



No. 14 April / May 98

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The primary purpose of our Groups is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers and our service structure is a tool we utilize to aid us in that effort.

We create service boards and committees to serve our needs and they are directly responsible to us.

The structure is designed to do things that affect our Groups or NA as a whole and it, therefore, cannot function autonomously.

There shouldn't be a whole lot of controversy about these three concepts, they are based in our Traditions and have been recognized as important since we published our first set of By-Laws in 1953. I guess there are some who feel that the Traditions are passe or no longer relevant to our needs, but most still feel that they are part of the set of principles that is our program.

The difficulty seems to come when we try to apply the Traditions. It seems that the broader the scope of a service board or committee:

- a. The more difficult it is to communicate effectively
- b. The harder it becomes to remain directly responsible to those we serve

- c. The more important the (perceived) need for organization, efficiency, specialization, and control becomes
- d. The more critical money and profit seem to become
- e. The more attractive autonomy without limitation seems, and
- f. The greater the concern is about potential impact of our actions (positive or negative).

This may, in part, explain the motivation behind recent developments in our service structure such as our 12 Concepts, A Guide to Local Service, or the motions in our current C.A.R. It may also help to explain some of the actions we've seen which seem to be taken in ignorance or contempt of our Traditions. (Note: these actions do not appear to be limited to any particular philosophical group, geographic location, or function within the service structure.)

Sometimes it seems to me that rather than making spiritual progress, we're getting further and further away from spiritual principles in our service efforts. This direction continues to concern me and I would like to suggest a couple of possible motions for your consideration:

1. That, at all levels of service, no service board or committee should initiate or pursue any course of action that has not been specifically assigned to them by the fellowship they serve.
2. That, at all levels of service, our service boards and committees should present reports and alternatives, rather than making directive motions which set or change policy.

The intent of these motions is to help strengthen the principles of direct responsibility and limited autonomy in our service structure.

Anonymity and Selfless Service is What Recovery is All About in the End

Usually, at the end of the meeting, the secretary mentions our 12th Tradition and then, more often than not, feels compelled to also tell us their opinion of what the 12th Tradition means to them. It usually goes something like this; "And what that means is that, what you hear here stays here," and then the rest of the group says in a chorus "here, here, and just for today we won't drink a beer," or another one that I have often heard is the one about. "I can say that I was here, but I can't say that I saw you here." I sometimes wonder why they bother to express their opinions at all, they sure don't seem to feel any compulsion to explain to us what any of our other 11 Traditions mean!

This behavior is, I believe, totally inappropriate because neither one of the above examples relate to our 12th Tradition. Instead, they refer to "personal anonymity," and therefore relate to our 11th Tradition and not our 12th Tradition. When I hear ignorance like this being shared at our meetings by the trusted servants of the groups, the very members that hold the responsibility to uphold the atmosphere of recovery in our home groups, the guardians of the purity of our N.A. message, I can only assume one of two things; our trusted servants do not work our Traditions in their life or they are aware of them only in a very superficial way without having any clue of the tremendous depth of Spirituality available to us in our 12 Traditions.

When our Basic Text tells us that Anonymity is "the Spiritual Foundation of ALL our Traditions," we must realize that our spiritual foundation is the basis of our spiritual principles. our foundation, Anonymity, is what is most important and must always come first. Our Foundation is that upon which everything else is built and that which supports and holds steady all that comes after it. We are after all Spiritual beings and Anonymity is the foundation of our very existence.

Our Spiritual Foundation (Anonymity), therefore, is the basis of our Spiritual structure. Everything we are and do depends upon Anonymity.

1).Anonymity is WHO we are, our name is and we are all members of Narcotics Anonymous.

2).Anonymity is WHAT we are, we are a Spiritual Fellowship based on Spiritual principles instead of on ego-based individual personalities.

3).Anonymity is WHY we are, we are addicts who must join each other in Unity and Anonymity in order to be able to recover. Not one of us can ever recover on our own in isolation.

We must all surrender our individual welfare into the wholeness of Anonymity for the sake of our common welfare, which must always come first because our personal recovery depends upon N.A. Unity. Anonymity is the foundation of Unity. First we must accept the Spiritual Principle of Anonymity into our lives, we must know in our very hearts that we are the same as everyone else in the rooms. There can be no doubt! There can be no difference between us at all, for the slightest feeling of difference brings with it automatic separation and thus isolation. Recovery evaporates in isolation. And then disease can drink its fill!

The feeling of safety and belonging, the knowledge of being supported and being taken care of by God at all times is available to all of us. This is the greatest feeling! God extends a safety net so that even when we fall we are still always safe. We destroy our individual egos which the disease feeds upon and surrender into the wholeness and oneness of Unity. It is at this point that we can be really successful in working our 12th Step and 12th Tradition and attempting to always practice "Principles before

Steps 1, 2, and 3 help me cope
when the shit hits the fan. All the
rest of them teach me how to stop
throwing shit into the fan!

Personalities" in all our affairs, day after day. We recovering
addicts are in fact Spiritual Warriors of sorts who must be ever
vigilant.

This, by the way, is not just an intellectual exercise. At the practical level we achieve progress and ultimately success in this critical area of our recovery through the increasing practice of selfless service. I don't mean just the fact of our participating in the existing "service structure," by chairing this committee or that committee. As a matter of fact, I am real sad to say that the chances for participating in the existing N.A. "service structure" seem to dwindle more and more each day. Instead of continuing to be an always open and expanding participatory vehicle for all of us to be able to grow together in selfless service it has instead turned more and more into an exclusive club where only a lucky few, can enter and even be "Paid cash," for service. The disease is REAL happy!

That new way to live that we must all find and which is our only alternative other than jails, institutions and death is talked about in the Basic Text (We do Recover). That new life must be about service in all our affairs'. As our Spirit awakens we become real instruments of our God's will. We slowly become channels for Gods' Love to all that cross our path. We lead by example. PLEASE JOIN US!

This Newsletter is being provided to any and all interested members of N.A. at COST please feel free to copy and give out as many of these as you like. We will be printing bi-monthly. Our cost is \$0.52 (includes postage) each so 1 yr, subscription would be \$3.12 (.72x6) Please send articles and newsletter money to:

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The 12 Steps of Insanity

1. We admitted we were powerless over nothing, that we would manage our lives perfectly and those of anyone else who would allow us to.

2. We came to believe that there was no power greater than ourselves and that the rest of the world was insane.
 3. We made a decision to have our loved ones and friends turn their wills and their lives over to our care, even though they couldn't understand us.
 4. We made a searching and fearless moral and immoral inventory of everyone we knew.
 5. We admitted to the whole world the exact nature of everyone else's wrongs.
 6. We were entirely ready to make others straighten up and do right.
 7. We demanded others to either shape up or ship out.
 8. We made a list of all persons who had harmed us and became willing to go to any length to get even with them all.
 9. We got direct revenge on such people whenever possible, except when to do so would cost us our lives, or at the very least jail time.
 10. We continued to take the inventory of others, and when they were wrong, we promptly and repeatedly told them about it.
 11. We sought through complaining and nagging to improve our relationships with others as we couldn't understand them, asking only that they knuckle under and do it our way.
 12. Having had a complete physical, emotional, and spiritual breakdown as the result of these steps, we tried to blame it on others and get sympathy and pity in all our affairs.
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One Addicts Views on Religious Abuse

In the past few years, we have been hearing increasingly more about spousal and child abuse. Admittedly these subjects are disturbing and painful to bring out and to admit their existence, but airing them in the open and the sunlight has helped educate the public and helped bring innocent victims out of denial. Being able to admit to themselves and others that this actually happened to them has helped them begin seeking help and put them on the road to recovery.

There is another type of abuse just as insidious and less talked about than the two mentioned above. I have become aware and sensitive to the very delicate issue of Religious Abuse since coming into Narcotics Anonymous and starting to work The Steps.

As a result of this increased awareness, I have met people, almost on a daily basis who have experienced religious abuse and won't admit that it has happened to them! Denial obstructs recovery.

Religious abuse occurs when a person or persons begin to believe they are closer to "GOD" than others and begin to believe they have a right to impose their doctrinal convictions upon another. Usually, Scriptures are used to prove their views. Guilt and fear are used to manipulate or force others to change their way of thinking and conform to the abusers control. If you choose not to conform, this usually leads eventually to being ostracized by that person or even a whole group of people.

I hope to clear away any misunderstanding by saying I do not lump together all who claim to be religious with those who use their religion to abuse. There is a vast difference! One who is Spiritual is generally motivated by love and one who claims to be "religious", without any spiritual foundation, by feelings of superiority and self-righteousness.

One of the byproducts of any type of abuse is anger and if not dealt with a deep seated hatred of the abuser. Instead of repressing either of these feelings, talk about them and the reasons behind them and come out of denial and start on the road to recovery. Look at the people who have abused you as those to be pitied, rather than objects of hatred. Hatred will harm you more than them!

You can take charge of your life. You can separate yourself from these very negative people. Remember, you have a choice today of what doctrines and Spiritual Principles and what type of people you allow to touch you and your life. Look for the winners, Seek only good and you will find it to be so. Recovery from any type abuse is a slow Process but Just For Today I have a choice.

12 steps of a sponsor

1. I will not help you stay and wallow in limbo.
2. I will help you grow and become more productive by your definition.
3. I will help you become more autonomous, more loving of yourself, more excited, less sensitive, and more free to continue becoming the authority for your own living.
4. I cannot give you dreams or "fix you up" simply because I cannot.

5. I cannot give you growth or grow for you. You must grow by facing reality, grim as it may be at times.
 6. I cannot take away your loneliness or pain.
 7. I cannot sense your world for you, evaluate your goals for you, or tell you what is best for you in your world - for you have your own world.
 8. I cannot convince you of the crucial choice of choosing the scary uncertainty of growing over the safe misery of not growing.
 9. I want to be with you and know you as a rich and growing friend; yet I cannot get close to you when you choose not to grow.
 10. When I begin to care for you out of pity, when I begin to lose trust in you, then I am toxic and bad; inhibiting for you and you for me.
 11. You must know - my helping is conditional: I will be with you, I will hang in there with you as long as continue to get even the slightest hints that you are still trying to grow.
 12. If you can accept all of this, then perhaps we can help each other become what God meant us to be mature adults leaving childishness forever to the little children.
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Old Ways

Surrender is built right into our twelve step recovery process from the beginning. When our newer members first come to a meeting, we work our program so they will find a basis for identification and hope. NA members are committed to making our meetings a safe place. We get to know the people who come to our meetings and on occasion have made recommendations that they seek help elsewhere when that seems to be what is best for them. We hope that when the new member comes to the twelfth step they will be able to recall what was done for them and do it for others.

It is terribly human to drift into feeling powerful when others are looking to us for answers. We joke and kid each other to make clear that disability, not ability, is the basis of ongoing recovery. Our egos tend to get us into trouble anyway and it keeps us in the learning mode required for ongoing spiritual growth. Sadly, we have found that when we need no more, we know no more. Supplication is openness to growth.

The idea that we are defined by our neural pathways is not just something from the Fellowship. It is part of the routine indoctrination of many hospitals and treatment centers. The feeling aspect of this is what I usually define and relate to in discussing the



topic with a crowd. I didn't learn this from either treatment or a hospital. A sponsee used some terminology that was unfamiliar to me and when I questioned her, she sent me some books.

Another way to say 'neutral pathways' is habit. We re-experience the past with memories. By examining our memories closely, in the light of what we know today, we can change the value of our memories and thus change not only our past, but its message for today. There can be no argument among addicts seeking recovery in NA that our using clouded our past resulting in poor judgement and poorer performance. We can no longer judge others by their performance and ourselves by our intentions. It is not fair. We are the ones who get the short portion of the stick in the end. If we want more, we give more. While these choices may seem terribly obvious and almost insultingly simple, they are basic to what goes wrong with addicts to produce the feelings and situations in which using can look like an option. We don't have to go there. New habits can not only take us away from things we associate with using, they carry.

The first question we learn to ask ourselves, is did it really happen. The second is did it happen that way. The third is did it mean what I thought back. If the answer of any of these changes upon closer examination, both our pasts and our futures change instantly.

If we thought someone was being hard on us and realize they were insisting we do our part, see the difference? If we were harsh or unfair to someone who later acted badly or retaliated, doesn't that take the emphasis off what we can't change and suggest that we learn better ways to interact with our fellow human beings? If we recall someone as weak or silly and later realize they were honestly sharing their emotions in the context of a private or intimate situation, doesn't that put their trust and openness in a different light? Doesn't it open possibilities of laying our innermost selves bare to special people in our lives, letting us experience for the first time what really being close to someone can mean?

Many addicts come up with the brilliant conclusion, sometimes after years clean, that nothing has changed for them. Without the closeness we engage by our honesty and sharing, there may be no one near enough to see what we are fixing up for ourselves or say something to make us stop and think about how much we have grown. Freedom is the ability to move in any direction, as needed. False memories and unfounded conclusions can represent permanent barriers to our personal freedom of movement and choice, hemming us into a framework as constricting as prison bars. The answer? Break out, one habit at a time!

Step Working Guides?

(Editors note-the following is an example of the step writing guides many of us in N.A. have used over the years-they are in no way connected to the guides that are up for consideration at this years WSC)

Sponsor / Participant First Step Work Sheet

"We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable."

The first mistake that many of us make when we come into the program, is that we think drugs are the problem. When we say to the newcomer that drugs are only a symptom of a much deeper problem (addiction), it is hard for them to understand this.

To get a better understanding of addiction, we must look at the disease concept of addiction. From that point of view addiction is a disease of attitudes, personality and a general negative outlook, that is rooted in fear, insecurity and low self-esteem. The main ingredients of addiction are obsession and compulsion. Obsession-- that fixed idea that takes us back time and time again to our particular drug, or some substitute, (substitute being anything that makes us feel good and get instant gratification, such as money power, sex food, anger, etc.) to recapture the ease and comfort we once knew. Compulsion--once having started the process with one fix, one pill, one drink or one substitute we cannot stop through our own power of will. Because of our physical sensitivity to drugs and anything that makes us feel good, we are completely in the grip of a destructive power greater than ourselves.

Looking at addiction from that point of view, we see how addiction makes our lives unmanageable with or without drugs. At this point we must surrender and accept how powerless we are over our addiction. When we do this a very strange thing happens, we begin to gain power through the (WE) part of the program and the next eleven steps. It has often been said that the first step is our past and the things of our past that are with us today. And the next eleven steps are our future.

Now that we have a better understanding of our addiction, let us look at some ways we can apply the first step in our daily lives. The most obvious is that we can't pick up that first fix, pill, or drink, or our lives will become unmanageable. We must accept and surrender to this JUST FOR TODAY. Let's now take a look at some non-chemical ways we must apply this step in our lives.

1. You go out to your car in the morning and it has a flat tire. Rather than feeding into the addiction attitudes of anger or frustration which will create unmanageability, we must accept and surrender to the fact that the tire is flat and take action to correct the situation.

As addicts we tend to resist the act of surrendering and using this step on every day problems making our lives unmanageable.

2. Another situation could be you go out to your car and you start it up and the motor dies. It can't be fixed. You need it. for your job. You must be able to apply the first step to this situation. Accept and surrender that the car cannot be fixed and you then gain the power to find alternate transportation. You can refuse to surrender and apply the stop and let your life become unmanageable. The choice is yours. As you see the first step can be and must be applied to all areas of our life. This is called living the steps. The bottom line is drugs are one symptom of our disease.

The only relief we get from our disease is by working the steps. It is a new and exciting experience that will bring many changes into our lives.

The following questions you are to write about on a separate sheet of paper and return to your sponsor.

1. What is the disease of addiction?
2. Why is being clean not enough?
3. How was my life unmanageable in my addiction?
4. .How is my life unmanageable in recovery?
5. How do I apply the first step in my life?
6. How are our steps different than any other 12 step program?
7. Am I willing to accept the steps as a way of life?

One last thing that must be pointed out is the WE portion of this step and all our steps. All of our steps begin with WE except the 12th, which has the word We in the center. This makes us different than any other 12 step program. Narcotics Anonymous is a WE program not a me program. Part of our strength and power come from WE. Together we can. I can't. WE can. This is why we need meetings for the rest of our lives. This is why we need contact daily with other recovering addicts. Another question many newcomers ask is, if I stop using, I should be cured and I don't need the program or meetings anymore. The only way I know to clear up this denial is to answer this way. A non-addict (A non-addict is a person who does not have the addictive personality) who goes to the hospital for a operation is given a physically addictive drug for pain during a period of two weeks. He becomes physically addicted. They detox him and he goes on with his life without any problem. However, addicts with the disease of addiction, having addictive personalities are unable to just stop with no problems, we were addicted long before we used.

Sponsor / Sponsee Step 2 Two Worksheet

"We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

The insanity referred to in this step is not the insanity of using drugs. We were restored to the sanity of not using by surrendering to Step 1, we now find ourselves clean and our lives still are unmanageable in many areas. Much of that unmanageability comes from doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting different results each time. Of course, the results are always the same unmanageability and insanity in our lives. But what is there left to do, go on the best we can, or begin to change with the Second Step as our guide through ongoing recovery.

The next question we begin to ask is: What is this power greater than ourselves? Many of us immediately thought this meant our Higher Power, but we are not introduced to a Higher Power till the Third Step. Our Higher Power is the ultimate power greater than ourselves, whatever our concept of a Higher Power is. However, this is not the power greater than ourselves that we are referring too in the Second Step. The best way to explain this is that a power greater than ourselves can change from situation to situation. I like to call it gifts from my Higher Power. A power greater than ourselves can be the N.A. program, a sponsor, another person, pain or something we may read etc. It is anything that makes us aware of the insanity of doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results, or makes us aware of the insanity of a situation if we act out on a defect or negative will.

Now having an understanding of the Second Step, lets take a look of some of the ways we can apply the Second Step into our lives.

1. The first way we applied this step when we came into the program was that N.A. becomes a power greater than ourselves. It helps us get through early problems without using and teaches us different ways of doing things.
2. Something someone may share with us can become a power greater than ourselves, if it makes us aware of something we are doing in the wrong way so we can than change it.
3. Pain many times becomes a power greater than ourselves. Sometimes it is the only thing that will make us do something in a different way to get sane results.
4. A Sponsor or some other recovering addict can become, a power greater than ourselves, by making us aware of the way we are doing things.

You can now see a power greater than ourselves can change from situation to situation. The important thing is to be aware of how to apply this principle in your life, so that insanity and unmanageability does not take hold. The principle of the step can be a power greater than ourselves.

The following questions, you are to write about on a separate paper and return to your sponsor.

1. What is a power greater than yourself.
2. What type of sanity is the second step referring to?
3. How can I apply this step into my life?
4. What does this step mean to me?

NEW ATTITUDES
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