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WOULD THEY?

It is the height of irresponsibility in service to allow personal interpretations to get in the way of doing our service jobs.. If discussions of policy begin to take precedent over getting the work done, something is wrong. The thing to do then is to renew our sense of primary purpose, apologize to those who have distracted us and pray to be used as instruments. There are times when almost nothing we do can avoid or even diminish the times of difficulty. Sometimes, like in other phases of our recovery, all we can do is just stand there and hurt.

We haven't always had serious service disorders. In the middle seventies in the new Fellowship of the East and South, we all used the newly written and approved *N.A. Tree* as our service structure. We didn't argue the content of the service structure because any reader could see that it was written in a clear and open style and the carry over between the feelings of love and trust from our recovery meetings into our service structure was obvious. Members of good spirit could make anything work. Then, in the early eighties, when we really started growing someone got the bright idea that our service structure had to be updated. What was meant by that was there were two or three places in the work that seemed mildly contradictory. In the rush of growth and expanding change, the notion that our structure wasn't perfect led to a succession of efforts within our service to come up with something better than the service structure described in the *N.A. Tree* which has essentially been carried forward under the title *Temporary Working Guide to our Service Structure (TWGSS)*. While the effort attracted widespread support, two things seemed

obvious 1) that the "work" being done was really bickering over terminology as opposed to a respectable work like you would find in a library book on the subject and 2) it was really about POWER and that the people who were able to push through their version of the structure would also be the people who wound up running things. Well, no one came out and said it but as time went by, serious people withdrew from the effort. The pitiful versions of the structure that were advanced are only taken seriously by the inexperienced and the uninformed. The Twelve Concepts were referred to as the "Twelve Cons" in the late eighties. They were approved during the time when WSO launched a lawsuit against a member who was upset about the high cost of our literature and the fact that group conscience approved versions of our Basic Text had been set aside in favor of a version merely approved by fifty or sixty people at a WSC one year. An entire generation of devoted members withdrew as a group from the structure when the Concepts were passed. Even now, years later, there is a serious polarization between people who support the Concepts and those who do not.

Without attempting to explain the positions once more, I would just like to say that when you watch two groups contending and one is basing their position on books and study and the other on conjecture and hearsay, I will go with the ones who have been openminded and sincere enough to check out what is written in books on the subject. There is no parity between an informed group and an uninformed group. By definition, the uninformed group will never understand. They may even feel downtrodden and unfairly criticized for their unwillingness to read, study and become informed. If they are numerous, as they are in this case, then no one would dare speak out against them would they?

Any reader who thinks that there is a similarity between the Concepts of NA and the Concepts of AA has never compared them. One is around a hundred pages long and well written; the other is much shorter and full of jargon and slogans. Guess which is which. One gives the Fellowship the ultimate right to order reorganization and resignations; the other gives voting representatives the right to vote the way they want to regardless of what their regions instructed them to vote on motions presented in advance and deliberated on by the Fellowship. This has the effect of nullifying the Fellowship's involvement in its affairs because they can study an issue, direct their representative how to vote on an issue, pay for their trip to California or wherever the WSC happens to be and then have the "representatives" vote however they want to effectively eliminating the Fellowship's voice and seriously cutting into the idea that representatives *represent* and leading to the idea that what we really have is a system of elected governors who do what they want and may or may not tell us what they did in our name. Fewer and fewer members know or care what is "happening" at the world level because they have been left out for the last four or five years and a new generation of servants are in place who are forced to go along with things without the benefit of really knowing our history or exactly why we are so unsettled on basic issues while we have a structure that has been in place for over twenty years now. The service structure, as written, has been abused and often it is ignored unless it can be used to justify someone seeking to get their way. The theoretical, unapproved and unproven *Guide to Service* is supposed to be a real contender to the *T.W. Guide to our Service Structure*, yet few members have even seen it! Perhaps

the time has come for us to recommend that our members read the AA Twelve Concepts not to gather an opinion on an outside issue but to become informed in the subject. Since there is a strong mistaken notion that our Concepts are based on the AA Concepts, at least this error would become obvious to all. Then perhaps we could rejoin as a Fellowship to work out something that would really suit our needs. It is hard to ask those who have done their homework and studied both sides of the issue to give in to those who are too lazy or too arrogant to at least become better informed as to the facts to these basic issues before any real harm is done. You know, sometimes you just gotta tell people when they are out of line and don't really know it. Maybe I am out of line to say this but the Fellowship through the WSC told me to go and study the materials as a member of an Ad Hoc and I submitted a sixty page typewritten report on the A.A. Twelve Concepts to the WSC one year. I don't say theirs is a perfect system but I believe that a member reading it would feel comfort and support for the vital importance of their membership.

Sharing from the experience of someone who was around in the "good times", we did better when it was understood that no one was above the principles of our structure. We surrendered and served side by side.

New Attitudes...

We shall attempt to print all articles promoting a change in our intolerance and indifference towards spiritual principles. We seek any and all ideas for this publication to become a venue for change. All materials shall be printed in a spirit of anonymity.

We encourage the use of humor and lampoon to stimulate thought and levity. Our hope is to find ways to transgress the perceived separation that exists amongst members of our society.

STEP TWO

Step One requires two admissions, one, of personal powerlessness, and two, that our lives are unmanageable by us. But in Step Two, is there not also an admission? To have a need to be restored to sanity implies that we are insane. A simple definition of sanity is being in touch with what is real, and with what is reality. So, we're insane, in that we are out of touch with reality.

A good example of this is if a client in a mental health facility would claim that he is Napoleon Bonaparte. Clearly, that person is out of touch with reality, and is delusional.

No objective facts support his claim that he is a historical figure known to be dead for over 200 years.

But like our Napoleonic friend, have we not also made claims that had no objective basis in reality? Have we not thought and insisted that we ourselves were the center of the universe in which we live? Did we not demand that others in our lives not have an interest in anyone or anything else, lest we feel threatened? Did we not claim, while jamming a rig in our arm or a pipe in our mouth, that others had somehow "driven us" to it? Did we not fancy ourselves as suffering for the sins of greater humanity because we "knew" the truth? And finally, did we not tell ourselves that our pain was greater and deeper than everyone else's, as a rationalization for what we were doing to ourselves in active addiction?

It can be humbling to make the admission of insanity. But the step clearly implies that we need to make this admission before we proceed with the rest of the program. No matter how well we've convinced ourselves and others that we are right and the world is wrong, we have to see that we can only change ourselves, and that, as such, we are a mess. Further examination has shown many of us that we had in fact used the sins of the world to keep the focus off of us and our problems. It was yet another twist in the extensive system of denial and rationalizations which enabled us to continue destroying ourselves and others. Understanding this, it is easy to see how getting rid of our denial is key to our recovery, for without it, the disease loses momentum.

So how do we actually take Step Two? Like all of the Steps, each person must seek a personal understanding of it for themselves. Many of us have found that proceeding to the next step may shed light on the matter for us, in hindsight. Others have needed to develop a concrete conception of a power greater than themselves and put it in writing before continuing, and that's okay because our understanding of this power is likely to evolve as we grow, and we can trade in our old conception for a new one at any time. The point is, we get on the path, and are growing.

In any event, there is no tangible, 100% sure-fire method to determine whether a person has or has not taken Step Two. Ultimately, it is a question that only the individual recovering addict can answer for his or her self. But clearly, if we can make an honest admission of insanity, on the heels of the admissions we have made in Step One, we are well on our way.

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RELAXATION, CONCENTRATION, MEDITATION

Many years before I found N.A., or heard of the 11th Step, I had already been fortunate enough to have learned some meditation skills.

The people that shared these life-saving skills with me showed me that before I could become a successful meditator there were two other skills that I had to master first as a prerequisite. I had to learn to relax my physical body and to concentrate my mind.

Let me share with you some proven techniques that can be used to achieve these goals.

In order to relax your physical body, first lie down on your back on a level surface. Inhale deeply and exhale very, very slowly through the nose keeping your mouth closed and concentrating your mind on your breathing. This can be done sitting up, but the spine must be kept very straight.

Through mental suggestion and visualization begin to order individual parts of your body to relax, starting with the tips of your toes and slowly moving upwards to your ankles, knees, hips, waist, stomach, chest, tips of your fingers, elbows, shoulders, neck, and finally your head. Feel a warmth at the part of the body that you are concentrating on. Then reverse the process moving slowly downwards from your head to your neck, shoulders, etc., all the way back to the tips of your toes. All the time focusing the mind totally on the part of the body that you are relaxing and maintaining your breathing as deep and slow as possible through your nose. You can repeat this exercise as many times as necessary until your physical body is completely relaxed.

This technique serves, as we perfect it through daily practice, not only to relax our physical body, but it also helps to calm the mind so that we can continue the process and progress to the next step of mental concentration.



Mental concentration is necessary in order to increase our ability to focus our full attention on one thought or idea thereby making it possible to reap the full benefits of meditation. In order to better concentrate the mind various exercises are available.

Gaze steadily without blinking at an object of your choice, it can be a candle flame, a flower, a picture of your higher power, etc.. Then close your eyes and visualize in your minds' eye the exact image that you have just been gazing at. If at first it does not happen do not be discouraged, continue to try, maybe with a simpler object, maybe with an object that is especially pleasing to you like the face of someone you love, it will come to you slowly.

If you find your mind wandering, (and you will) don't get upset, just gently bring it back to the present again and again, as many times as it mat take. Consistency and perseverance are key here. Repeat to yourself, "these thoughts do not belong to me, I am just a witness".

It is also very effective to practice concentration on sound. Repeat softly any calming sound, the word love, your higher powers name, your favorite prayer of mantra, etc.. Continue to repeat it softly to yourself or silently in your mind and try to visualize this sound coming from your heart. Repeat these exercises as often as necessary.

These are both forms of concrete concentration. After some progress through regular practice (consistent practice is indispensable), we can then move on to abstract concentration on principles like faith, hope, love, etc.

First concentrate on the word itself, then focus the mind on the meaning, the practice of this principle, and finally on the feeling that this principle resides in your heart and is part of your being.

It is at this point that real meditation starts. Meditation is the taming of the restless uncontrolled mind and using it as a very, very powerful tool in our recovery. Normally our disease works against us through our mind, it lives in the mind. Through meditation we can take this weapon away from our disease and use it towards God in order to improve our conscious contact.

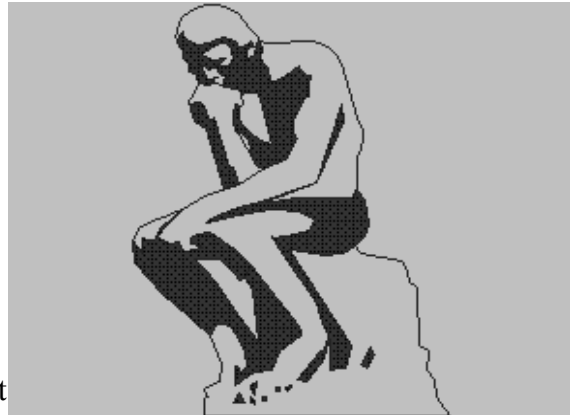
Once we can achieve the meditative state at will then we can truly practice the 11th Step. We can focus our mind on God and maintain it there without any interference from our physical body (it is completely relaxed). We can also hold our mind focused through our newly acquired powers of concentration.

The benefits to be reaped from this Step; the continuous improvement of "conscious contact" and the "knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry it out" will depend on the level of focused mental concentration that we bring to our prayer and meditation.

CHANGE

Change the effects by changing the actions. Don't keep acting while bemoaning the effects.

Re-evaluate our alternatives before considering our possible outcomes. Getting into outcomes too early can blind us to our real choices. We may tend to focus on fearsome potentials and so miss out completely on options that avoid disaster completely with little or no changes on our part except to focus on the positive.



At an early - easily influenced - age many of us set ourselves on goals. Later in our lives - for instance now - we may look again at what we're doing, what we getting and ask ourselves if we really want it. What we expect may no longer be that important or meaningful. If this is the case, it may be helpful if someone reminds us its ok to change our minds Change our minds and change our lives.

DOES SEX REALLY HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH SPONSORSHIP?

OK, now that I have your attention, what I really want to discuss and investigate is the real validity of the statement we hear all the time "men should stick with men and women should stick with women" or "women should have women sponsors and men should have men sponsors only".

Right from the start let me tell you that I think the mere idea of separating male addicts from female addicts is totally corrosive to our spiritual foundation (anonymity). One of the most important, if not THE most important ingredient for our personal recovery is our Unity! We read that at every meeting. We are all the same, we are not different, if we think we are different it is the disease that is telling us that in order to separate us, the emphasis should not be placed on our differences, the emphasis should always be placed



on our lowest common denominator, on our anonymity, the fact that we are here to recover together from this horrible disease of addiction.

I know what you are thinking right about now, you say that we must make this suggestion for newcomers because otherwise they will be screwing each other like rabbits! Well, guess what! the Basic Text says that we get this program by example not direction. We can suggest till we are blue in the face to the newcomer that they should stay away from sexual situations, that they must concentrate all their energies and efforts on staying clean and trying to work the Steps and Traditions in order that they may have a chance to recover instead of getting laid and having a ball, but if those of us who were here before don't set the proper example nothing will change. I don't know what happens in your area but in my area this suggestion is regularly ignored. Oh yes, the men will get men sponsors and the women will get women sponsors, the men will go to their men's meetings and talk about the women and the women will go to their women's meetings and talk about the men, but then they will turn right around and jump into bed with whomever will have them, newcomer, oldtimer, whatever! In other words, whatever benefit is gained by the few members who may follow the suggestion not to associate with the opposite sex is far outweighed by the damage done to our unity by the separation of the sexes, the special interest meetings, etc. I can not emphasize enough the tremendous damage that is done when we operate under the mistaken idea that it is somehow wrong or unsafe or against the principles of our program to fully share our recovery with every addict at all times. As a matter of fact we need to do exactly the opposite! We must be able to reach out to, or respond when someone reaches out to us regardless of sex or sexual persuasion. There is nothing external about the first step. We need to get rid of all the prejudices and all the fears that the disease is using against us to destroy our unity and keep us separated.

I am not saying that there are no differences between men and women, but those differences make no difference when it comes to recovery from addiction. What I am saying is that we must change our old way of life, we must try our damnest to change who we are by practicing the Steps and Traditions in our daily lives. We must totally accept each other as equals. If we continue to allow lust, greed, and fear to run our lives, we are all lost; but if on the other hand we are sincere in our desire to live spiritual lives, the 6th and 7th Steps will free us from this prison. We are not here to get laid or to find a mate! Those who are here for those reasons are really only passing through, just visiting, but the damage they cause while here is inestimable. They have no intention of working the Steps and Traditions so that they can change their lives. Those of us who are here to recover fully deserve that chance.

Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addicts that still suffer. We can only do that by the example of our own changing lives. The responsibility is yours and mine, please do not shirk it!

Tee-Shirt Quote:

WE HAVE NOT SUCCEEDED IN ANSWERING ALL OF YOUR QUESTIONS. IN FACT, WE HAVE NOT COMPLETELY ANSWERED ANY OF THEM.

THE ANSWERS WE HAVE, HOWEVER, DO SERVE TO RAISE A WHOLE NEW SET OF QUESTIONS ABOUT PROBLEMS WE HAD NOT THOUGHT OF PREVIOUSLY.

IN SOME WAYS WE ARE AS CONFUSED AS YOU ARE, BUT WE BELIEVE OUR CONFUSION IS ON A HIGHER PLANE AND ABOUT MORE IMPORTANT MATTERS.

STEP ONE

"WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS OVER OUR ADDICTION; THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE."

This step means exactly what it says. It is simple in form and its meaning not nearly as ambiguous as many would have us believe. The total achievement of overcoming our disease in practice is most difficult and elusive, but ADMITTING powerlessness over the disease and the recognition of the devastation caused by it is a simple, humbling disclosure.

The difficulty in admitting powerlessness over any situation or life circumstance is a burning desire on the part of ego (or lower self) to be in control. Our addiction has us almost unconsciously ruled by a mind-set of extreme separateness and attack, a condition of mental isolation in which we look

upon the world through condemning eyes, paranoia, judgement, and anger. This condition throws us into a state of war with the world and at war with ourselves. It cripples spiritual growth with guilt and fear of the world around us. I want to be the one responsible for change and my ego masks the "I" by allowing me to give the credit to God after I've made all the decisions.

Yes, I am powerless over my addiction; my life is unmanageable. I cannot make it alone. Left to my own devices, I will be trapped forever. Not by anything outside of myself, but by the encircling wall of my own false beliefs. I live in the lies and fantasies that tell me things are not really as they are. The Truth is, things are NOT as I see them, nor as I fantasize them.

We have two choices: To move towards ultimate Truth and recovery; or pursue the insanity of our disease and be forced to continue the cycle. My every thought and action will be based on FAITH, TRUST, LOVE, and FORGIVENESS. Should I falter or slip along the way, I mustn't give up my journey for I cannot. I can only postpone the outcome.

My disease and my ego are one in the same. The longer I stay clean, the clearer it becomes that we addicts are not as unique within the human race as we would like to believe. We simply pursue our self-destruction with more enthusiasm. The consequences of practicing our defects are more immediate and apparent for us than for "normal" people. It is this very curse however that blesses us, for it is the catalyst that drives us back to God when inertia and apathy would let us slip away into self-centered complacency. We are on a journey without distance to a goal that has never changed.

That goal is to be at one with God. The method is the steps of Narcotics Anonymous. The vehicle to carry us will be love and forgiveness for ourselves and all others.

God Is In Charge

God is in charge. In my life I have been appointed as the footwork foreman. The jobs he hands out is the work that he needs done to make his presence known. When it's Gods work everything needed to accomplish the task is freely provided. So if it's spiritual it will be practical. The energy needed to accomplish the work is automatic, as long as we remain on the spiritual path, God keeps doing his job that is to lovingly guide and protect us and provide all of our needs as we experience the success of knowing his love for us.

What is the purpose of life? To know God. How can this be accomplished? By living a life in service to others. What happens when we begin to do this? The more spiritual one desires to become, the more the ego will act up.

What is ego? Ego is the Ease God Out part of our disease. It is the cornerstone of thought that makes all other lies possible. It is deeply embedded in our self-centeredness and indeed may be possible to completely erode us.

However we find the lie is connected to everything else that lies are essential to the progression of our disease. The lie is simply "that somehow the impossible has happened", we have become separated from God."

This erroneous belief opens the door to the indefinable fear that so many addicts seem to be able to empathize with. And we soon find that our intelligence can be a liability to our spiritual search.

Fear is invented by our intelligence, "our thoughts", all emanating from the false belief that the impossible has happened. We must learn what the lie really means, that if we believe that one false premise, the rest of our lives become a reflection of that one flaw.

No matter how we work, no matter how much progress we make, no matter how complete we attempt to make our lives- no matter what, we will always be aware of that fear, that blemish in our spirit, that point at which the disease reaches out for our souls hoping to pull them down with it, in some false reality in which the old Scottish proverb illuminates:

Your are born through fear

You live a life of pain

You finally die, utterly alone.

We in N.A. know another truth, that is, we are never alone! What we can't do alone we can do together!

We come to our first meeting walking out of a world of darkness into the light of recovery. This light is of different intensity for each of us. Some may not recognize it at all, for such is the veil of ego that shrouds our true spirit, but we are attracted, like moths to the flame. And we keep coming back, for the simple truth of who we are, addicts, is as thrilling to us as those old behaviors used to be.

There is one difference - we no longer have the death wish- we are free from the bondage of addiction, and choose to live an N.A. way of life.

NEW ATTITUDES
P O BOX 447
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