



The power of peer support

January 2022

What we have learned from our GamFam peer support group

What is GamFam?


GamFam is a registered charity, set up by people who have experienced first-hand the devastating effects that gambling can have on family and friends. GamFam offer support through GRA5P – The GamFam Recovery And Support Programme. Knowing that **you are not alone** and that you have the opportunity to share your experiences in a safe space, with no fear of judgement and with others who have real empathy and understanding makes Peer Support such a powerful tool to help you in your recovery.

GRA5P

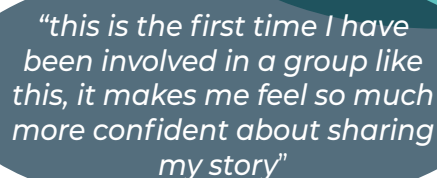
GRA5P is a structured 5-stage self-help peer support programme, which was designed originally to support those affected by someone else's gambling. However, more recently and out of increasing demand, GamFam have now developed a programme to support those directly in recovery too¹.

Introduction to our group

We are a group of people who have a common thread, we have all been affected by our loved ones who have formed a gambling addiction. We have all suffered with significant emotional and financial consequences and have not known where to turn or what to do next. Through a variety of paths, we have been brought together. This is either from our direct contact with GamFam or through a referral. We meet every Monday night through Zoom which eliminates the geographical boundaries between us. We have co-created this case study to share our journey².



"I was sceptical about joining a group and talking but once I overcame this, it has been a big help"



"this is the first time I have been involved in a group like this, it makes me feel so much more confident about sharing my story"

Our group has a facilitator who has similar lived experience and is a member of a similar GamFam support group. Our facilitator is trained and supported by GamFam and guides us through the GRA5P programme. Guest speakers share their experiences and provide themes to consider for our own recovery. GamFam have partnered with Suffolk Minds³ so that we have access to their Your Needs Met[®] programme. This helps us recover our own emotional and physical well-being and helps us build our resilience.



What is peer support?

Peer support involves people drawing on lived experience to provide knowledge, experience, emotional assistance, practical help, and social interaction to help each other⁴. It is different from other types of support (e.g., health coaching, counselling) because the source of support is a similar person with relevant experience, it connects people together. Peer support is one way that individuals, families and communities can manage their own health and wellbeing.

'Peer support in health and care encompasses a range of approaches through which people with similar long-term conditions or experiences support each other in order to better understand the condition and aid recovery or self-management'⁴.

Why is peer support important to us?

Peer support is a growing field of research with positive impact established in several different health conditions. It is acknowledged as a simple yet powerful social approach to better health and wellbeing.

The act of helping someone else as a way of paying back for help previously received, or just simply sharing the experience gained can be a deeply rewarding and therapeutic experience in its own right. GamFam has centred its GRA5P Programme around the principle of peer support. This is our experience:

We can talk to people about our personal matters, without judgement and in a confidential way.

"safe and non-judgemental"

"no-one is going to judge you; we are all in the same boat"

"everyone's problems are similar to our own"

"a safe space where people understand"

"You can speak openly without worrying about what anyone thinks; everyone has their own stories"

A large, orange speech bubble with a white outline, containing the text "it has been a lifeline really".

"it has been a lifeline really"

We share our experiences so that we help each other with the recovery of ourselves and our loved ones.

"everyone has learned so much"

"at the start you feel everyone's anger, once we got over this, we were able to think more clearly"

"had so much anger, the more you talk, the more it goes"

"we have so much knowledge now in the group to share"

It helps to know that somebody really understands what we have been going through with our loved one.

"always, the advice and support makes you feel better"

"eventually we calmed down and started to learn from each other"

"you have a sense of relief after the first few weeks and then start to feel a little better"

"sharing our story lifted a weight off our chests, then we started to heal"

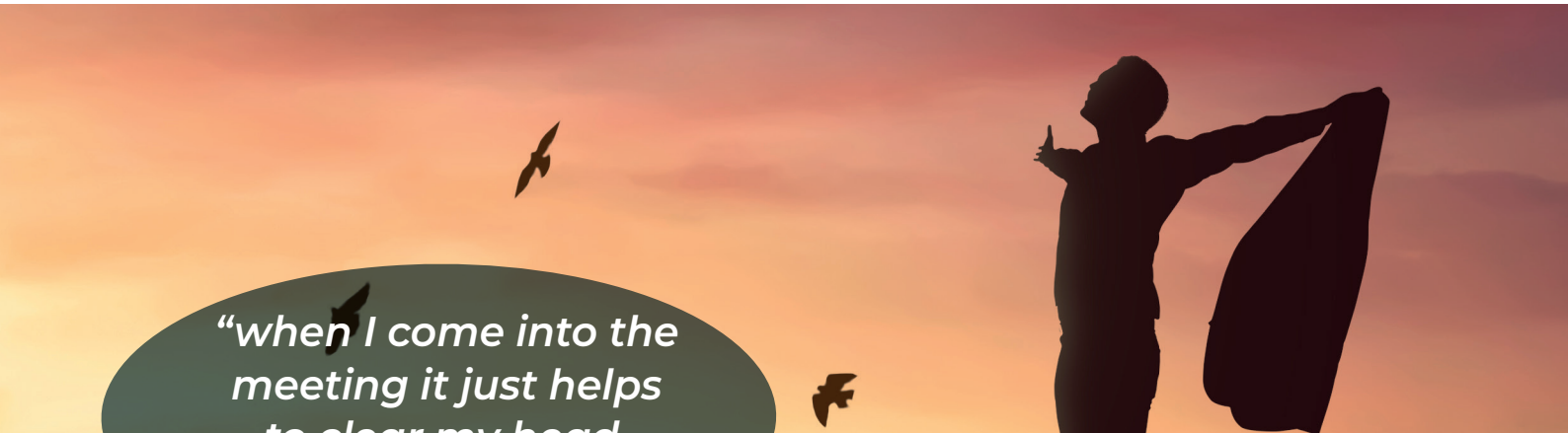
We help each other to understand the gambling industry and the resources available to help us.

"learned a lot about the gambling industry and addiction"

"when we get talking, we share resources and downloads which all help"

"everyone's input helps, everyone has experience to share"

What is peer support?



"when I come into the meeting it just helps to clear my head, gives me clarity"

"We have learned we are not on our own"

"I have discovered so much more about the gambling industry and how it works"

We motivate each other to keep positive and focus on our emotional and physical health.

"just gives me one or two things to focus on"

"it helps me to be kind to myself"

"our recovery and the recovery of our loved ones is not a quick fix, it is work in progress, the group is definitely supportive in this process"

As individuals we have learned more about ourselves, our recovery journey and that we are not facing this alone;

"Personally, I have learned that I have a huge amount of resilience to draw on with the support of the group"

"I don't think I realised the extent of the problem gambling situation out there, that is what I have learned"

Our evidence for peer support

Since joining the group, we have been able to understand more about gambling addiction and what our loved ones have been going through. It has helped us to understand and validate the need to focus on our own recovery. There are no quick fixes, this is something we need to continue to work on;

"I really value the group as it helps us to acknowledge and validate that we have been hurt and have a recovery journey of our own"

"It's very reassuring to be able to talk to others, there's nobody judging, there's nobody deterring, the group are supportive and friendly. On occasions we even have a laugh together just to remind us we're still human. The atmosphere is open and helpful, taking with like-minded people who have been through a similar situation"



"It validates that we need support and this has been huge for me"

Next Steps



If you would like to know more about GamFam, GRA5P and joining a peer support group, please contact info@gamfam.org.uk

"I can understand if you feel reluctant to join a group, just give it a go, it will be better than you think"

"With people who you don't know, it is so much easier to share"

"Strongly encourage you to come on to a group, just listen and watch, there is no pressure".

References

1. GamFam GRA5P <https://gamfam.org.uk>
2. All quotes in this case study are provided by the participants of the GamFam Monday evening peer support group
3. Suffolk Mind for Better Mental Health <https://www.suffolkmind.org.uk/>
4. Realising the Value (2016) 'At the heart of health - Realising the value of people and communities.' London: Nesta and The Health Foundation.

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