

1981 Twelve Traditions

We keep what we have only with vigilance and just as freedom for the Individual comes from the Twelve Steps so freedom for the groups spring from our traditions. As long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well.

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. 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 membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each Group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other Groups, or N.A. as a whole.
5. Each Group has but one primary purpose - to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An N.A. Group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every N.A. Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service Centers may employ special workers.
9. N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. N.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. 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.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

It is necessary that we be aware of these principles in all our N.A. work and especially whenever our actions could in any way affect N.A. as a whole. Any undertaking such as this pamphlet must, if it is to be valid, have as its foundation all of these traditions. The N.A. pamphlet says: "There is one thing more than anything else that will defeat us in our recovery, this is an attitude of indifference or intolerance toward spiritual principles." The Traditions are spiritual principles and we have tried in writing this pamphlet to keep these principles in mind.

The First Tradition, of course, is the main purpose of this pamphlet. A service structure for N.A. is necessary for our common welfare and to promote personal recovery. Unity within Fellowship is the goal we hope can be achieved by the implementation of this structure.

Much thought has gone in to the structure to be described in this pamphlet. One of our primary aims has been to lay out the structure in such a way that the integrity of the conscience of each group is maintained throughout the service arm of N.A. The Second Tradition also describes the nature of those members active in N.A. Service as trusted servants and only by emphasizing this relationship between the group and its representatives can the principle of democracy and group conscience, which we have tried to build into this structure, work. We find it necessary to stress that adherence to the Second Tradition is of the utmost importance, without it no effort to strengthen N.A. as a whole can be successful.

The guarantee that our society will remain an open Fellowship in which recovery is available to all and not limited to a select group is one of the principles (Third Tradition) which the implementation of a formal structure can help to ensure. We hope that N.A. will never become weighted down with the

rules, regulations, requirements, initiation fees, selective membership, and discrimination which prevent recovery and which have, in time, destroyed most programs designed to help addicts.

Tradition Four talks about the autonomy of each group, except as it affects other groups and members. Again this Tradition can be strengthened by lines of communication and unity, freeing the individual group from the arbitrary actions of another group.

Our primary purpose, as expressed in the Fifth Tradition is, along with some of the other Traditions, the reason we are writing this pamphlet. The hope that we can, in some way, carry the message of recovery more successfully and on a broader scale has been our motivation.

The Sixth Tradition concerns the use of the name Narcotics Anonymous. Formal service structure with active member participation can help prevent the misuse of our name and guard against the problems of money, property and prestige and their ultimate weakening of the Fellowship.

Undoubtedly one of the most widely used terms in N.A. is the "7th Tradition." Most groups, in fact, even call the collection which is taken during most meetings the Seventh Tradition. This is unfortunate, the Seventh Tradition is not a basket with money being put into it; it is a principle - probably the most widely confused and abused principle within all the 12-step fellowships. Few of us, it seems, have given much thought to this principle and its far reaching consequences. The 12 Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous were not adopted by the Fellowship until 1950 and during the 15 or so years prior to this adoption A.A. was not fully self-supporting. Numerous cash gifts from non-members and organizations were accepted, loans were taken, a cash advance on Big Book sales was accepted, stock was issued, and money came from many sources outside the fellowship. Because of the "Strings" so often attached to free or easy money, A.A. had to pay its dues for this outside support. All the Traditions are there for good reasons and the reason we must be fully self-supporting is obvious in the history of A.A. It is, in more than any other way, through the practice of this principle that our Fellowship maintains its freedom. The acceptance of a service structure for N.A. will give us a guide to what needs to be supported, a context in which one can see where the money goes, a chance for the group to use its funds to benefit N.A. as a whole, and some checks to help prevent our contributions from supporting someone's habit or paying someone's rent.

Tradition Eight describes the nature of people who will make up this service structure. That they should be non-professional just as we are individually non-professionals in our 12 Step work is obvious, and for the same reasons. The nature of professionalism contradicts the principle of giving freely of one's self for the common good. This principle of giving and sharing is, of course, one of the cornerstones of our program and recovery.

The Ninth Tradition has been the topic considerable deliberation in the preparation of this pamphlet. How can we propose a structure without proposing organization? The Tradition states that we ought never to be organized but that we may create service boards and committees. This seems to be, at first glance, almost a contradiction in terms, but somehow we must untangle this mess. We ought never be organized and disorganization is killing us. What can we do without violating this Tradition? We feel that the key to this problem lies in understanding the purpose and nature of the structure we propose. First of all the purpose of this structure is service. Most of us realize that in order to keep our meetings going there are some necessary functions which must be performed, this is service. The development of lines of communication within our fellowship is service. Providing for 12 Step work is service. This Ninth Tradition says that we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

Most of this pamphlet deals with just that. But what about those they serve. Most of this pamphlet deals with just that. But what about mapping it all out with charts and descriptions, and everything, isn't that organization? The purpose of laying out these boards and committees in an orderly form, showing what they do, and how they relate to each other is not organizational in nature, but informational. What we are presenting is not an organization, but a method; a method by which the services necessary to N.A. can be performed with a minimum of confusion. In this sense, this service structure is fully in keeping with our Ninth Tradition.

As with other Traditions the Tenth Tradition is supported by the service structure. With such a structure functioning within our fellowship we are assured that no one person can express his personal opinions in the name of N.A. as a whole.

With a service structure, public relations as discussed In Tradition Eleven becomes a group matter rather than a personal one. With the group conscience working as the basis for decisions concerning public relations the chances of inadvertent anonymity breaks are greatly reduced. The individual who is going to publicly break his anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, or TV because of self-obsession, in one form or another, is going to do so despite traditions, service structure, group conscience or the advice of his friends. In establishing this service structure we do not vainly hope to prevent this type of anonymity break, we do, however, hope to minimize the occurrence of the accidental anonymity breaks which result from lack of information and guidance.

That leaves us with the Twelfth Tradition. We, as a group, feel that this tradition, as it relates to this topic and to N.A. as a whole, is self-explanatory. We pray that in implementing this service structure, principles may always be placed before personalities.