the results of these "proofs" that we are in control?

LETTING GO. We cling to the illusion (or expectation) that we either can (or should be able to) control our gambling. **WE MUST LET IT GO.** The truth is, we are powerless over the addiction. It controls us. It will continue to control us until we surrender.
Step 1, Exercise 3: Reality Check

You may have admitted that you are powerless over gambling but have you fully accepted it? Write about any lingering doubts, fears, qualifications, justifications, guilt, blaming, or rationalizations you may have.

Write about any withdrawal symptoms you may be experiencing. These may include some or all of the following and may be frequent or intermittent.

- Thinking problems
- Memory problems
- Emotional extremes
- Sleep disturbances
- Physical sensations
- Stress sensitivity

Think about the idea of Meeting Power vs. Will Power. Is the meeting a power greater than yourself? Write about specific examples from your experience that illustrate how meeting power succeeds where your own will power fails.
**Step 1, Exercise 4: Empowerment**

Accept Powerlessness, and You Empower Yourself. There are certain things in our lives over which we have no power/control -- like the passage of time, the actions of others, and the weather.

Be honest with yourself: are you ready to add gambling to that list?

List at least 20 things in your life that are within your control/power. Which of these things will you draw upon most to aid you in your recovery?

Also write about:

- The most meaningful thing you learned about yourself through working Step 1.
- One thing for which you've become grateful while working Step 1.
- The kindest thing you've done for yourself recently.
### Step 2, Exercise 1: Our Thoughts & Behaviors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GAMBLING</th>
<th>RECOVERY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Abnormal Thoughts</td>
<td>Normal Thoughts</td>
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<td>Self-Destructive Behaviors</td>
<td>Healthy Behaviors</td>
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Step 2, Exercise 2: Our Beliefs & Values

Write about:

1) What happened each time you attempted abstinence on your own before you came to GA?

2) How is your abstinence within the GA program different?

3) Three (3) core beliefs and/or values that gambling caused you to ignore, abandon or compromise when you were active in your addiction.

4) With your abstinence within the GA program, have these core beliefs and/or values been restored to you? How do you feel about it? What difference do they make in your life today?
Step 2, Exercise 3: Willingness

Step Two asks us to open our minds to the possibility that there is a power greater than ourselves. YOU create YOUR OWN concept of a higher power. There can be many sources and inspirations for it: religious upbringing, family tradition, life experiences, group membership, reading, training, travel. Ultimately, it is a personal, spiritual choice -- one of YOUR OWN understanding at this time. Keep in mind that, as the fog from gambling clears and you let go of your need to control people, places and things, that understanding may change, grow or deepen. At this point, we need only become willing to make it part of our recovery process.

Write about:

1) Is your mind open to the possibility of a power greater than yourself? If not, what things are keeping your mind closed? Pride? Ego? Self-centeredness? Stubbornness? Fear? Would you be willing to set them aside, just for today?

2) Have you ever seen a “greater power” at work in the lives of others? Have you ever experienced such a power at work in your own life?

3) Three things that you believe in and trust today.

4) Belief + Trust = Faith. Does writing about what you believe in and trust give you a sense that there is or could be a force at work in your life beyond your own will? Are you willing to welcome this safe, loving and supportive presence into your recovery?
Step 2, Exercise 4: Restoration

Restoration to a Normal Way of Thinking and Living.
At the start of Step 2, we examined what a normal way of thinking and living might look like and wrote down some things that were meaningful to us. Things like taking better care of ourselves and others, acting with integrity, being accountable, driving safely, eating better, developing healthy diversions, respecting the value of money, becoming more spiritual, achieving balance.

1) Take another look at your list. Note how many of those things have been restored or begun to be restored to your life. Has will power alone made it possible or is some other power at work in your life?

Step 2 allows us to become reacquainted with what we believe and trust to be true for ourselves and moves us in the direction of faith.

2) Do you have a better sense of what's right for yourself today? Are you willing to continue to move forward in faith?

Write about:

• The most meaningful thing you learned through working Step 2.
• Something for which you've become grateful while working Step 2.
• Something good/positive you've done for yourself recently.
Step 3, Exercise 1: Surrender

Step Three asks us to surrender -- to turn our will and our lives over to the care of our Higher Power. Notice that the step says care of, not control of. There’s ease, gentleness, comfort and support in this kind of surrender. Step Three asks us to make a commitment to let go of our stubborn, habitual or irrational need or desire to control things that are clearly beyond our control. These are "things we cannot change" -- like the actions of others, the weather, the passage of time, and our compulsive gambling. By allowing our benevolent guiding spirit or Higher Power to handle these things, we free ourselves to address the things that are within our control. These are all the things we listed in Step One -- like remaining abstinent, attending meetings, being honest, finding spirituality, achieving balance. If we allow ourselves to be cared for in matters over which we have no control, we can direct our energies to effecting change within ourselves.

1) Write about three things you could lose -- or you’re afraid you could lose -- if you were to make a decision to turn your will and your life over to the care of a Higher Power. Write about three things you could gain.

How do we become willing to open our minds and hearts to the benevolent guidance of a Higher Power? We can start within the program itself. Many of us in GA have come to experience the meetings and the fellowship as a power greater than ourselves. Through sponsorship, we can align ourselves with members who practice the principles of the program and embody its spirit.

2) Do you have a sponsor? If yes, write about how the relationship connects you to GA and supports you in your life. If no, list the qualities you would look for in a sponsor and write about how a nurturing relationship with someone in GA could enhance your recovery. Are you willing to make a commitment to choosing a sponsor within the next 60 days?
Step 3, Exercise 2: Wisdom

Surrendering our will to our Higher Power enables us to know our Higher Power's will for us. Letting go of our need to control (or be controlled) opens the door for us to develop the wisdom to know the difference between the things we can change and the things we can't. Because we're not attempting to exert our will, acquiesce to the will of others or force an outcome, we are empowered to see situations as they really are, determine whether our participation is appropriate, assess our options and make productive choices.

Write about:

1) Does surrendering your will mean sacrificing your independence? Even if it does, might it not be worth it?


3) What does the phrase "Do the right thing" mean to you? How does it work? Cite a recent example from your life.
Step 3, Exercise 3: Self-Awareness

We've looked at how surrendering our will relates to our independence. Now let's look at how it relates to our feelings. Often, our need to control situations or exercise our will encourages us to manage, manipulate, distort, deny, excuse or bury our feelings, rather than experience them. In the week before our next meeting, choose a situation in your life and make a conscious decision to let go of your need to control it (as long as doing so will not harm yourself or others) and then follow through on it. Allow yourself to feel whatever comes up as you formulate and act on the decision. Observe your feelings as best you can.

Write about:

1) How did it feel when you let go of your need to control the situation? Be specific.

2) Your willingness is the key to letting go. Would you be willing to let go again in the same or a different situation, regardless of the outcome?

When we let go of our habitual need to control (or be controlled), we're also freed to look within ourselves and examine our true nature. The process allows us to connect or reconnect with our spirituality and with personal interests and passions that can enrich and balance our lives in recovery.

3) Are you feeling more connected to your spiritual nature? How has this connection changed the way you feel about yourself? How do you feel about yourself?

4) What interests/hobbies/passions have you discovered or rediscovered in recovery? How have they added to your life? Are there any you might like to explore in the future?
Step 3, Exercise 4: Decisions

In Step 3, we’ve written about and discussed important aspects of our independence, including self-will, self-reliance, defiance, false pride, arrogance and our need to control.

1) Have you continued to surrender your will and let go of your need to control people, places and situations? How do you feel when you do so?

Paradoxically, as we gain recovery and make progress in GA, overconfidence may set in. We may begin to feel like "our old selves" and conclude that our problems are solved. In Step 3, several additional aspects of independence may appear -- like impatience (nothing seems to be moving fast enough), intolerance (focusing on the perceived faults or shortcomings of others) and immaturity ("the rules don't apply to me"). No coincidence -- they’re all telltale signs of overconfidence. It’s also no coincidence that these thinking patterns start with the letter "I." As much as we’d like to put the onus on others, the people, places or situations we’re struggling with, focusing on or judging have everything to do with "I" and very little to do with "them." The trick is to notice the thinking before we act on it.

2) Are you experiencing any of this "I" thinking? How are you dealing with it?

Step 3 asks us to make a decision to surrender our will to the care of our Higher Power. If the request seems too intimidating, we can start by simply deciding to be willing to make a decision. We can choose to remain open to the idea of surrender. We can continue to use the GA program and fellowship as our Higher Power, if that’s more comfortable. Remember, it is a Power of our own understanding with which we desire to connect, and our understanding may change and evolve if we seek help, trust others and remain open and willing.

When we decide, the decision probably will not be universal. Most of us will make it many times and in countless different situations. We may decide to test it, only to take it back when the outcome is not to our liking. We may convince ourselves that we’re too time-pressed to turn it over, resolving to "do it later." We may "pick & choose," letting go in minor, inconsequential situations, but holding on for "important" ones. But if, gradually, we can become willing to make the decision one day, one hour, one situation, one person at a time, eventually it will become our "second nature" -- a more open, humble and accepting nature that can support us to live life on life’s terms.

3) Are you willing to continue the journey through Step 4’s searching and fearless self-inventory in partnership with a Higher Power of your own understanding?
Step 4 Preparation Exercise:
Write Your "Gambling Autobiography"

Go back in your memory as far as necessary -- to childhood, if appropriate -- to identify the history of your relationship with gambling. What's your earliest memory or experience of betting, wagering or gambling? You may not have been a participant, merely an observer. What do you remember most about the experience? Can you recall how you felt about it at the time? Did it capture your interest or stir your emotions? Did the activity itself appear acceptable and innocent or dangerous and taboo? What part did the incident play in your forming an early opinion about gambling?

Start with your first recollection and write about it and all subsequent incidents and experiences with gambling throughout your life. Notice whether, along the way, you had a sense of your attitude and participation as "normal" with regard to gambling. When did you first notice changes in your attitude toward gambling and/or your involvement in it? Did other people bring those changes to your attention? How did you feel and respond when they did? What behaviors did you develop? Also notice whether your changing attitude(s) toward gambling or the gambling itself began to affect choices/behaviors in other areas of your life. Use specific examples!

Creating a "gambling autobiography" enables us to paint a clear picture of ourselves as compulsive gamblers. We may learn that we were "normal" gamblers who became compulsive. Or we may notice that compulsiveness or some indications of it were present almost from the start. By chronicling our gambling history, we can trace the formation of the guilt and shame we carry today. We may begin to see how our early gambling-related attitudes and experiences are connected to our present-day choices/behaviors. Most importantly, we can start to identify the specific character defects -- self-delusion, big shotism, lying, stealing, manipulation, pride, irresponsibility, wastefulness, self-pity, isolation, greed, jealousy, resentment, laziness, impatience, arrogance -- that made it possible for that guilt to accumulate.


Step 4, Exercise 1: Character

CHARACTER = BEHAVIOR + PERSONALITY + MORALITY

Our character determines how we deal (or fail to deal) with our feelings and emotions. In examining our character, we need to be willing to identify how/when we have hurt others. Only then can we acknowledge our actions, make amends, and move on. And what about hurting ourselves? Many aspects of character begin as protective defenses, born in response to circumstances in which wrongs have been done to us, only to evolve over time into a pattern of ultimately self-destructive habits/behaviors that we believe we need for our security. As we look to identify the guilt we carry, we also have an opportunity to recognize how we have hurt ourselves.

Go back over your gambling autobiography and your life. Identify specific situations from which you are carrying guilt or remorse for your behaviors/actions. Also identify specific situations from which you are harboring anger, resentment, pain or sadness. Just note them for now; you'll refer to them in more detail in later Steps.

Read Pages 1 through the top of Page 6 in the Guide to 4th Step Inventory. Before you tackle Question 1 on Page 6, take a candid assessment of yourself. Is your natural tendency toward high self-esteem, self-righteousness or pride? If yes, start with your character defects or weaknesses. Are you more prone to low self-esteem, depression or worry? If yes, start with your character assets or strengths.

First, list your character traits as Question 1 asks. Second, identify your "Top 5" in each column. Third, pick two traits, one from each column, to examine in detail. Last, write about each of these two traits in Questions 2, 3 & 4.
Step 4, Exercise 2: Feelings

In Step 4, Exercise 1, we identified some major components of our character. Hopefully, we've begun to see how our defects may have created recurring difficulties in our lives while our strengths seem to have eased our journey. As we learn to rely on our strengths and remove our defects, we can begin to create new, healthy relationships, environments and situations.

Now let's take a look at how we deal (or fail to deal) with the feelings and emotions, positive and negative, that are triggered by people, places or things. In this Exercise, we have an opportunity to admit how well or badly we've dealt with our feelings and emotions in the past and make a decision to deal with them more appropriately today and in the future.

Read Pages 12 through 14 in the Guide to 4th Step Inventory. Write your answers to Questions 1 through 6 and then move on to the "mini-formula." For Topic 2 in the mini-formula, start your writing with the specific situations that you identified in Step 4, Exercise 1 (the ones from which you are harboring anger, resentment, pain or sadness) and move on to other situations/feelings from there.
Step 4, Exercise 3: Dollars and Sense

The goals of Step 4 are to uncover our burden of guilt and move toward achieving balance in all areas of our lives. Through the previous 4th Step writing exercises, we've begun to see how our character defects (or defenses) have created recurring difficulties in our lives, including how we've dealt poorly with (or denied completely) our feelings and emotions. Similarly, we've begun to see how our character strengths have supported us. Now let's look at how the major components of our character (weaknesses and strengths) have contributed to our material situation.

For most of us, our financial lives have become unmanageable. A financial inventory is called for. But we will not itemize debits and credits. We will not list the money we used, borrowed or embezzled in order to finance our gambling nor will we dwell on the amount of money won or lost. A Pressure Relief Meeting may be of help for these issues. Instead, we will trace our lifelong experience and relationship with money. We need to be able to separate our thinking about money and financial responsibility from the effects/after-effects of gambling, lest we delude ourselves that abstinence alone will solve our financial difficulties.

Just as we have an opportunity to bring about a character change within ourselves, we can change the way we relate to money. As with our feelings and emotions, our goal is to recognize our old behaviors and patterns and leave them in the past. Free of the financial drain caused by gambling, we can decide to deal with our finances more healthily, realistically and appropriately today and in the future.

1) Write a "financial autobiography" that chronicles your experience and relationship with money or finances, including saving, investing, borrowing, spending, and the acquisition of property and possessions. Identify your attitudes, feelings, expectations, behaviors and habits with regard to money and financial security.

Some questions to consider as you write: To what lengths have you been willing to go to acquire money or accumulate wealth or possessions? Have you used money to improve your life? Have you used money to fill emotional, psychological or other needs? How have your character defects contributed to your financial instability?

2) Write about how working on the elimination of your character defects and drawing on your strengths could have a positive effect on how you relate to money and deal with finances. Can you envision a time when you might be able to trust yourself to manage your financial affairs in a responsible way? What steps do you need to take to create that?

3) Make a separate list of any guilt that you are harboring -- either from the past, from your gambling days, or currently -- in relation to your financial situation, your handling of money, etc.
Step 4, Exercise 4: Priorities

Through the 4th Step writing exercises, we’re moving closer to achieving balance between who we are and how we operate in the world. We’ve identified our five major character weaknesses and defects, resolved to change them within ourselves, and selected one defect with which to begin. We’ve noted our major character assets, from which we will draw strength. We’ve listed the feelings and emotions that cause problems for us and identified healthier, more constructive ways to deal with them. We’ve examined our financial history and discovered that we can change our old attitudes, behaviors and habits toward money, learn to trust ourselves again, and deal with our finances more healthily, realistically and appropriately today and in the future.

Of course, it can be stressful to implement changes, especially within oneself. That’s why prioritization of the major areas of our lives is so important.

This week, read Part II Priorities – Principles and Responsibilities from the bottom of page 7 to the middle of page 10 in “A Guide to Fourth Step Inventory.” Write your answers to the questions posed in Priorities 1, 2 and 3 (Abstinence, Higher Power and Family).

Next week, continue reading Part II Priorities – Principles and Responsibilities from the middle of page 10 to the middle of page 12. Write your answers to the questions posed in Priorities 4 through 7 (Job/Profession, Goals/Dreams, Friends/Neighbors/Community/Country and Special Interests).


Step 5, Preparation Exercise

In Step 4, we made a searching and fearless moral and financial inventory of ourselves. We identified and wrote in detail about our personal strengths and defects. We noticed how those defects created problems, dictated our choices, and formed patterns of destructive and self-destructive behavior throughout our lives, affecting our relationships with our parents, spouses, siblings, children, relatives, teachers, friends, employers, coworkers and, perhaps most importantly, our Higher Power.

Have you begun to change your patterns of behavior as a result of Step 4? In what ways?

What has working Step 4 meant to your life?

Step 5 (“Admitted to ourselves and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs”) isn't about forgetting our wrongs; it's about putting our guilt over them into proper perspective. Carrying a heavy burden of guilt stops us from moving forward. We need to let go of our guilt and put it in the past so we can focus on our lives today.

Have you forgiven yourself for your illness and the damage it caused? Have you come to terms with the true nature of the illness and your powerlessness over it?

Are you still carrying guilt? Are you willing to put it into proper perspective?

Are you willing to admit your defects to another human being, knowing that it's the first step to letting go of your guilt over the wrongs that resulted from them? Do you feel you deserve to be freed from the guilt? If not, what must you do to allow yourself to feel deserving of being freed from it?
Step 5, Exercise 1

Honesty, open-mindedness and humility are the three keys to making Step 5 smooth and productive.

Are you more honest, open-minded and humble after having worked Step 4? In what ways? What relationships, activities, realizations and choices have contributed to your growth in these areas? Write about how you intend to keep yourself honest, open-minded and humble as you take the action suggested in Step 5.

The person with whom you do Step 5 should fill two needs. He or she should have the wisdom and experience to receive your admittance in a helpful, supportive and nurturing way, and he or she should be someone you can trust to respect your confidentiality. It could be a sponsor, a member of the clergy, a mentor, a counselor, a close friend. It could be someone in the GA program or in another 12-Step program. It could be someone who’s familiar with the Steps, or not. The choice is yours.

Have you decided to whom you will admit the exact nature of your wrongs? Why are you choosing that person? If you have not yet chosen a specific person, write about the qualities you want that person to have; this may help you to choose.
Step 5, Exercise 2

Review your Top 5 Defects – you’ll talk about them in your Step 5 admittance.

Review your Top 5 Strengths -- you’ll need to draw on them in your Step 5 admittance.

*Identify any guilt you are still carrying. It need not be related to gambling, although some of it may be. Write about the specific wrongs, behaviors or actions (i.e. lying, neglect of self or family, criminal acts, suicidal thoughts) from which your guilty feelings arise. Then write about how your life could be without the guilt. Can you live with not having to punish yourself anymore?*

*Decide with whom you will make your Step 5 admittance. Enlist his/her cooperation, schedule a good time/place to get together and then, just do it.*
Step 5, Exercise 3

Have you done your Step 5 admittance? Has your burden of guilt lightened? Have you gained humility? How do you feel today emotionally, spiritually and mentally?

Are you developing new resolves today while living One Day at a Time – that is, are you making plans without planning outcomes? What are some of them?

Are you more honest, open-minded and willing to change/grow today? How do you know?
Step 6, Exercise 1

Write about the thoughts/tools/resources/actions that help you maintain serenity. You will need to draw on them as you work through Step 6.

Step 6 is best accomplished "One Defect at a Time." Review your list from Step 4 and choose one defect with which to begin.

Which defect have you chosen? How has it affected your life in the past? What benefits will its removal bring to your life in recovery?
Step 6, Exercise 2

Has your readiness/intention to remove your character defect made you more aware of it when it surfaces? Have you begun to change your behaviors, choices and actions? How?

Are you getting any comments from others regarding your character changes/improvements? Have you received any positive feedback? Have you met with any resistance? How do you feel about it?

Regarding your other character defects/defenses, are there any with which you find yourself unwilling to part? What’s holding you back?
Step 7, Exercise 1

How do you interpret your Higher Power’s will for you?

Do you feel that your life has meaning and purpose?

What does the word "humility" mean to you? Has your view of it changed since joining GA?

How does humility manifest itself in your behavior and actions today? Give specific examples. How will you keep it in your life as your recovery progresses?
Step 7, Exercise 2

Do you have a one-day-at-a-time plan for asking for help in removing the character defect/defense that you targeted in Step 6? What is it?

Are you willing to continue to apply Steps 6 and 7 to your other defects/defenses? How do you intend to continue the process?

Are you more honest, tolerant and loving toward yourself and others today? Describe how you will use these qualities to work Step 8.
Step 8, Exercise 1

In what ways (spiritually, emotionally, mentally, physically, financially) did you harm yourself through gambling? List and write about them. Be specific.

Make a detailed list of all others you harmed through your gambling. Describe how you harmed them. Be specific.

(Note: If you are working the Steps for a second, third, or more time, you may have already addressed some or all of your gambling-related harms. If that is the case, identify and list any ways in which your more recent behaviors and actions may have harmed you or others.)
Step 8, Exercise 2

Review your lists from Step 8, Exercise 1. Are you carrying any guilt or shame over the harm you did to others? Are you still angry or blaming others for the harm done to you? Write about your feelings of guilt, shame, anger or blame.

Choose a way (visually, symbolically, spiritually or physically) to release your feelings of guilt, shame, anger or blame. Describe this process of letting go and how you felt afterward.

Are there any legal or financial situations you created while gambling with which you will need additional assistance or support to make direct amends/repayments? Are you willing to ask for help with them (i.e. from a sponsor, Pressure Relief group, employer, court system, bank/creditor)?
Step 9, Exercise 1

The thought of making amends raises the fear of consequences and the shame of apologizing. The act of making amends creates the hope of forgiveness and the joy of freedom.

*If you haven’t already forgiven yourself, face yourself in the mirror and do so now. Describe your feelings afterward.*

*Are you willing to make amends to yourself and others now? If not, what do you need to do to become willing?*
Step 9, Exercise 2

Review your lists from Step 8, Exercise 1 (of harm done to yourself and others) and indicate how you intend to make your amends to each person on the list. For example, if you embezzled money, indicate how you will make restitution. If you neglected yourself or your family, lied to a loved one, abandoned a friendship, or duped your employer, indicate how you intend to acknowledge it (in person, wherever possible, or by telephone or in an audiotape, videotape or letter).

Prioritize your list of amends to be made, starting with those to yourself, and then, one by one, begin to make them. Write about how you feel as you move through the process.

Are there any people, to whom you owe amends or others, who could be injured in some way by your making amends? If yes, how can you reconcile it and move on? (For example, you might write a letter of apology to them but not send it. Or you could make an anonymous charitable donation in their name)
Step 10, Exercise 1: Daily Inventory

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<th>Date</th>
<th>3 Things Done Well</th>
<th>3 Things Could Have Done Better</th>
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Step 10, Exercise 2

What insights have you gained from doing the Daily Inventory for a week? Acknowledge areas of growth, achievement and progress.

Are you promptly admitting when you are wrong? If not, what are the barriers to your doing so? (for example: denial, ego, pride, justification)

Are you living in a more spiritual way -- that is, with kindness, generosity, honesty and humility? Be watchful for any patterns of selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear.

How do you intend to continue to practice Step 10? (for example, daily/nightly/weekly inventory; scheduled review/reality check with sponsor)

Have you developed constructive ways of releasing/expressing feelings? If yes, what are they? If no, what could work for you that you would be willing to make a part of your Step 10 practice?

Are you taking better care of yourself and minimizing stress in your life? Give specific examples.
Step 11, Exercise 1

Review your writings from Step 2, Exercises 3 and 4, and Step 3, Exercises 1 and 2.

Has your willingness to turn your will and your life over to your Higher Power created miracles in your life? Give specific examples of the miraculous differences you have experienced in your journey through the Steps.

Has your open-mindedness improved? Are you asking for and accepting help from others in the program and in your life? Give specific examples of how your asking/acceptance of help has contributed to your recovery.
Step 11, Exercise 2

Through prayer, you can communicate with your Higher Power and ask to know your Higher Power’s will for you. In meditation, you can release and surrender your own will, and receive your Higher Power’s answers.

How you improve and maintain conscious contact with your Higher Power is YOUR CHOICE. Only you can decide how much time to devote to it, how often to do it, and what form the practice/ritual will take. Step 11 asks you to make those decisions and then commit to making those practices a part of your daily life.

Are your prayers based on spiritual objectives or are you praying for material gain or intervention? Do you have a prayer practice? Describe it.

Have you embraced the practice of meditation? Describe how you quiet your mind.

How will you keep the practice of prayer and meditation alive in your daily life?

Step 12

*Are you practicing the 12 Steps in your life, one day at a time?* Give specific examples.

Step 12 involves showing that we care for other compulsive gamblers. We demonstrate caring through our words and our actions. *What words and actions of yours demonstrate your caring for your GA brothers and sisters and for compulsive gamblers who still suffer?* Give specific examples.

*How will you balance carrying the message to others with taking care of yourself and your own recovery?* Give specific examples.
The “13th Step”

As the Combo book reminds us, the greatest challenge with which we will be faced is that of bringing about a character change within ourselves. This challenge should be worked on immediately and continued throughout our lives, through the study and practice of the Twelve Steps of Recovery. After working the 12 Steps, ask yourself these questions:

1. Am I still powerless over gambling?
2. Do I believe that a Power greater than myself can restore me to a normal way of thinking and living?
3. Have I turned my will and my life over to the care of this Power of my own understanding?
4. Have I made a searching and fearless moral and financial inventory of myself?
5. Have I admitted to myself and another human being the exact nature of my wrongs?
6. Am I entirely ready to have these defects of character removed?
7. Have I asked my higher Power to remove my shortcomings?
8. Have I made a list of all persons I have harmed?
9. Have I made amends to the people on my list?
10. Have I continued to take personal inventory and when I was wrong, promptly admitted it?
11. Have I improved my conscious contact with my higher Power?
12. Am I carrying the message of recovery to other compulsive gamblers?
13. Am I willing to work the 12 Steps again, starting with Step 1?

If you answered "No" to any of the above questions, or you have any doubts, please take this opportunity to look inside yourself and see what's holding you back. This exercise may help you to become more willing to commit to doing the work that will enable you to answer "Yes" to all of these questions, especially the 13th.