



Gamblers Anonymous **Saved My Life**

But It Didn't Solve Everything

start



**Please sit next to the assigned candy bar
(but do not eat it yet!)**



**Lived Experience of
Gambling Disorder**



**Behavioral & Mental
Health Professionals**



**Gaming &
Gambling Industry**



**Educators &
Prevention Specialists**



**Researchers,
Government, &
Regulators**



Introductions

Paige Huskey



I taught writing and literature for twenty years but left my full-time job at the end of 2023. Now, I'm publishing a memoir about my gambling addiction that I hope will lead to more open dialogues and will help others who are struggling know that they are not alone.





Session Attendees: Who are YOU?



Ice Breaker: If you were a candy bar, what two words would best describe you?

I start playing Texas Hold'em at the casinos in Indiana and over time begin dabbling with slot machines.

Casinos and racinos start opening in Ohio, and I begin playing at them more and forget about the clubs (except the base club).

2009

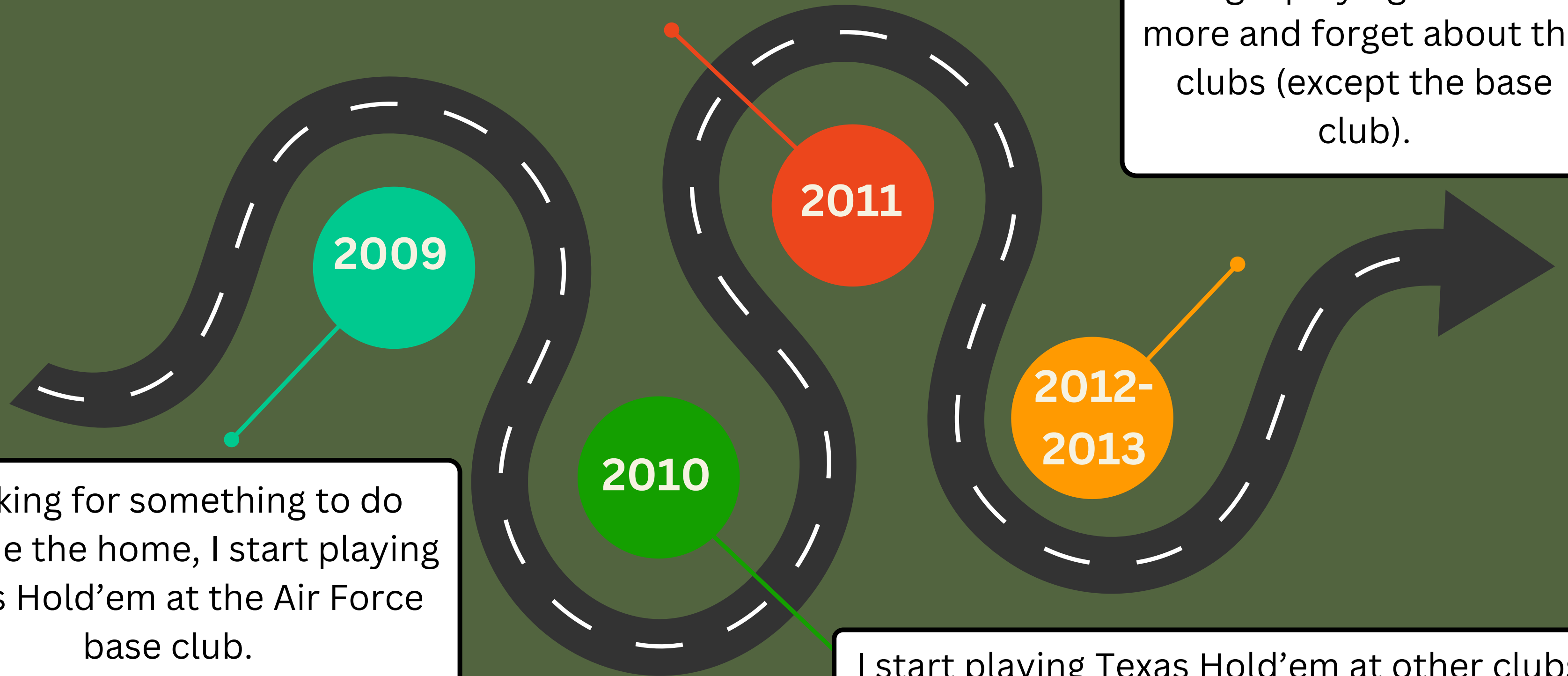
2011

2010

2012-
2013

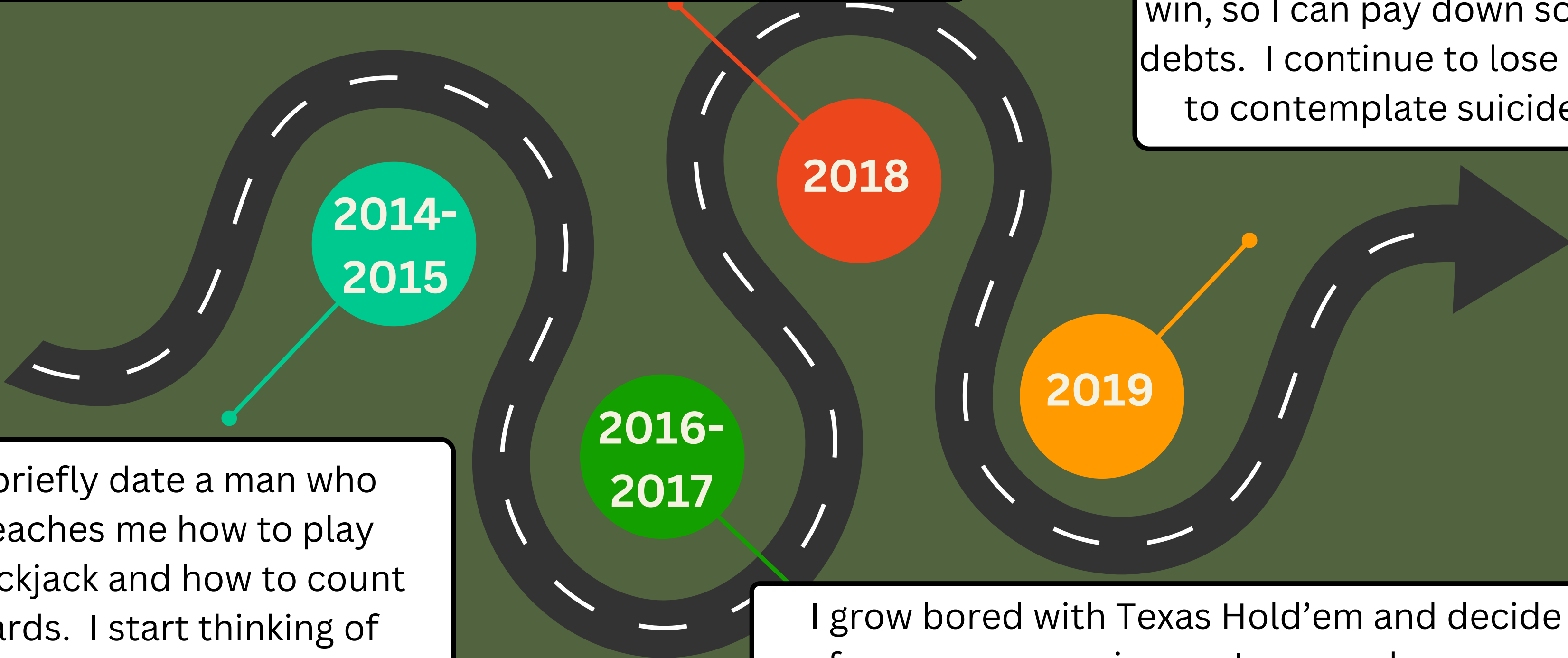
Looking for something to do outside the home, I start playing Texas Hold'em at the Air Force base club.

I start playing Texas Hold'em at other clubs, too (AmVets, VFW, private, etc.).



I can no longer ignore the mountain of debt that I've created and start trying to manage my gambling. I briefly date a man who tells me about his struggles with addiction, and I start wondering if gambling can be addictive.

I find GA online but think I will quit after one more big win, so I can pay down some debts. I continue to lose and to contemplate suicide.



I briefly date a man who teaches me how to play Blackjack and how to count cards. I start thinking of Blackjack as a part-time job.

I grow bored with Texas Hold'em and decide to focus on one casino, so I can pool my reward points. Within a few months, I gain VIP status.

Final Days of Gambling



From late December 2018 until February 24, 2019, I went on several crazed gambling benders, maxing out all my credit cards on top of the \$20,000 personal loan I'd already gotten and taking out payday loans as well.



I knew I wouldn't be able to pay my mortgage on March 1, and I feared I'd lose my house and everyone would know I was a gambling addict and a failure.

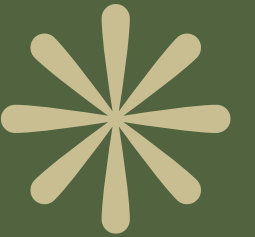


Not thinking that GA would work for me, I felt the only option was to end my life. When it came down to it, though, I couldn't do that to my kids until I'd at least given GA a try. I planned to attend a meeting.



Audience Q&A

My First GA Meeting



On Tuesday, February 26, 2019, at 7 PM, I attended my first GA meeting. Although the location was intimidating and the room cold and dark, I immediately felt a sense of hopefulness from the group of 12-14 people.



P O S I T I V E S



The group was not too big or small



The setting was relaxed and welcoming



Four women were there



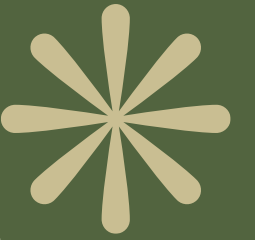
Everyone shared their stories or tips



They offered resources and information



My First GA Meeting



What I learned from this meeting, the stories and tips from others who'd been where I was, and how I felt afterward led to the critical next steps I took that week which propelled my recovery journey.



N E X T S T E P S



I called each of my three kids



I asked a friend to join me that Friday



I went to the bank about my mortgage



I went to the casino to self-exclude

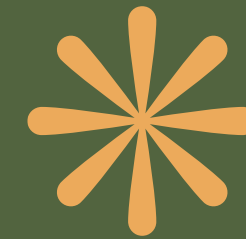


Finally, I decided to block my VIP host



The Gamblers Anonymous Program

Gamblers Anonymous began in 1957 by two men who were familiar with the twelve-step principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. They founded a similar program of recovery designed to help compulsive gamblers abstain from gambling.



What has worked well for me:



Being able to meet and talk with other compulsive gamblers

Being able to share my story, questions, and concerns without judgment

Having a telephone list and ready access to resources and information

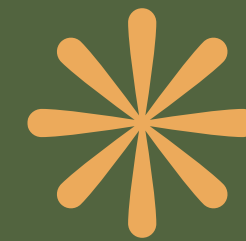
Working the steps and feeling progress, earning keychains and pins

Feeling part of a much larger community, getting name in International bulletin

Learning that recovery is a process and that helping others is part of it

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What has been challenging or missing altogether:



Limited, often outdated information (website, bulletin, meetings)

Website is clunky and difficult to use and to find meetings (even new one)

Religious (Christian) slant in literature and meetings, beyond spiritual

Can't discuss specific money issues and limited or no guidance available

No sponsors and no guidelines on group sponsorship

Different groups can function very differently depending on the senior members

Differences in Groups

✱ Knowing what I know now, here are some questions someone might ask when looking for a GA group or comparing GA to other options:



About how many people come to a meeting? Are there women who attend regularly? Is the location secluded and private?

Does this group have sponsors or use group sponsorship? How does your group sponsorship function?

Does this group offer financial guidance, such as a Pressure Relief Group Meeting? If not, who can I discuss my financial situation with?

Does the group respect people who are not Christian? What about those who are spiritual but not religious? What about atheists?



Audience Q&A

Groups of 4-5 Different Candy Bars

- Make sure that there are at least four different candy bars represented at the table.
- Go around the table and introduce yourselves in 1-2 minutes each.
- Please share your name, where you're from, what brought you to this workshop, and what you are hoping to gain.



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Discussion Time!

- **Now you may eat your candy bar!** Additional candy will be passed around.
- Spend about 4-5 minutes on each question, giving everyone in the group about a minute to speak.
- I will alert you when we are at the half time and again when we have two minutes left.
- Afterward, one person from each group will share highlights of your discussion in ~2 minutes each.

What did you learn or what surprised you about Gamblers Anonymous?

For those with lived experience, how has your experience differed from the presenter's?

For anyone working with those in recovery, how does GA compare to your own program or treatment?

Have any of your views changed or would you consider doing anything different now?

What additional questions or concerns do you have?





Audience Q&A



Closing

There is not a one-size-fits-all program or treatment for people with gambling disorders. As such, professionals must consider, as part of their work, helping to identify programs, treatments, or resources—including Gamblers Anonymous—that may best meet each individual's needs.

We all hold a piece of the puzzle, and we need every voice so that we can work together to improve gambling disorder awareness, prevention, and recovery efforts.



Let's keep the conversation going!
I hope you'll visit me
at my exhibit table
where I'll have limited
advance copies of the
book and other swag
to give away.



THANK YOU!

 www.paigehuskey.com