

Narcotics Anonymous.

# **It Works: How and Why**

*Original Approval  
Changed - because  
of 2d Tradition  
Question*

Part Two  
**The Traditions**  
Approval-Form Material  
Traditions One — Six

UNAPPROVED LITERATURE  
NOT FOR USE IN NA MEETINGS

For approval or disapproval  
at WSC 1993



## **The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous.**

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA 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 NA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every NA 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. NA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the NA 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.



# WORLD SERVICE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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TO: The fellowship

FROM: Becky Meyer, Chairperson  
World Service Board of Trustees

DATE: July 17, 1992

RE: *It Works: How and Why, The Traditions*

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We are nearing the end of our project on *It Works: How and Why, The Traditions*. We, the WSB, have thoroughly enjoyed our part in developing part of this very important work for the fellowship. At the same time, we are overjoyed that we can see "the light at the end of the tunnel" by being able to present you with the approval form of the first six traditions. Attached is the content of those traditions for your perusal. Additional copies of this material are available through the World Service Office. The item number is #1161 and the cost is \$2.50 + shipping and handling.

At this point, I need to reiterate a statement made a number of times by the WSB Traditions Ad Hoc Committee about the nature and purpose of this material: "The Traditions portion of *It Works: How and Why*, shall serve as a resource for NA groups and the individual member. The book seeks to: explore the spiritual principles within the traditions; engage members with the spirit--not the law--of the traditions; and, provide a basis for thought and discussion about the traditions. This book is not meant to fulfill every need for every group or every member, rather it is to be a book that will generate discussion and allow for local interpretation of the practical application of the principles contained in the traditions." We hope that you will find as much encouragement and inspiration from reading it as we have in developing it.

As we have sought to inform you during the past year and a half, the approval form of the traditions will come out in two parts; the first part is in your hands. The second part will be mailed out to you by the middle of October. Both parts will have the content only; the final approval form (containing the steps and the traditions) will be mailed out to you by the WSC Literature Committee in the beginning of December. This material, in fact the entire book, *It Works: How and Why*, will be up for conference-approval at WSC '93, next April. This is in keeping with the information we've provided during the past eighteen months and the panel discussions regarding the shorter approval period at this year's conference in Dallas. Part of that information was the fact that, based upon the

input we've received on the review-and-input drafts, only minor, cosmetic changes were going to be made to the drafts to arrive at the approval form.

On behalf of the entire WSB, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the WSB Traditions Ad Hoc Committee whose tireless efforts resulted in this material. I would also like to extend our thanks to all of you who have provided input on the review drafts of the traditions. Your participation has allowed us to put together what we believe to be a quality piece of literature about our traditions. We are all anxiously awaiting the day, that will hopefully arrive next April, when we, as a fellowship, will have a book on our steps and traditions.



## Volume Two


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# It Works: How and Why The traditions

*Approval Form, 1992*



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# WORLD SERVICE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

## TRADITIONS ONE - SIX APPROVAL FORM

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FOR APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL AT WSC '93





## TRADITION ONE

*Our common welfare should come first;  
personal recovery depends on NA unity.*

Narcotics Anonymous is more than just the first meeting we attend or the other NA meetings in our neighborhood. We are part of a much greater whole. Addicts apply the principles of Narcotics Anonymous in their personal recovery across town and around the world. Just as we learned in early recovery that we need each other to stay clean, we come to believe that all of us, every NA meeting and group, are interdependent. We share an equal membership in NA, and we all have an interest in maintaining the unity that underlies its common welfare. Unity is the spirit that joins thousands of members around the world in a spiritual fellowship that has the power to change lives.

One way to look at placing our common welfare first is to say that each of us is equally responsible for NA's well-being. In our recovery, we have found that living clean is very difficult without the support of other members. Our individual recovery depends on meetings that take place regularly, other recovering addicts who participate, and sponsors who share with us how to stay clean. Even members who can't get to meetings depend on the support of fellow addicts, maintaining contact with phone calls, letters, and NA loner groups. As each individual member relies on the support of the fellowship for survival, so NA's survival depends on its members.

Our First Tradition encourages not only our members but our groups to place our common welfare first. Most groups conduct most of their affairs on their own. In attending to the details of their week in, week out routines, autonomous NA groups may lose sight of the bigger picture. In the larger frame, each group is a strand in the supporting fabric of Narcotics Anonymous as a whole; without that fabric, there would be no NA. The importance of our unity encourages our groups to look beyond their own little worlds to the common needs of the worldwide NA Fellowship, placing the welfare of the whole before their own.

The relationship described in the First Tradition is reciprocal. Groups work together in a spirit of cooperation to ensure the survival of Narcotics Anonymous; in turn, those groups receive strength and support from every other group and all our services. The strength of our mutual commitment to NA creates the unity that binds us together in spite of all that might divide us. The common welfare of NA depends on the continued growth and well-being of the fellowship in every corner of the world.

Our shared commitment to recovery and our common welfare gives us a personal stake in the unity of NA. In meetings, we find a new place to belong,

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new friends, and a hope for a better life. A feeling of care and concern grows between us and the group. We learn to treat others with kindness and respect and do what we can to support each other and our group. Sometimes, we comfort each other merely by being present; at other times, a phone call or letter to simply say hello can make a world of difference. Our relationships with other addicts are a source of strength in our personal recovery. We come to rely on meetings, and on each other, for that support. The unity we see in our meetings is an expression not only of our reliance on each other but our mutual reliance on spiritual principles and a Higher Power.

NA unity begins with our recognition of the therapeutic value of one addict helping another. We help each other in different ways. Sometimes we help each other one-on-one, as in sponsorship, or we may help each other by participating in the formation of new meetings to make NA accessible to more addicts. Many groups are formed when members of a more established group decide to start another meeting. Sharing the responsibility enhances our common welfare and creates unity among NA members who work together. Groups flourish with the loving support of addicts helping addicts. We strengthen our unity by participating in each other's recovery.

The unity described in our First Tradition is not the same thing as uniformity. Our membership is richly varied, made up of many addicts from widely differing backgrounds. These members bring with them a variety of ideas and talents. That diversity enriches the fellowship and gives rise to new and creative ways to reach addicts who need our help. Our purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers--allows room for everyone to serve. When we unite in support of this purpose, our differences need no longer detract from our common welfare. Working together for our mutual well-being is a significant source of unity in Narcotics Anonymous.

### **Unity and common welfare in action**

While we often think of unity as a feeling or a condition, unity doesn't just "happen." The unity underlying our common welfare requires personal commitment and responsible action. For example, when we accept personal responsibility for supporting our home group, we further NA unity and enhance the common welfare of the whole fellowship. Our commitment to unity strengthens our groups, allowing us to carry a message of hope. Meetings flourish in this atmosphere of hope. The fellowship grows and our common welfare increases as a result of our united efforts.

Communication goes a long way toward building and enhancing our common welfare. With an attitude of open-mindedness, we seek to understand other perspectives. Reports may tell us a lot about what's happening in other groups or



areas, but our common welfare depends on more than just information. True communication involves an effort on our part to "listen" as we read or hear reports, seeking a better understanding of the needs and problems of both our own group and other groups, wherever they may be. Encouraging each member to speak openly from the heart enhances our ability to work together. Regular reports, thorough discussion, and active listening lead us to the kind of understanding that helps us find creative solutions that benefit us all.

Today's decisions may affect tomorrow's members. When we think of solutions to our current problems, it's not hard to consider the needs of our group, our area, our region, or even the worldwide fellowship. But it's also important to remember the "unseen members" in our discussions--the members yet to come. When we work to ensure the vitality of NA, we're not working just for ourselves but for those yet to join us.

The unity that supports our common welfare is created not only by working together but by playing together. The friendships we develop outside meetings strengthen NA unity. Fellowship activities provide opportunities for us to relax, socialize with each other, and have fun. Conventions, dinners, and holiday celebrations give us a chance to celebrate our recovery while practicing social skills. Picnics, dances, and sports days, for example, often allow our families to participate, too. We strengthen our sense of community when we share more than just meeting time. Stronger relationships develop as we become more involved in each other's lives. The care and understanding born of these relationships are strong threads in the fabric of NA unity.

### **Applying spiritual principles**

In the Twelve Steps of NA, we learn to apply principles to better our lives. Moved by the miracle of personal recovery, we reach out to share that miracle with others. This is the essence of being of service in NA. In supporting our unity, we first apply principles to guide our own behavior. As groups, we use the same principles for guidance. That guidance engenders a sense of unity that strengthens our ability to reach out to others, enhancing our common welfare. Some of the principles that seem particularly important to unity include surrender and acceptance, commitment, selflessness, love, and anonymity. As we practice these principles, we will find others that strengthen unity as well.

*Surrender and acceptance* open the door to unity. As our trust in a Higher Power grows, it gets easier to let go of our personal desires and stop fighting for what we want. With an attitude of surrender, working together in a group becomes easier. Tradition One presents a picture of addicts working together worldwide to support each other's recovery. We try to remember this goal in all our actions, as individuals or as groups. If we find that our personal desires or the



aims of our group conflict with that ideal, unity asks us to surrender our own desires and accept guidance that enhances the greater good of Narcotics Anonymous. Only by deciding to be part of that whole can we support the unity so essential to our personal survival.

*Commitment* is another essential ingredient in unity. Personal commitment to our shared sense of purpose is one of the ties that bind us together. When we know that we belong in NA, and when we make a commitment to stay, we become a part of the greater whole. Our sense of belonging is closely related to our degree of commitment to recovery in NA. As groups, the combined strength of that commitment is a powerful force in serving others. With that strong commitment, we are able to carry the message of hope that will support us all in our recovery.

Commitment is a decision supported by our belief in NA as a way of life. Regular meeting attendance is one of the ways in which we live out that belief. Greeting newcomers as they arrive or giving our telephone number to someone who needs help also reflects our decision. Sponsorship, sharing in meetings, setting up chairs before a meeting--all these are ways in which we express our commitment. Each member finds a level of service that fits comfortably into a balanced program of recovery.

*Selflessness* is another indispensable element in unity. The principles we learn in the steps help us let go of our selfishness and lovingly serve the needs of others. To keep our groups healthy, we place the needs of our group ahead of our own personal desires. The same principle applies to our affairs as a group. Setting aside what we may want as a group, we think about the needs of the fellowship and seek ways to support our common good. Our ability to survive as a fellowship and to reach others depends on our unity.

*Love* is a principle that is expressed in the practice of goodwill toward one another. We contribute to unity in our meetings by exercising loving care in the way we speak and the way we treat one another. We try to share our experience, strength, and hope in a way which demonstrates that recovery is available in Narcotics Anonymous. An atmosphere of love and care in our meetings helps members feel comfortable and safe. The love we show each other attracts newcomers and strengthens us all, fueling our sense of unity and common welfare.

*Anonymity*, the spiritual foundation of our traditions, supports NA unity as well. When we apply anonymity to the First Tradition, we overlook the differences that would separate us. In the context of unity, anonymity means that the message of recovery is for every addict who wants it. We learn to set aside our prejudices and focus on our common identity as addicts. Each of us has an equal right to--and responsibility for--the well-being of Narcotics Anonymous.

Just as anonymity is the *spiritual* foundation of our traditions, the unity spoken of in the First Tradition is the *practical* foundation on which we may build strong and successful groups. Each succeeding tradition builds upon the strength of our unity as a fellowship, recalling the vital importance of the common welfare to each individual member and group. With unity as our practical foundation, we find that our relationship with one another is more important than any issue that may arise to divide us. No problem or disagreement is more significant than our need for each other's support. The fundamental importance of our common welfare strengthens our understanding of all the other traditions. Many questions can be answered simply by determining how the action we contemplate will affect the unity of the fellowship. Will it serve to divide us, or will it bring us closer together?

Unity is the spirit that joins members around the world in a spiritual fellowship that has the power to change lives. By striving to see beyond our individual ideas and the interests of our own group, we come to understand that the common welfare of all NA must come first. Through our trust in a loving Higher Power, we find the strength to work together toward our shared goal of recovery from addiction. In the unity that grows in trust, we are ready to work together for our common good.



## TRADITION TWO

*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.*

Tradition Two builds on the practical foundation of Tradition One. We begin with unity, founded on the strength of our commitment to recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. Our commitment is reflected in service that builds our common welfare: supporting a meeting, sharing with other members, sponsorship, any of the ways in which we reach out to other addicts. As groups, too, our purpose is to serve, to carry the message. Everything we do in service to NA is related to that purpose. Without direction, however, our services might lack consistency. To guide us in serving others, we seek direction from a Higher Power.

Personal service arises from the application of principles. Ideally, personal service is founded in a relationship with the same Higher Power that guides our personal recovery. This Higher Power also guides the various elements of our fellowship. Our direction in service comes from a God of our understanding, whether we serve as individuals, as a group, or as a service board or committee. Whenever we come together, we seek the presence and guidance of this loving Higher Power. This direction then guides us through all our actions.

Everybody has opinions on how to serve more effectively. When we each propose a different plan for any course of action, how do we choose among them? Who has the final say in our discussions? Our answer is that a loving God, the source of our unity, has the final say--the same Higher Power that guides our personal recovery.

### **The group conscience process**

If we are to find guidance from an ultimate authority, we need to find means of hearing that guidance together. The mechanism we use is group conscience. The success of the group conscience process depends on our willingness as individuals to seek guidance from a Higher Power on a personal level. We then bring that willingness into the group setting.

Something happens when we practice the steps and learn to apply principles in our individual lives. We develop an awareness of our behavior and its effects on ourselves and others. In other words, we develop a conscience. This conscience is a reflection of our relationship with a Higher Power. It reflects the guidance we receive from the God of our understanding and our commitment to follow that guidance. Whenever we come together, a similar process occurs: a



collective conscience develops. That conscience reflects the relationship of our members to a loving Higher Power. When consulted regularly, that collective conscience guides us in fulfilling our primary purpose while preserving our unity and common welfare.

Group conscience can be thought of in much the same way as personal conscience. Group conscience reflects a collective awareness of, understanding of, and surrender to spiritual principles. The conscience of a group of people takes shape and is revealed when its members take the time to talk with each other about their personal needs, the needs of that group, and the needs of NA as a whole. Each member draws upon his or her relationship with a Higher Power when sharing with the group. As members listen carefully to each other and consult their personal understanding of a loving God, something happens: Solutions to problems become apparent, solutions that take into consideration the needs of everyone concerned. In developing a group conscience, a clear mutual understanding or consensus arises. Based upon the understanding gained by sharing group conscience, a group may move on to a vote in order to make decisions. In the best of circumstances, however, the group continues discussion until it reaches unanimity. The resulting solution may be so obvious that no vote is needed.

### **The evolving group conscience**

Group conscience is not fixed and inflexible. We know that personal conscience changes as an individual's relationship with a Higher Power grows and strengthens. In the same way, the conscience of a group evolves as its members mature in recovery, new members arrive, and the group's situation changes.

Group conscience is a process that may work differently under differing circumstances. It's not reasonable to expect that today's solution to one group's needs will always be sufficient for every group; in fact, that solution may not even apply to the same group at a different time. The principles involved in group conscience are always the same, but the times and conditions our conscience guides us through are constantly changing, requiring our conscience to tell us different things in different settings. It's important for us to continue cultivating our group conscience, seeking the guidance of a loving Higher Power whenever a question arises.

A surrender to group conscience means we allow our fellowship to be shaped by a loving Higher Power. We are tempted sometimes to take control of the daily affairs of our group, our service board, or our committee, believing that our great concern for the fellowship's welfare could never lead us astray. However, as we become more trusting, we realize that the group we are involved with is directed



by a loving Higher Power. Our reliance on that Higher Power is demonstrated by our willingness to carry out the direction expressed in our group conscience, believing that all will be well.

Any group, board, or committee can become bogged down in disagreement or sidetracked by seemingly insurmountable problems. In these situations, it's important to focus our attention on the principles of the program and the solutions they point toward, *not* on our problems. Agreement is reached when we step out of the way and allow a loving Higher Power to direct us.

Only when we listen for the direction of a Higher Power are we able to hear it. The heart and mind of a group are most clearly expressed when every member is considered an equal. A Higher Power works through all of us, regardless of clean time or experience. Group conscience always exists, but we are not always willing or able to hear it or allow its expression. Hearing group conscience may take time and patience. A flexible approach invites a loving Higher Power into our group conscience process.

In our personal recovery, our thoughts and actions change as we stay clean and grow spiritually. We don't get better overnight, and sometimes our growth is sporadic and uneven. This same pattern of growth and maturation also occurs in our life as a fellowship. As our fellowship grows and evolves, our resources change, and so do our needs. Groups may change trusted servants, meeting format, or location, depending on their resources and their needs; service committees may expand their subcommittees, reach out into new territories, or combine their efforts with other committees. These changes may not always feel like progress. Just as our personal recovery doesn't always develop in an orderly fashion, our fellowship doesn't always evolve as we would expect. As groups and committees go through this growing process, their collective conscience often evolves as well. Changes in the group conscience are not a cause for alarm, merely part of the growing process.

### **Leaders as servants**

When a group or committee has sought direction from a loving Higher Power, it may ask some of its members to help carry out that direction. When we ask members to serve, we don't set them apart as being somehow better than the rest of us. Leadership in NA is a service, not a class of membership. For this reason, we call our leaders *trusted servants*.

When we choose a member to serve us in some capacity, we exercise mutual trust. We trust the conscience that influenced our selection, since it reflects our collective relationship with a loving Higher Power. We extend that trust to the members we have selected to serve. We have faith that they will apply principles in their actions, seek and share the most complete information available, and



work to further our own well-being and our fellowship's common welfare. The trust relationship of servants to the served is reciprocal: Members chosen to serve are asked to do so with dedication and fidelity, and those who've chosen them are responsible to support their servants.

When we are asked to serve, we understand that we are responsible to a loving Higher Power as expressed in the group conscience. We acknowledge this responsibility when we approach service with a selfless and loving attitude. The principles embodied in the traditions apply to all our actions. We can look to our individual conscience as well as the collective conscience of our group, service board, or committee for guidance in all we must do in fulfilling our responsibilities.

This connection with the group conscience is enhanced when, as trusted servants, we carry a continuous flow of information that is honest and open; it is further strengthened when we seek to serve, not to govern. We help form the conscience of our group or committee, through the direction of a Higher Power, by presenting a complete and unbiased stream of information. The ideas and direction of the committee or group, then, are conveyed in our representation of that conscience.

Our trusted servants lead us best when they lead by personal example. Ideally, we choose them for the principles of recovery we see at work in their lives. We encourage our trusted servants to remain open to new ideas, become knowledgeable about all aspects of service in NA, and continue to seek personal recovery. All of these attributes are essential to their ability to serve us well.

### **Applying spiritual principles**

We noted earlier in this chapter that personal service arises from the practice of principles. By applying these principles, we learn to seek direction. We talk to our sponsor, share with our NA friends, and listen for a Higher Power's guidance. Some of the principles that seem to be important in Tradition Two include surrender, faith, humility, open-mindedness, integrity, and anonymity.

We begin with *surrender* to our ultimate authority, the God of our understanding, with whom we have developed a personal relationship. In this case, we surrender to the direction of that Higher Power as it is revealed in our group conscience. We renew our commitment to the common welfare of NA when we place the needs of the fellowship ahead of our own desires.

*Faith* is our reliance on a loving Higher Power put into action. The application of this spiritual principle lets us surrender to the group conscience with hope instead of fear. It is a constant reminder that our direction comes from a Power greater than our own. Faith demands courage, since we often practice an active



demonstration of faith in spite of our anxiety. Our faith is strengthened through the experience of seeing a loving Higher Power work in our fellowship.

*Humility* in practice is the honest assessment of our strength and weakness. That kind of assessment is a necessary ingredient in our willingness to surrender. Humility prepares us to set aside our personal wishes so that we can effectively serve our fellowship. We look to humility, first, to remind us that we aren't personally capable of guiding the affairs of Narcotics Anonymous. We are reminded of our source of strength: a loving Higher Power.

By practicing humility in our efforts to serve, we make room for *open-mindedness*. We remember that, just as we need the experience of other addicts to recover, so do we need their direction and ideas in order to serve. We learn to actively cultivate our listening skills, using our ears more than our mouths in conversation. When we are open-minded, we hear and accept solutions offered by others in the development of group conscience. Application of this principle teaches us to set aside our prejudices in order to work with others. By practicing open-mindedness, we nurture an attitude of goodwill toward others and become willing to serve with our common good in mind. Only with an open mind can we recognize the guidance of a loving Higher Power.

*Integrity* is the consistent application of spiritual principles, no matter what the circumstances. Leaders who demonstrate this quality inspire our trust. We serve best when we display an honest respect for the trust placed in us by others. Fidelity and devotion to that trust reflect the personal integrity of our servants. When we choose members to serve us, we often look for integrity as a sign that they are trustworthy.

The spiritual principle of *anonymity* reminds us that we are all equal in Narcotics Anonymous. No one member or group has a monopoly on the knowledge of a Higher Power's will. We practice anonymity by offering our love, attention, and respect to everyone, regardless of our personal feelings toward any individual. Every member has a part in the development of group conscience. We are all equal in the expression of a conscious contact with a Higher Power of our understanding.

**T**radition Two offers guidance for our relationships with others. A loving Higher Power is the source of direction for NA as a whole. This Higher Power is also the source of the principles that we apply when we serve. We can use these principles when we seek direction as individuals, groups, service boards, or committees.

Service is for those we serve. Our best talent in service is the ability to reach other addicts, offer identification and welcome, greet the addict walking in the door for the first time, and help ensure that newcomer's return again and again.

Any one of us is capable of offering that service. With the guidance of a loving Higher Power, we become better able to help others.

Service to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous has its own rewards. When we practice spiritual principles in our daily lives, a stronger relationship with our Higher Power develops. Our relationship with our group and the fellowship grows stronger, too. Service in NA is a learning experience that allows us personal growth. We begin to look beyond our own interests, setting aside our self-centered view of life in order to better serve the whole. We benefit spiritually in return for our unselfish service.



## **TRADITION THREE**

*The only requirement for membership  
is a desire to stop using.*

Narcotics Anonymous offers recovery to addicts around the world. We focus on the disease of addiction rather than any particular drug. Our message is broad enough to attract addicts from any social class or nationality. When new members come to meetings, our sole interest is in their desire for freedom from active addiction and how we can be of help.

The Third Tradition helps NA offer recovery to so many addicts by freeing us from having to make judgments about prospective members. It eliminates the need for membership committees or applications. We are not asked to make decisions about anyone's fitness for recovery. Since the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using, we as members have no reason to judge each other.

Desire is not a measurable commodity. It lives in the heart of each individual member. Because we can't judge the sole requirement for membership, we are encouraged to open wide the doors of our meetings to any addict who wishes to join. We are asked to extend to others the care and concern that helped each of us find a sense of belonging. The Third Tradition helps NA grow by encouraging us to welcome others.

### **Freedom to choose**

Membership is a personal decision reached by each individual. We can do a lot to allow addicts the freedom to make that decision and reaffirm their commitment to recovery. We can help them feel comfortable in our groups by greeting them at the door, sharing with other addicts before or after the meeting, and exchanging telephone numbers. We try to make sure that any addict who attends our meeting is not turned away. To the extent that it's possible, we choose the most accessible location for our meetings. We may choose a format that reflects an invitational tone. Most of all, we encourage every addict to keep coming back.

The strength of any member's desire is not necessarily connected to any outside circumstance. What makes one addict stay clean while another returns to using? No one of us can judge who will stay to recover and who will return to active addiction. There are no guarantees based on types of drugs used or using history. We cannot predict a higher success rate for addicts of a certain age, or those who used for a certain number of years, or women over men, or any other external factor. Just as we are not capable of measuring another's desire to stay



clean, neither are we equipped to decide who should join. We are free to offer welcome instead of judgment.

We look for ways to help instead of judge. Our task is to fan the flame of desire, not dampen it. Any addict who walks into a meeting, even a using addict, displays a level of willingness that cannot be discounted. While maintaining an emphasis on the importance of total abstinence, still-using addicts are welcomed into our meetings with special encouragement to keep coming back. Many recovering addicts do not have access to regular meetings because of incarceration, geography, physical disability, or employment. These addicts are members in every respect as long as they have the desire to stop using, and they are entitled to the same consideration and support as any other member.

### **The desire to stop using**

Addicts attend their first meeting for many reasons. Our motives for coming to NA aren't particularly important. The desire to stop using may not be clearly realized; it may be no more than a subtle yearning for relief from pain. But that yearning often drives us to seek solutions we might otherwise never consider. Often, the experience of hearing other addicts share about recovery will ignite the desire to stop using. Others come to a meeting, hear the message, and return to active addiction. Those who return to meetings after relapse often say their desire to stop using was born from the pain of relapse. We come to NA for many reasons, but we stay to recover when we find and keep the desire to stop using.

The group is not the jury of desire. We cannot measure or arbitrate willingness. Any addict's willingness to come to a meeting ought to be sufficient indication of desire. It may take a while for an addict to find the desire that will keep her or him in Narcotics Anonymous. No addict should be denied an opportunity to stay long enough to develop that desire. We can nurture that desire with loving acceptance.

The wording of the Third Tradition reflects the broad focus of our First Step. It's written simply enough to include addicts of all countries and cultures, no matter what drugs they used. Before finding recovery in NA, many addicts don't think that alcohol is a problem. Others abuse prescription medication, thinking that "legal" drugs are okay. Because of the wording of this tradition, we are able to attract and welcome addicts who might think they didn't use the *right* drugs to qualify for membership in NA. Each addict should be allowed to decide if NA is the answer for her or himself. We cannot make the decision for others.

Although the Third Tradition is written simply, we know that when it talks about "a desire to stop using," it means using *drugs*. We understand that NA is a program of recovery for drug addicts. Although *addiction* takes on a broader meaning for many of us as we continue in recovery, it's important to remember



that we first came to NA because of our drug problems. If new members are to feel that they belong in NA, they need to hear something they can identify with. They find that identification in the fellowship of recovering addicts in Narcotics Anonymous.

Many of us know when we walk into our first meeting that we're addicts; it's not something we have to decide, it's just a fact of life. Membership, however, means more than just being an addict; it means making a decision. If we identify with what we hear in NA and relate with the people we meet, we will want what NA offers. So long as we have a desire to stop using, we are free to make the decision to join Narcotics Anonymous. Then, once we've made that decision, we need to follow it with a commitment to the principles of NA. With that commitment, we set ourselves squarely on the road to recovery.

### **Applying spiritual principles**

The Third Tradition encourages freedom from judgment. It leads us on the path of service toward an attitude of helpfulness, acceptance, and unconditional love. As we've seen in the previous traditions, our path of service arises from the application of principles. Some of the principles that support this tradition include tolerance, compassion, anonymity, and humility.

*Tolerance* reminds us that judgment is not our task. The disease of addiction does not exclude anyone. NA likewise cannot exclude any addict who desires to stop using. We learn to be tolerant of addicts from different backgrounds than ours, remembering that we are not better than any other addict in a meeting.

Addiction is a deadly disease. We know that addicts who don't find recovery can expect nothing better than jails, institutions, and death. Refusing admission to any addict, even one who comes merely out of curiosity, may be a death sentence for that addict. We learn to practice tolerance of addicts who don't look like us, think like us, or share like us. We teach by example. Pressuring new members to talk or act like we do may send them back to the streets. It certainly denies them the right to recover and learn in their own way.

*Compassion* lends kindness to all our efforts in service to others. With compassion as the foundation of our actions, we learn to support members through any difficulties they may experience. All too often, we are quick to judge the quality of another's recovery or willingness. Tradition Three asks us to set aside our self-righteousness. Because the only requirement for membership is a quality we cannot measure, the right to judge another's desire is denied us. Our attitude ought to be one of loving acceptance toward *all* addicts, regardless of any other problems they may experience. Generous application of compassion is more therapeutic to the suffering addict than a free application of judgment.



*Humility* reminds us that we are not God; we cannot predict another's readiness to hear the message. We try to remember our own fear and confusion in our first meeting. We need each other's help and encouragement, not criticism or rejection. Our awareness of our own shortcomings, exercised in humility, helps us remember this. The self-acceptance that often accompanies humility makes us reluctant to judge others harshly.

*Anonymity* is the principle that supports the openness of our groups and our freedom to welcome everyone as equals. NA has no classes of membership and no second-class members. The common denominator in NA is the disease of addiction. We are all equally subject to its devastation. We share an equal right to recovery.

The practice of anonymity ensures the integrity of Tradition Three. In the spirit of anonymity, we remember that no individual member or group is more important than the message we carry. The single requirement for membership helps ensure that no addict need die without having a chance to recover. We celebrate our equality and the freedom we share by welcoming any addict who has the desire to stop using.

Tradition Three spells freedom for the members of NA. It sets the sole requirement for membership in the heart of each individual member. We don't have to decide for anyone else. We don't have to expend time and energy on deciding who should stay or who we should help. Instead, we are free to extend loving assistance to anyone who walks into a meeting desiring freedom from addiction.



## TRADITION FOUR

*Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole.*

NA groups have a great deal of freedom. We've already seen in Tradition Three that groups are free of any need to screen their members or set requirements for membership. Our NA groups are free to offer recovery to any addict. The Fourth Tradition enhances that freedom, allowing the rich diversity of our varied experience to help us serve.

Freedom can be exhilarating. Many of us have little experience with freedom of any sort. Our lives in active addiction often seemed more like slavery. When we first experience the freedom of recovery, we may find it overwhelming. Through working the steps, we learn that freedom comes with responsibility. In recovery, we become responsible for ourselves. As we accept that responsibility, we see how the Fourth Tradition encourages us to act responsibly as groups and as a fellowship.

### **Autonomy as freedom**

NA groups are vehicles for the message of recovery. In the strength of the personal commitment group members make to one another, a group character forms. As this group character grows and evolves, the group finds ways in which it can do what no other group in town may be doing. The members of each group design a blueprint for meetings that reflect that particular group's personality.

Group autonomy gives groups the creative freedom to find individual ways to carry the message. NA is made up of a vastly diverse assortment of addicts joined together by the strength of their mutual commitment to recovery. We speak many different languages and live in differing cultures; one type of meeting will not appeal to every addict who comes to Narcotics Anonymous. In order to reach every addict who may need our help and support the recovery of every member, groups have the freedom to vary their format and other meeting characteristics. Each group has the freedom to pursue our primary purpose in the manner it feels will work best.

Every group has a niche to fill, both in the fellowship as a whole and in the local NA community. As a fellowship, our ability to reach still-using addicts is tied to our willingness to offer meetings that are accessible and attractive to those addicts. With the creative freedom offered by autonomy, we are encouraged to seek the particular role that meets the needs of both the NA community and our own group. We are free to make each group the very best it can be. The vitality



of Narcotics Anonymous is enhanced by each group's willingness to find its niche and fill it.

Creative freedom challenges the groups to be strong and responsible. Members may support many meetings with their attendance, but most make a commitment to support one group in particular. Members grow in their personal recovery when they take responsibility for their lives. In the same way, groups grow and become stronger when their members take collective responsibility for maintaining their meetings. Groups reflect the responsibility and commitment of their members.

One of the most common ways in which groups express their autonomy is in the choice of meeting format. Most NA communities will offer a number of different types of meetings, from speaker meetings to step studies to topic discussions or any other format or combination of formats that meets the needs of local members. Some meetings will be open to the public, while others will be for addicts only. Larger communities may offer several different types of meetings each night. Some addicts will hear the message of recovery better in one type of meeting, while others prefer another format. An NA community that offers a variety of meetings is more likely to reach a broad cross-section of addicts. In a spirit of cooperation, we try to respect the autonomy of other groups by allowing them the freedom to carry the message in whatever manner seems best to them.

In the spirit of autonomy, many groups hold meetings that appeal to members with similar needs. The freedom from judgment expressed in the Third Tradition is aimed at helping any addict, anywhere, feel comfortable in NA. No matter how a group structures its meetings, however, all NA groups are encouraged to keep the focus of their meetings on recovery from the disease of addiction. As long as a group observes the Twelve Traditions and espouses the Twelve Steps of NA in its meetings, it may consider them Narcotics Anonymous meetings.

### **Responsibility**

Sometimes it's hard to know what affects NA as a whole. The Fourth Tradition offers a way to balance the freedom of autonomy with our responsibility to preserve NA unity. We are challenged in Tradition Four to apply autonomy in ways that will enhance the growth and vitality of NA. Autonomy encourages groups to become strong and lively, but also reminds them that they are a vital part of a greater whole: the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. We consider our common welfare when we make decisions in our groups.

Since most groups are not directly connected with each other, we might think that whatever happens in our meetings has no effect on anyone else. When we consider who is affected by our group, we have to look at other groups, the addict yet to come, the newcomer, and the neighborhood in which we hold our



meetings. We have an effect on other groups or NA as a whole if we're not recognizable as an NA meeting. It helps to remember what we needed to hear when we were new: hope for recovery from drug addiction. Addicts first coming to NA often look closely for differences, hoping that somehow they won't fit in. It's not difficult to alienate an addict. It's important to think about the message we send to newcomers in our meetings. Thoughtful consideration of our primary purpose may help ensure that meetings will be available for those addicts yet to come.

It's also important to consider how we're viewed by society. When NA meetings first began in many places, it was illegal for addicts to meet under any circumstances. Even where meetings are legal, the public often views groups of addicts with alarm. Until NA has established a good public reputation, it may be difficult for addicts to find meeting places. If our behavior as NA members is still destructive and selfish, we will once again have difficulty meeting openly. We help protect our reputation as a fellowship when we use our meeting facilities with respect, keeping them clean and in good repair. We should take care to act like good neighbors, conducting ourselves respectfully. Even something as simple as the name a group chooses may reflect on NA as a whole. If the public reputation of Narcotics Anonymous is somehow impaired, addicts may die.

Autonomy does not relieve groups of their obligation to observe and apply the spiritual principles embodied in the traditions. Careful consideration of the group's observation of the Fourth Tradition often takes the form of a group inventory, helping members gauge their success at carrying the message and reaching addicts in their neighborhood. At the same time, groups can examine their part in contributing to the unity of NA as a whole. The Fourth Tradition guides us away from self-centeredness by giving us the freedom to act responsibly as groups.

### **Applying spiritual principles**

The Fourth Tradition helps groups achieve a balance between independence and responsibility. This mirrors the freedom of the individual recovering member and the responsibility which supports that freedom. Together with open-mindedness, unity, and anonymity, these principles help protect NA as a whole when applied in our group affairs.

While autonomy gives us certain freedoms, it also implies *responsibility* for our actions and for the continued well-being of NA. As groups, we exercise our responsibility to the fellowship by taking inventory of our behavior and how we hold meetings. Our group exercises its autonomy in a responsible way when it takes care to consider the common welfare of the fellowship as a whole before it acts.



*Open-mindedness* is essential if we are to use autonomy to help NA grow. With an open-minded attitude, we are more receptive to new ways of reaching addicts. We learn to find and fill our niche in the NA community. We encourage each member of the group to contribute thoughts and ideas. Our attitude of open-mindedness helps us remember that each group is part of a greater whole. Acknowledging that we are part of something bigger than ourselves prompts us to look at still more new ideas. Our diversity can enrich us only when we are open to its richness.

Remembering our part in the greater whole, we consider *unity* when we think about applying the Fourth Tradition. Any decision that we make as an autonomous group ought to be founded first in our common welfare. Although we are autonomous, we may offer loving support to other groups by attending their meetings or offering other help. NA meetings thrive when groups look beyond their immediate needs to offer help to each other.

*Love* is the principle that guides us to see NA as a greater whole. This impacts our responsibility as autonomous groups. Our group's autonomous decisions, based on our love for NA, will serve to strengthen our efforts to serve others. Love encourages us to reach out to other members and other groups, finding ways to cooperate with them in carrying the message of recovery.

*Anonymity* applied to the Fourth Tradition reminds us that each group has an equal place in the fellowship of NA. Larger groups are not more important than smaller groups; older groups are not "better" than newer groups. While all groups have the freedom to apply principles in whatever ways seem best to them, those same principles make each group an equal partner in recovery. Each group bears an equal responsibility in the work and in the reputation of NA.

**A**utonomy in NA gives groups the freedom to act on their own to establish an atmosphere of recovery, serve their members, and fulfill our primary purpose. The responsibility that balances our autonomy reflects the principles expressed in the first three traditions. Preserving the unity of the NA Fellowship comes first. Next, we seek direction from a loving Higher Power. Then, we hold meetings that welcome everyone with a desire to stop using.

Healthy, vital groups are essential to the growth of Narcotics Anonymous. Groups provide a place where we can offer our most basic service: one addict reaching out to another with the message of recovery. Without our autonomous groups, we would be unable to fulfill our primary purpose.



## TRADITION FIVE

*Each group has but one primary purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.*

Our primary purpose is at the heart of our service. With guidance from a loving Higher Power and a clear focus on this purpose, NA groups become a channel for the healing power of recovery. Narcotics Anonymous exists to help addicts find freedom from active addiction. If we were to espouse other ideas or pursue other goals, our focus would be blurred and our energies diminished. The Fifth Tradition asks us to practice integrity by keeping our purpose foremost.

Tradition Five helps our groups fulfill the fundamental reason for their existence: to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. As we learned in the Fourth Tradition, NA groups are free to find new and different ways of presenting meetings. This freedom is important; it protects and encourages diversity, letting us reach addicts by many means. In this autonomy, each group develops a character of its own. The character of the group is not its purpose, however. The message we carry is not our group personality, but the message of Narcotics Anonymous--the principles of recovery.

What is the message that we are asked to carry? Groups carry the message of NA: hope and freedom from active addiction. This message may be voiced in many ways. Sometimes we simply share that if we don't use any drugs, we won't get loaded. Other members share that they have found satisfying, productive lives in recovery. Sometimes the message we share is that, even though life may be painful, we can stay clean. The spiritual awakening we experience when we work the steps is also our message. When addicts experience the message of recovery, we find healing from our suffering, no matter what the cause. We can live drug-free and establish new lives. That is our message: that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the compulsion to use, and find a new way to live.

### **Primary purpose**

The groups' focus on carrying the message is so important to the survival of NA that it is called our primary purpose. That means it is the most important thing we do. Nothing ought to take precedence over it. This is the most basic guideline by which groups may examine their motives and their actions.

There are many ways in which groups can further our primary purpose. Generally speaking, group members start by creating an atmosphere of recovery in their meetings. This includes extending a welcome to every addict who attends. Stable meetings that start on time carry a message of recovery.



Effective meeting formats keep the primary purpose in focus and encourage members to participate in a way that expresses recovery. We lead by example, sharing experience instead of advice. Group members help further our purpose when they take personal responsibility for keeping the meeting recovery-oriented. All of our actions convey a message, and Tradition Five reminds us to make it a message of recovery.

There are many distracting influences that can divert us from our primary purpose. For instance, our groups may be tempted to use meeting time to discuss their business and finances or talk about some controversy. As individual members, we can get caught up in socializing with our friends, ignoring another addict who may be in pain and need our encouragement. But each time our focus is diverted from our primary purpose, the addict seeking recovery loses out.

Other influences can distort our group's focus on its primary purpose. From the money members contribute, our groups pay rent on their meeting space, buy literature and supplies, conduct activities, and support NA services. All of these can either help further our primary purpose or distract us from our focus. Some groups seek to outdo others with luxurious meeting spaces, extravagant refreshments, huge supplies of literature, and elaborate activities. When we do this, our focus is distracted away from our primary purpose and onto money, property, and prestige. We should try to establish a reputation for carrying the message--nothing more, nothing less. Money, literature, and meeting space are tools we can use to help us carry the message; however, they should serve us, not rule us.

The groups can provide many services to carry the message. Our primary service is the NA meeting, where addicts share their recovery directly with one another. Additional services like phonelines, public information work, and H&I panels also help carry the message. In rural areas and newer NA communities, groups are sometimes the only source of such services. However, most groups find they cannot maintain their focus on their recovery meetings and also carry out other services. For this reason, groups usually assign responsibility for such services to their area committees. That way, groups reserve their time and energy for carrying the message directly to the addict who still suffers.

Because carrying the message is so important, many groups take inventory periodically to help ensure that our primary purpose is still in focus. The Twelve Traditions may be used as an outline for a group inventory. Some groups use a specific set of inventory questions, such as: How well are we carrying the message of recovery? Are there addicts our group isn't reaching? How can we make our meetings more accessible? What can we do to make new members feel more at home? Has the atmosphere of recovery diminished? Would a change in our meeting format strengthen that atmosphere?



Considering the needs of the larger NA community may lead to other changes. For instance, if there are no step meetings in one town, a group may consider having meetings that focus on the steps. There are many ways to carry the message and meet the needs of both the group and the NA community.

### **Carrying the message**

There is a power that works through this program. We tap this power when we practice the Twelfth Step as individuals, carrying the message to other addicts. When groups carry the message, the impact of the Twelfth Step is greatly multiplied. Even more impressive than sheer numbers of recovering addicts is the unity of purpose and the atmosphere of recovery found in meetings--a spiritual power. The evidence of that power in the group is hard to deny. It is a power we can draw on between meetings to stay clean.

Tradition Five focuses the group's priority on carrying the message. Members can do many things to further our primary purpose. For example, we show our care and our willingness to help by taking turns greeting people at the door, preparing lists of telephone numbers to distribute, or offering packets of literature to newcomers. When members come together as a group to undertake the task of carrying the message, they offer an attractive picture of recovery in action.

Many meetings are structured to carry the message to our newest members. These new members often need more encouragement to stay, more answers to their questions, more of our love and care. But the newest members are not the only addicts who need the message of recovery. The still-suffering addict with whom we share our hope may be any one of us, regardless of clean time. Tradition Five is not limited to helping newcomers. The message of recovery is for all of us.

### **Applying spiritual principles**

The Fifth Tradition complements the Twelfth Step: It asks *groups* to carry the message to addicts. As individuals, we are asked in the steps to apply principles in all our affairs; this is also important in our actions as groups. Some of the principles we have applied to help us observe the Fifth Tradition include integrity, responsibility, unity, and anonymity.

*Integrity*, or fidelity to the principles embodied in the Twelve Traditions, is demonstrated when groups carry the NA message of recovery. Many of our members have much to offer on a variety of subjects, but our fellowship has its own special message: freedom from active addiction through practice of NA's Twelve Steps and the support of the fellowship of recovering addicts. Groups demonstrate this when they offer vigorous, conscious support for addicts seeking



to work the NA program. When groups conscientiously cultivate this kind of integrity, their meetings further our primary purpose.

The Fifth Tradition gives our groups a great *responsibility*: to maintain our fellowship's primary purpose. Each group is responsible to become as effective a vehicle for carrying the NA message as it can be. Allowing our groups to lose sight of our primary purpose may deprive an addict of a chance to hear our message of hope. Each member is responsible to help the group keep our primary purpose in focus.

*Unity* is one of our greatest strengths in carrying the message. Unity of purpose keeps our focus on carrying the message. As groups, we work together to ensure not only our own personal recovery but the recovery of every NA member. The evidence of many addicts staying clean and seeking our common good is very persuasive. We don't recover alone.

In *anonymity*, our personal differences are insignificant compared to our primary purpose. When we come together as a group, our first task is to carry the message; all else ought to be set aside. Groups can practice the Fifth Tradition by reminding their members that the recovery message, not individual personalities, is primary in Narcotics Anonymous.

**Narcotics Anonymous** is a fellowship with meetings around the world. Our primary purpose is a common thread that unites us. Tradition Five defines the focus of Narcotics Anonymous. This focus also helps to ensure our survival as a fellowship. The Fifth Tradition asks us to serve other addicts by carrying the message that recovery is possible in Narcotics Anonymous. This concentrated focus protects the integrity of our fellowship.



## TRADITION SIX

*An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.*

While each group has but one primary purpose, there are many ways to fulfill that purpose. Our groups often go to great lengths to carry the message. We carry out our primary purpose as individuals, as groups, and through our service structure. In carrying the message, groups come in contact with other organizations in their areas. Good public relations can help our groups better fulfill their primary purpose, but cooperation with other organizations can also lead to conflict, diverting our groups from carrying the message. Tradition Six tempers our zeal to carry the message, establishing boundaries for our relations with others in the area.

Our fellowship's primary purpose defines us. We are a society of addicts sharing with others the hope of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. When NA's identity becomes too closely tied to the identity of another organization, the clarity of our primary purpose is muddled, losing some of its power.

The Sixth Tradition warns us of three things that could blur the distinction between Narcotics Anonymous and other enterprises: endorsement, financing, and the lending of our name. An endorsement is a public statement of support for another organization. Financing another organization further endorses its primary purpose. Lending our name to a related facility or outside enterprise--allowing an addiction treatment facility, for example, to call itself The NA Medical Center--is the ultimate endorsement, permanently tying our primary purpose to theirs in the public eye.

By establishing boundaries, the Sixth Tradition helps our groups avoid some of the problems that commonly arise between organizations. If we endorse an organization that later runs into trouble, our reputation will be damaged along with theirs. If we boost an outside enterprise that some find obnoxious, addicts seeking recovery may be discouraged from coming to our meetings. If we voice support for another organization, the public, the addict who still suffers, even our own members might confuse that organization's purpose with ours. If we fund a related facility or outside enterprise, money that could be used to fulfill our own primary purpose is diverted; if we later withdraw that funding, other problems occur. If we finance or lend our name to one organization instead of another, we can be drawn into a conflict between the two. By helping our groups avoid such



problems, Tradition Six allows us to devote all our energy to carrying a clear NA message to addicts seeking recovery.

### **Our relations with others**

We must exist in the world. It's not possible to be entirely separate, evading all contact with outside agencies. Not only is it impossible, it's not a good idea. Cooperation with others is healthy for Narcotics Anonymous. Contacts between our groups and the public help others understand NA better. They help increase public goodwill toward NA. They lead doctors, teachers, police, friends, and relatives to recommend NA to addicts who want recovery. They help us carry the message to addicts who can't get to regular meetings. Letting others know who we are and what we offer increases the chance that addicts seeking recovery will hear our message.

NA groups often cultivate good relations with nearby treatment facilities. They make it known that their meetings are always open to addicts from these facilities and make them welcome when they visit. There's a difference, though, between cooperation and endorsement. When a group's primary purpose becomes blurred by its relationship with some other facility or organization, it's time for the group to step back and examine that relationship. For instance, when a group or an area holds a dance, should it offer a reduced entry price to patients from such facilities? Why not just extend such reductions to *all* newcomers? We should ask these kinds of questions whenever our group's relationship with a related facility or outside enterprise becomes so close that our group appears to be linked with the other organization. By asking ourselves these questions, we help ensure that our cooperation with an outside agency does not inadvertently become an endorsement of that agency.

There are many related facilities and outside enterprises devoted to understanding addiction and aiding recovery. Like NA, each has its particular primary purpose that is reflected in its literature and its message. While that purpose may be *similar* to ours, it will not be the *same* as ours because the organization is separate from us. We use NA literature and speakers in our meetings to help us fulfill NA's primary purpose. An NA group that uses another organization's literature or speakers endorses that organization's primary purpose, not ours.

Although a few NA groups meet in their own buildings, most do not. Those who rent meeting space from other organizations need to take special care never to endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to the organizations from which they rent their meeting space. For instance, is the group paying substantially more to meet in a particular facility than it would somewhere else? Does this make it appear that the group endorses the facility in which it meets? Is the group better



able to carry the NA message by meeting at that facility, or is the group funding an outside enterprise with its "rent" payment? When we devote our energies and funds to carrying the NA message, we free ourselves from distractions or confusion with the primary purpose of other organizations.

It's important to remember that we as NA members and groups are responsible for observing our Twelve Traditions. The facilities in which we meet do not have this responsibility; neither do other organizations. If it appears that some outside organization or facility is compromising our traditions, we are responsible to discuss their actions with them. While we cannot demand that they change their behavior, a reasonable approach and open discussion will often lead to mutually satisfactory solutions.

A group's meetings provide a forum in which individual members can share their recovery with one another. The message we carry in our meetings can either enhance our efforts to fulfill our primary purpose or distract us from it. Each of us can play a part in carrying out Tradition Six by asking ourselves, "What do I do to clarify NA's relations with other organizations?" Many of us use a variety of resources in our personal programs of recovery and spiritual growth. Not all of them, however, relate directly to NA's primary purpose. Do we imply an endorsement of a related facility or outside enterprise when we share in an NA meeting about the good things we've found elsewhere? Do we distract other members at the meeting from NA's message of recovery or give new members the wrong impression about the Narcotics Anonymous program? No one can answer these questions for us. But by answering these questions for ourselves, we can each help free our group of problems that could divert us from our primary purpose.

### **Applying spiritual principles**

The application of principles is the basis of our freedom. When we adhere to the principles of recovery, we are free to carry the message and interact with others, knowing that we will not compromise our purpose. Some of the principles that help us observe Tradition Six include humility, integrity, faith, harmony, and anonymity.

*Humility* reminds us of NA's role in society. We have a program that has provided much help to many addicts seeking recovery. We do not, however, have any other purpose in society than to carry the NA message, nor do we pretend that Narcotics Anonymous offers anything more than freedom from active addiction. It may be tempting to think of other good things we might do in the world or for each other if we extended our focus or closely allied ourselves with a wide range of related facilities or outside enterprises. These grandiose dreams



serve only to divert us from our primary purpose. Carrying our message to the still-suffering addict is sufficient for us.

Carrying a clear message of recovery in NA reflects *integrity*. Our message is outlined in our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and further articulated in NA literature. Because our message is also our identity, we take care not to confuse it with the beliefs or literature of other organizations.

We demonstrate *faith* when we don't trade our endorsement, funds, or name for the cooperation of others. It's true that our friends in society can help us carry our message to addicts who need us. But our faith lies in the effectiveness of our message and the Higher Power that guides our recovery, not in the related facilities and outside enterprises we deal with. If a relationship with another organization compromises our devotion to carrying the recovery message, we need not be afraid to let go of that relationship. Our strength is in the power of the NA program--after all, it works!

The principle of *harmony* is both assumed and supported by Tradition Six. Our groups seek to cooperate with others in society whenever possible and as much as possible. Our contacts with others are made simple and straightforward when we let them know, right from the start, how far we can go in cooperating with them. By respecting the Sixth Tradition's boundaries in our group's relations with other organizations, we generate harmony in those relations.

Our identity as a fellowship is founded in *anonymity* and selfless service, carrying the message one addict to another. The relationships we have with outside organizations are not based on the personalities of our leaders; our groups themselves are responsible for their cooperation with other organizations, making those contacts stronger and more effective.

Additionally, anonymity helps us avoid blurring our purpose in our contacts with other organizations. Our relationships with outside agencies exist to help us fulfill our primary purpose, not merely to build our reputation or prestige. When we observe the spirit of anonymity, we seek nothing other than to carry the recovery message to the addict who still suffers.

**W**ithin the limits established by Tradition Six, we have tremendous freedom to carry the message of recovery and help other addicts. We have clear boundaries set by our identity as Narcotics Anonymous. When we take care to observe those boundaries, our outside relationships enhance our ability to carry the message to the addict who still suffers rather than diverting us from our primary purpose.







## The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous®

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We 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.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.



