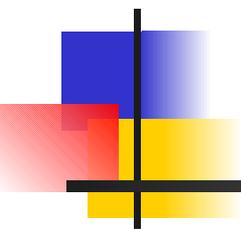


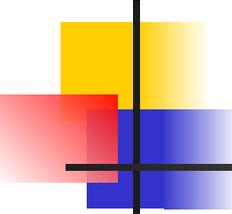
Similarities and Differences between GA and AA



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Gamblers Anonymous

Jim W., Gamblers Anonymous' number one man, tried and failed several times to get the organization off the ground.

Sharing Recovery Through Gamblers Anonymous documents two attempts, but an anonymous informant documents three failed attempts. The frustration from those failures appears to have played a role in the present form of the twelve steps used by Gamblers Anonymous. By the first official meeting of the present Gamblers Anonymous on 13th September, 1957, AA's 12 steps **had already been changed.**

At the first meeting the GA 12 steps were presented to the group of 13. There were two wives, four AA members who did not have problems with gambling, six male gamblers, and one female gambler (Anonymous interview, 1990). The following table highlights the initial modification of the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous that Jim W. presented to the 1957 meeting.

Table 1: Comparison of the 12 Steps of AA and the 1957 12 Steps of GA

The 12 Steps of AA

1. We admitted we were powerless over **ALCOHOL**-that our lives become unmanageable.
2. Came to Believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to **SANITY.**
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of **GOD AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM.**
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted **TO GOD**, to ourselves, and **TO** another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God revoke all these defects of character.

The 12 Steps of GA

1. We admitted we were powerless over **GAMBLING** that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to **A NORMAL WAY OF THINKING AND LIVING.**
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of **GOD, AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM.**
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to ourselves and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

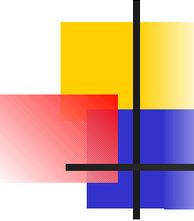
Table 1: Comparison of the 12 Steps of AA and the 1957 12 Steps of GA

The 12 Steps of AA

The 12 Steps of GA

1. Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.
2. Make a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
3. Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
4. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong admitted it.
5. 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.
6. Having **HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AS THE RESULT OF THESE STEPS.** We tried to carry this message to **ALCOHOLICS, AND TO PRACTICE THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS.**

1. Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.
2. Make a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
3. Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
4. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
5. 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.
6. Having **MADE AN EFFORT TO PRACTICE THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS WE** tried to carry this message to **OTHER COMPULSIVE GAMBLERS.**



The modification of Alcoholics Anonymous's 12 Steps presented at the 1957 meeting can be attributed to the interaction between GA's number one and number two man. Reliable sources point out that Sam J. was an atheist in explaining why Jim W. de-emphasized the spiritual aspects of the AA steps (Anonymous interview, 1990). Three of the five changes center around God. These changes, however, read like compromises, first, God is taken out of Step 5, but not out of Step 6. Second, in Step 3 and 11, a broad conception of God is emphasized by underlining, **AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM**, in God, as we understood him. Third, the notion of a spiritual awakening is taken out of Step 12. The fourth change is minor and it is made by most organizations that adopt AA's 12 Steps; in Step 1 GA changed alcohol to gambling. Finally Gamblers Anonymous number one and number two men also changed AA's Step 2. The reasons for this are not known, but instead of being restored to "a normal way of thinking and living." The change implies that compulsive gamblers are not insane or not as insane as alcoholics; they just experienced an abnormal way of thinking and living. It is clear that GA's founding members wanted to avoid the connotations, the stigma of insanity.

Sam J., GA's number two man, did not remain long with the organization, but his interaction with Jim W. clearly contributed to the early changes of AA's 12 steps. The changes of AA's 12 Steps were not completed in 1957. Jim W. made four changes to the 1957 version of GA's 12 Steps in his 1962 version. Table 2 presents those changes.

Table 2: Comparison of the 1957 GA 12 Steps and 1962 GA 12 Steps

The 1957 GA 12 Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over gambling—that our lives become unmanageable.
2. Came to Believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to a normal way of thinking and living.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of **GOD AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM.**
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to ourselves, and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have **GOD REMOVE AL THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER.**

The 1962 GA 12 Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over gambling that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to a normal way of thinking and living.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of **THIS POWER OF OUR OWN UNDERSTANDING.**
4. Made a searching and fearless moral **AND FINANCIAL** inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to ourselves and **TO** another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have **THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER REMOVED.**

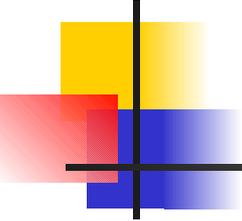
Table 2: Comparison of the 1957 GA 12 Steps and 1962 GA 12 Steps

The 1957 GA 12 Steps

1. Humbly asked **HIM** to remove our shortcomings.
2. Make a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
3. Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
4. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong admitted it.
5. 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.
6. Having made an effort to practice these principles in all our affairs, we tried to carry this message to other compulsive gamblers.

The 1962 GA 12 Steps

1. Humbly asked **GOD (OF OUR UNDERSTANDING)** to remove our shortcomings.
2. Make a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
3. Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
4. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
5. 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.
6. Having made an effort to practice these principles in all our affairs we tried to carry this message to other compulsive gamblers.



Although Sam J. had left Gamblers Anonymous long before 1962, the issue of God continued to be important to Gamblers Anonymous. Why this is so is not clear. All four changes to the 1957 version of Gamblers Anonymous 12 Steps center around God. First, God is taken out of Step 6 as was done in Step 5 five years earlier. Second, the emphasis on “as we understood him:” in Step 3 is changed to “this power of our own understanding.” This step seems to broaden even further the conception of God permissible in Gamblers Anonymous. The final 1962 change is a clarification of “Him” in Step 7; him is replaced with “God (of our understanding).” The concern with God and spirituality even after the departure of the atheist number two man needs to be explained.

Except for the addition of a financial inventory to Step 4 in 1967, Gamblers Anonymous 12 Step essentially the 1962 version written by Jim W. In 1962 Jim W. also wrote the 12 Traditions or Unity program of Gamblers Anonymous. Alcoholics Anonymous is again his model. The 12 Steps are a guide to personal recovery while the 12 Traditions speak to the organizational structure and operation of the organizations. Like the steps of recovery, GA also changed the traditions of AA. Table 3 documents the changes of AA’s 12 Traditions. Jim W. wrote GA’s Steps of Unity or “Traditions” in 1962.

Table 3: Comparison of AA's 12 Traditions and GA's 1962 Unity Program of Traditions

12 Traditions of AA

1962 GA Steps of Unity

1. Our Common Welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.
2. **FOR OUR GROUP PURPOSE THERE IS BUT ONE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY-A LOVING GOD AS HE MAY EXPRESS HIMSELF IN OUR GROUP CONSCIENCE.** Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop **DRINKING.**
4. Each group should be **AUTONOMOUS,** except in matters affecting other groups or **AA** as a whole.
5. **EACH GROUP has** but one primary purpose-to carry its message to the **ALCOHOLIC** who still suffers.
6. An AA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on GA unity.
2. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for GA membership is a desire to stop **GAMBLING.**
4. Each group should be **SELF-GOVERNING** except in matters affecting other groups or **GA** as a whole.
5. **GA** has but one primary purpose-to carry it's message to the **COMPULSIVE GAMBLER** who still suffers.
6. GA ought never endorse, finance or lend the GA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

Table 3: Comparison of AA's 12 Traditions and GA's 1962 Unity Program of Traditions

12 Traditions of AA

1962 GA Steps of Unity

1. Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
2. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
3. **AA** as such ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve
4. **AA** has no opinion on outside issues; hence the **AA** name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
5. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion. We need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio **AND FILMS.**
6. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of **ALL OUR TRADITIONS.** Ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

1. Every GA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
2. Gamblers Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
3. **GA** as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
4. **GA** has no opinion on outside issues; hence the **GA** name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
5. Our public relations policy is based in attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, **FILMS AND TELEVISION.**
6. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of **THE UNITY PROGRAM.** Ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.