

**IN LOVING SERVICE**



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**GEORGIA REGIONAL LITERATURE SUBCOMMITTEE**

**WORK IN PROGRESS - ALL RIGHTS TO N.A.**

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GEORGIA REGIONAL LITERATURE  
COMMITTEE

February 19, 1987

Dear Members,

The Georgia Regional Literature Subcommittee is pleased to present this copy of "In Loving Service" to you for your review and input.

We would be deeply grateful if you would mark your comments and input by page and paragraph number and submit them to our subcommittee. We have had two major workshops in the past year revising this piece and have another workshop planned for Memorial Day Weekend of this year. Although workshops seem to have the best spiritual surroundings for reviewing literature, we encourage all of you who read "In Loving Service" to send in your personal input.

Please mail your input to:

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If you would like to purchase additional copies of this manuscript, please send \$10.00 (includes shipping and handling charge) to the above address and we will return your copy as soon as possible. Please allow at least two weeks.

We are sincerely trying to make this literature effort a Fellowship - Wide concern and we need your help. We have already presented this manuscript to the World Literature Committee and have a motion in the '87 Conference Agenda to have "In Loving Service" placed on the WSC Literature priority list.

In loving service,

Bryce S.  
Georgia Regional Literature Committee

## INTRODUCTION

This material is meant to share the basic functions which go on behind the scenes in N.A. service work. Because of the nature of things, appearances can be deceptive in service. The trusted servants who has spent years learning how to do their service job may appear similar to the enthusiastic member who thinks they know it all but in truth haven't yet begun the process of surrender we call service.

Newcomers to service bring with them talents and skills which may well contribute to the general welfare in N.A. Helping these members harness their talents and learn to serve within the framework of our Twelve Traditions, is the purpose of this work. By design, this work is applicable to members who want to give their best at all levels of service to the Fellowship: member, group, area, region and world. These interlocking levels of service are structurally similar in N.A.: committees, subcommittees, representatives, etc. Still, the basic part and the essential element is the N.A. member who provides service on an individual basis. All our formal service functions are expansions of what individual members do in the course of their recovery.

If, however, our committees turn inward on themselves and get 'committee' oriented, the age old problems of all bureaucracies set in. Common sense disappears. Human power is nothing against the disease of addiction. Some sort of love and spiritual values must guide us to be effective. If we ever lose this feeling in service, it's time to get back to the basics of recovery. As recovering addicts ourselves, we can never lose sight of our own need for surrender and faith in spiritual principles.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE NATURE OF SERVICE

We must put our faith to work with action. This is particularly so in our case. Without the changes which reflect spiritual growth becoming apparent in our lives, we feel the return of the "hollow" feeling inside which we addicts have known so well. We revert to the selfishness and egotism we have relied on in our past. To help us establish some hope for ourselves, we need evidence that N.A. recovery is real. Evidence which will stand the tests which are forced on us by our disease.

We respect our members in service to N.A. and this can help their recovery for the good. It provides a degree of recognition of their better nature and a way of confirming their aspirations to become a better person. We are powerless, scared, and confused individuals who are willing to struggle towards our goals against terrific odds. We are motivated by a power greater than ourselves which provides for our survival. We are protected by the spiritual, giving nature of our Fellowship. When we fall short as individuals, we find forgiveness and acceptance. When we act against the principles which have given us a chance at a new life by disregarding one or more of our Twelve Traditions, we step outside this protective circle of spiritual love.

Basing our lives in a Power greater than ourselves gives us a spiritual freedom which makes the welfare of others a valid concern to us. It is this concern for the well-being of others which is part of what attracts our newcomers. This concern has best been summed up in the phrase: "What you want to do about your problem and how we can help." It is positive and nondirective at the same time. We do not play

We see, accept and feel thankful for the help and love we receive from others. To do less for others than we receive from them would be spiritual lapse. Giving makes sense to us because we can see where we receive much more than we will ever be able to give back. When we try, we find we have even more to give. The world is good to its givers. Becoming a member of society is our transformation from taking to giving. When we find these truths, we have begun the spiritual transformation we call recovery.

In the beginning, for most of us, there was at least one member of N.A. we trusted. We met them at a meeting or through a helpline call. Our desire for recovery allowed them to carry the N.A. message to us. We may have hung out with them, chosen them to be our sponsors and gone to meetings and activities with them. Often-times we couldn't be comfortable unless they were there. We may have met other members as well but there was some special person who made us feel comfortable, safe and at home.

We all need someone we have good reason to trust. Our using destroys this kind of basic human contact. As our trust grows, we make others friends slowly or quickly. We may join a home group or a circle of members we see often. Our fear of others decreases. We go to more meetings and sometimes travel far from where we live, and find ourselves still feeling at home in another N.A. meeting. We begin to feel about our N.A. Fellowship, the way we felt about our first friend and our first circle of friends. Our fear lessens and our freedom increases.

When this time comes, the cycle of service begins anew. We get to give them some of the answers we have found helpful in our own recovery. These answers become more real and meaningful each time we get to share them and see them work for others. Part of our recovery can be attributed to this process of ongoing renewal of the basic, simple answers we found in the beginning. We find more in life through giving than we can in taking. As our need for giving grows, we grow personally. Our visible growth is a reflection of an inner change. Our need to share simply allows more room for addicts seeking recovery.

The cycle of service from getting our message to giving it to others is the basic mechanism which allows for N.A. growth. Whenever it is broken through fear or shortcomings, we have learned to stop and turn to those who helped us before. They will have our answers if we are sincere. Soon, we will feel better and be able to do better.

Some of our problems seem to defy solution. If we find our way is blocked, it is better to find another positive direction to take for ourselves and let our God take care of the things we can't handle.

Many members suffer greatly from the confusion between our formal service structure and the spiritual nature of service to others. Our structure is a meaningless diagram printed on paper without the life, love and wisdom only we can put into it. Many of our best trusted servants never serve in any elected capacity. Our most important member may be the newcomer but our most important servant is the one who will be there, today, when we need help staying clean.

## CHAPTER TWO THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

A more complete survey of our Twelve Traditions is to be found in the Sixth Chapter of our Basic Text, Narcotics Anonymous. This material is not meant to be a replacement of that material but only to provide commentary on our Traditions as applied to service in N.A. Observance of our Twelve Traditions preserves the integrity of our program of recovery. They are as essential to recovery as the Twelve Steps because the Steps cannot be worked without the atmosphere of recovery which exists within our Traditions. They should be studied by every member of N.A., not just our trusted servants or members with years of clean time. The written forms of the Traditions are the formalization of underlying spiritual truths which form the foundation of all recovery. They allow the 'we' of our Twelve Steps to exist.

### TRADITION ONE

"Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity."

"When you're up and I'm down, please help me. When you're hurting, I promise to return the favor. We really are in this one together. When we're both doing alright, let's learn to work together for those who are still suffering. That's where the real good feelings come from."

We come into the program broken and defeated by addiction. We are dazed and it takes a while for the fog to lift. What is shared and learned in NA meetings is essential to our lives and the quality of our lives. Eventually the program starts making real sense to us. We keep coming



has the right and ability to maintain an accurate directory of N.A. meetings. This does not allow for meetings which go against the basic principles and beliefs of N.A. as embodied in our Twelve Traditions. Truly, our recovery is on the line if they are unable to surrender our Traditions which serve to protect all who call themselves N.A. members.

Remember, what the other members, groups, areas and regions share in common is at stake here! Our combined feelings, welfare and recovery come first. Because this is a sensitive and often emotional subject, it may help to review what our experience has shown.

When one or more groups are kept on the meeting schedule but go against the spirit of N.A. by violating one or more of the Twelve Traditions, the service effort and the N.A. spirit fades. The most basic and easy service functions seem to be impossible. As addicts, we see this sort of thing for what it is: dishonest misrepresentation of the facts. If our service committees are dishonest, they lose the respect and the affection of our members. One of the most basic services we need is some sort of stability and order.

When the meetings in violation are taken off the schedule, the members behind the violations scream 'politics' and their need for disorder is made manifest. The other members just go to meetings where our Traditions are recognized as essential or start new groups. The integrity of our name and our principles is taken seriously and even with the hurt feelings of the few, the many benefit. Our kindness is not seen as a weakness of mind or spirit.

We get a sense of oneness with our early members by helping others. Through the Steps, our awareness of the effects we can have on others becomes more important to us. We speak well of others today and those who have gone before since we are able to understand them through our own difficulty. None of us can afford the false sense of importance which comes from gossip. We realize what a miracle N.A. is. Sometimes, our disease gives us the idea that N.A. is only a mutual agreement to sustain a basis for belief which will fall apart if examined too closely. We forget the way we were when we came to the program because it is better today. Sometimes it takes the suffering of another, we are committed to help, to snap us out of this delirium before we relapse. Through helping another and seeing the things which worked for us working for another, we are protected. It reminds us of the Power of the program to work a lasting good for those who would otherwise be dying. Our ability to remember the miracles we have known is restored to us.

We come to love the Program of Narcotics Anonymous in its own right. We see those around us with new eyes. As if for the first time, we can see their pain and their courage takes on a new meaning. We know what it takes to do these things. Nothing has come easy for us except as a gift from our Higher Power.

We each pay a price to keep N.A. going. Not surprisingly, some of our members take this for a sign of weakness rather than an opportunity. To the dismay and discomfort of those who have come to love them, these members become proud and arrogant. Puffed up with a false sense of importance, they are unable to do the things which have worked to produce their recovery and lapse into a coma of the soul. Sometimes we can shake them out of it, sometimes not. We still love them and stand ready for the first indication that

## TRADITION TWO

"For our Group purposes 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."

Each one of us has an equal chance to play a positive or negative role in the present course of N.A. today. Our membership requirement, the desire to stop using, implies we have to change in order to play a useful role. This change takes place in every little thought and deed. When we have learned the uselessness of false pride and ego, our opportunity to serve will increase.

We bring our past into N.A. with us intact. Some of our beliefs and feelings are accurate and will apply to our lives clean. Many will not work any better for us clean than when we were using. These must be changed for us to be happy. If our unhappiness persists, we want to re-examine major portions of our lives to consider what we were exposed to which goes against what we really feel to be right inside. Otherwise, we will repeatedly go through strange feelings in ordinary settings. Contradictions of thought and feeling need to be resolved if we expect to overcome the restlessness and inability to accept good things into our new lives.

Without these changes, we will have grave problems surrendering to group conscience on any matters of importance to us. We may feel plagued and threatened instead of happy and joyous. We may get caught up in viewpoints based on our former experience with groups of all sorts. It is important to remember that in N.A. the rules have all been changed. Be grateful for the changes. Sometimes these changes can only be seen in retrospect. Still, we can remember when conflicts based on pride, self-will and ego were real

Our groups can appear either sleepy or totally efficient. We have seen countless incidents of members strutting and puffing out their brief hour on the stage of service. If we're worth our salt, we've been there ourselves. It makes it easier to be considerate of others who may be unaware of the nature of our services or our source of strength.

We have got nothing to worry about except staying clean. Through recovery, we've got plenty of time, one day at a time. Time is our gift. When the spirit of our Fellowship moves, all will be well. The increase brought on by our growth makes it increasingly difficult to keep track of everything that's happening. More and more we have to try to just do our job well and be supportive of the whole. Somehow our groups seem to do a good job of keeping track of it all. This is the reason our groups conscience is our guidance system. Somehow they know what we as individuals cannot.

The most we can expect is to be servants, worthy of trust. This means a lot to people like us who have known total collapse of moral systems and effective group roles. Perhaps our lack of experience in these areas brings out a tendency to moralize and seek to dominate those we would serve. It's unfortunate when it happens and a good thing to avoid or get over as soon as possible. It seems contradictory to paint a picture of our role in service as something subservient to the will of others and also speak of the joy of giving. You figure it out, we can't. It feels good. Sometimes it gives us a way to go on when nothing else can.

Group conscience is the result of individual prayers. When we pray, we activate the best in ourselves or make ourselves more open to the best in others. This conscience is not without direction. It is always rooted in concern over the

their will on another member. Its been tried but it always fails because the other member or members involved get bored and move on when their addiction threatens or they realize the feelings associated with service are missing. Remember, we try to love and help all our members, especially when they are hurting.

### TRADITION THREE

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

Membership means the end of loneliness to us. We have all beaten ourselves into a corner by the time we get to Narcotics Anonymous. While we may be suspicious in the beginning, we feel a freedom in the meetings to express ourselves and find a similarity among the members we come in contact with. They hear what we're saying and seem to understand what we are feeling. They share with us and we begin to feel as if we have come home.

The purpose of this Tradition is to insure that no addict need die seeking recovery. Any other requirements for membership would allow someone to be turned away who might be seeking recovery but not be able to meet some other requirement.

We all had serious living problems which went against the grain of the society we come from and often made for discomfort among those who tried to help us. We had been forced by the fears and desperation to do many things which made us seem to be bad people in our own eyes. We felt unworthy and it was often confusing when people reached out and told us they loved us. Didn't they know what we were and where we came from? Did they know what we had done in our active addiction. If they really knew, how could they accept us,

alive. Somehow their efforts to get real help come to the forefront of your mind and the ways they fell short seem less important than when they were alive.

It is natural that we have to achieve some relief from our defects before we can expect to stop falling short of our goals. We lack the power to manage our lives and this makes us uncomfortable. It is an ancient way for us to attempt to bring others in line when it is we who must change. Our power over others remains non-existent. We learn that we can change ourselves and that at least part of that change is based in our reactions to others, particularly when we do not like something about their actions. We will stay miserable in a job, a relationship or just about any living situation longer than most people. When we feel uncomfortable, we lash out at others, especially those who are close to us. Hopefully, they can continue to love us through these difficult times until we are able to accept, return and give to others what we have received.

These are our tendencies. If you don't suffer from them, we're glad for you. Because of these tendencies, we have a special need for this Tradition. We are allergic to pain and without this Tradition we would sooner or later become victims of spiritual pride. We would grow socially sensitive and unconsciously exclude from our midst people who might be addicts but failed to meet some criteria for N.A. membership. They might be dirty, well dressed, foul mouthed, or from either of the wrong sides of the tracks. Some distinction would be made and some addict would die. Our discomfort would create social pain in us and we would become exclusive as a Fellowship. By taking control in this way, we run a certain risk of cutting ourselves off from the true source of our recovery. When we forget the lessons of surrender and faith and attempt to take up our old ways, we flounder, relapse and begin to die again.

This is one of the most important of the Twelve Traditions because it keeps membership simple. Other Traditions are related to the Third Tradition. It unifies our recovery and service effort. It says "Yes!" to members by right of our pain, our addiction and our hope for a better life clean. No one can make us members but we ourselves. Acceptance of our membership is based on what we let others see and feel of our desire for recovery. Through our services, personal and in groups, we keep the doorway to recovery wide open to all addicts regardless of station in life or personal origins.

#### TRADITION FOUR

"Each Group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups, or N.A. as a whole."

Our trusted servants have learned through painful experience or grateful surrender that there are limits on what we can do (and not do) in service to N.A.

When we first get into service, we are generally concerned with giving our very best to those we serve. We ask questions, read our Service Manual and exert ourselves to attend and support our group or committee. This open attitude lasts until we feel confident in what we are doing and begin to serve as a resource to others seeking to serve. A lot of things can go wrong when we start to feel powerful, stop asking questions and reading the Service Manual. We can get so caught up in service that we stop working our personal programs. When we stop feeding ourselves spiritually and arrest the growth process we are involved in, almost anything can go wrong and something usually does. We begin to want to strike out on our own. We can become critical of others and lax in our service.

We allow ourselves to be guided by the Twelve Traditions when we want to insure that our actions won't cause problems or hardships for other members or groups. If we ever get into a place where 'our common welfare' isn't important to us, we are in real trouble and should get back in touch with reality as soon as possible. Admitting fault is better than and can prevent a relapse. Taking personal responsibility for an error keeps the problem from growing.

Groups in N.A. are autonomous because it brings the whole Fellowship in touch with the spiritual principles of N.A. Individuals are not autonomous. Work to inform others rather than reform them. It just won't work in N.A. The Fellowship always has the final say and the final responsibility. Group autonomy relates to the fact that our members become living extensions of their Higher Power's through living the Steps of N.A. If you can't feel something special in an N.A. meeting, you'd better raise your hand and get honest. Someone else may be hurting and your courage can help bring the meeting back into focus.

Group autonomy offers the variety and freedom we are promised as newcomers. We have all sorts of group formats, all sorts of members, our meetings are set in all sorts of places; we have a lot of freedom. We even have meetings within the locked doors of prisons where a lot of our members happen to be found. When group meetings become too formal or stuffy and lack the spirit found in other meetings, attendance will fall off. If our meetings get too wild and crazy, they can drive off sincere members and would be members in violation of our Fifth Tradition covering the groups primary purpose of carrying our message. Either way, you can't stay clean without newcomers. Our freedom is balanced between personal freedom and concern for others. Our meetings can't be called N.A. without this sense of purpose.



addicts who are recovering on a daily basis in N.A. These other members help us go beyond what we were capable of before we were alone. The group principle is best illustrated in the fact that every one of our N.A. Twelve Steps is centered around the word "we". We don't become powerful in recovery but we are able to tap into a strength greater than ourselves immediately through other members, as soon and as long as we are open to it.

Groups which fail to carry a sufficient message of recovery invariably fail. As it says in our basic text, we have nothing else to offer but our message. It takes a group of two or more to make a "we". If a group forgets its primary purpose, then at least for a time, both are lost. The power to stay clean through taking an active interest in the recovery of others is given to us by the God of our understanding. We first pick up on this feeling of usefulness to others in a group setting where other members are interested in helping us recovery. At least part of the feeling of loving concern which draws us back to the meetings comes from active application of the spiritual principle of this Tradition. Where the message is not being carried, there is no recovery.

We need each other and aren't embarrassed about admitting our need for help. We see others doing it and it comes to us naturally. The group setting and our primary group purpose begins to take away our loneliness from the beginning.

In terms of N.A. service, our primary purpose is really important. Members gathered together without an atmosphere of recovery will face insurmountable difficulties in affecting any services. Without the spirit of concern for others, gratitude for what we have received through N.A. and an effort to give our best, efforts to help others will have

Today, our resources are growing and so are our numbers. As we grow we learn new lessons in service just as we learn in recovery. Giving has to be more than a word to us. Whether service is done one way or another is a concern which might better remain in the hands of our Higher Power. If we truly want to help enough, we will be shown a way. Each time our path seems to be blocked we can turn to some new direction. Quite often, we find that others are able and ready to do as good a job or better than what we may have had in mind, whereas we are able to move on to break new ground where it is needed. Still, the addict in us will attempt to root us in our old self and we often mistake our anonymous freedom for lack of recognition.

Our groups and service bodies reflect the feelings and the recovery of our members. By working our own program first, we are doing the most basic thing a servant can do. By fulfilling our spiritual needs, we are able to contribute to the whole in a good and useful manner. We feel good about what we are doing at the time and good about it later on as well. Naturally, lack of faith, character defects and an inability to admit fault or make amends will be a hindrance to anyone seeking to serve. Helping others who seem to be having these problems is one of the ways service work, serves us.

### TRADITION SIX

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

Most of us have never been a real part of anything we could feel good about before coming to N.A. We would hear about good things and good people and investigate them only

times to have to opportunity to draw on our roots to extend our branches throughout the world. We have more meetings, members and services than ever before and its still getting better.

The second need we have to deal with concerns us all. We have suffered greatly for the lack of sure insight into problems of money and prestige which arise not from the outside, but from within our own ranks. As we have grown, many of our services have inevitably put our members into situations where they are unable to deal with the pressures and demands of their job and have fallen right flat on their faces to our amazement. We voted them in, we believed they could do it and we were wrong! The lesson here is that we who elect have a responsibility to those who serve us. They, like us are addicts, and will sooner or later have problems. Just like the other things which go against recovery, we bring the problems out into the open before we can deal with them. Sticking your head in the sand is only good for getting your ass in the air! Where these matters have been dealt with successfully, the members get together, honestly share what is bothering them and work towards a solution together. Sometimes it gets sticky. A committee may have funds, equipment or apparent personal influence which get misused by some or all of its members. A whole community may have to reach out to other communities but the help is there if we have the courage to ask for it.

Today, we have excellent guidelines to help our treasurers. Implicit in the guidelines is the fact that the group is responsible for itself. Those who put it in the bank or spend it as directed by group conscience serve us and like other servants need consideration and support if they are to do a good job. If they get into trouble, their recovery hangs in the balance. We have to put our primary purpose first here. Before jumping in with only rumor and suspicion, lets take our

because we need to feel good about ourselves and each other and we get something special through the giving. All we can do as servants is to work a daily program and do our job. No one can account for N.A. Anyone who has been involved for a while will tell you from their own personal experience of the times they thought they were in control and feared for the worse. Through their surrender and faith, they stayed clean and everything came out alright in the end.

### TRADITION SEVEN

"Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

As we each grow in recovery, so our Fellowship has grown. We have had to pay a great price for what we have today. Along the way, all the blind alleys were checked out, all the errors made and all the things happened which would have spelled our collective ruin. The miracle of Narcotics Anonymous is that we go through all these growing experiences and not only survive but possibly grow from them. It seems that we addicts insist on doing anything the wrong way first. Because of this, we have learned that we truly have little to fear - beyond the spectre of relapse. We are the sort who can go through the most painful experiences known to man and be laughing right after. In a way this might have helped us survive, but we have grown to better things. Our 'tendency to test' is often exchanged for a more practical method when something important is at stake. One of the most important things for addicts seeking recovery is another addict who wants our help and is asking for it. To find these people and help them to get to our meetings, we print meeting schedules and directories, we carry meetings of N.A. into jails and hospitals, we run public service announcements to let other addicts know that recovery is possible and we work

strains which might otherwise occur are prevented. Travel, telephone and correspondence costs are budgeted by our service bodies, and receipts are turned in to the treasurer. Our service committees have an open book policy where the ledger and these receipts can be inspected by any member. Reviews of our treasurers records by their service committee officers benefit the treasurer and let them know they don't have to act alone. As a note of interest, our treasurers came up with the review procedure in the N.A. Treasurer's Handbook so they wouldn't have to feel like they were doing it themselves. Problems of money should never hamper our service effort. We used to put a lot of money into dying, we now put our money into living.

Servants have always been extensions of a group conscience and have enjoyed some level of emotional and financial support from the service body which has backed them up. Where they have failed to get the help they needed, the service effort has fallen short of its goals. Our loving God has a way of keeping track of these things, and all who have truly served selflessly have gratitude and joy to share. Their need to stay clean and feel better about themselves was met.

Our Basic Text, Narcotics Anonymous, has excellent material on the application of the Seventh Tradition relating to forms of outside support. N.A. can't afford to compromise its spiritual integrity by placing itself in a position where recovery or growth is seen as determined by money, power or prestige. We know God has been good to us. We will always have the funds to do what is needed, and more than we need would cause problems. Our 'prestige' is in the simple fact of our recoveries. Our power rests solely in our prayers and our gratitude.

find it embarrassing even to discuss charging for what we attribute to a power far greater than ourselves.

Some of our members are employed in treatment facilities which offer programs of various sorts to addicts. Their membership in N.A. is separate from their employment. Those who keep it separate have little trouble maintaining their jobs and may help others as a part of their program with no conflict. When the two are not kept separate, the idea that we ourselves are powerful enough to produce recovery in others creeps in and we run the risk of finding ourselves cut off from our spiritual roots. We need always be mindful of the fact that we enjoy a way of life which has come from the thousands who have gone before us in recovery. N.A. has been born out of their successes, and no government, medical approach or single religion has played any significant role in any of it. We just found a way to stop dying, and part of the responsibility for recovery is the willingness help others. Keeping the miracle alive is important to us because our lives depend on it.

Our early years were such that we never could afford special workers. As a consequence, we have had to do without some things. We have had great difficulty in documenting our successes which has limited our ability to pass on to others what we have learned in N.A. Our Book, Narcotics Anonymous grew out of a volunteer service effort. Historically, we had our recovery, our Board of Trustees, our World Service Office and our World Service Conference and even our service structure before we had our Book which is the basis of the finances which have allowed our world service effort to grow to the extent that it can effectively support the service needs of hundreds of thousands of recovering addicts all over the globe. It has been difficult in the past to maintain an up-to-date World Directory of meetings. Only the valiant efforts of our predecessors allowed us to have literature

## TRADITION NINE

"N.A. as such ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve."

The group conscience covered in the Second Tradition comes out in the Ninth Tradition. It is not enough to say we care and give only lip service to the promise of N.A. recovery. Our promises are backed up by our actions. This Tradition gives the Fellowship a way to implement group conscience within spiritual bounds.

Sooner or later our members want to give back some small part of what the Program has given them. To keep out arbitrary rule-making for others and keep our Fellowship and Program adaptable, N.A. as such is left in the hands of our members. Their prayers keep our way spiritually fit. Since we turn our wills and our lives over to the care of the God of our understanding in our Third Step, we entrust our way of life to this care. Our group conscience is based on our conscious contact.

Our services are conducted by members carrying out the will of our groups and members. We don't need rulers or governors in any sense. It would go against our nature as well as our principles. Our structure is different from 'committees' and 'boards' as the terms apply in the world at large. They are terms of convenience since the spiritual nature of our service effort as well as our recovery requires using terms which may have other meanings, for convenience. For instance, our group secretaries rarely have steno or typing skills, and if they do they have little need to use them as they set up the coffee and literature or line up a speaker. Our services are performed by members who care and are rewarded in terms of recovery. When they require our financial

As soon as we feel powerful, we have taken back our Third Step, the Step which allows the God of our understanding to help us with our defects and shortcomings and gives us the power to make amends. We need always to remember that without N.A., we are subject to active addiction. No spiritual knowledge, no personal power and no strong enabling can help us then. All we can do is humble ourselves by coming back to N.A. It is this consideration which makes our service boards and committees different. If we get caught up in self-will, we may be putting our recoveries and our lives on the line, and this we don't want.

To the best of our God-given ability our service boards and committees are organized. Disorderly services are generally poor services. Keeping it simple and doing the best we can will take care of most problems. We tend to get into trouble when we fall for the idea that what we need is more guidelines. This is a mental approach and generally doesn't work out when we are in need of a spiritual remedy. Sometimes this is to surrender to the loving experience already embodied in our existing guidelines. Our egotism leads us to try to 'top' the efforts of others when our need is to continue those efforts.

If our guidelines are simple, straightforward and useful to the members doing the work, they are abided by. If not, they are disregarded and new guidelines written. We have learned how powerless we are to force our point of view on another trusted servant.

It is better to pray and deal with the personal problems up front. One self-willed member can undo a whole service effort if they go unchecked. Somebody has to love them enough to be honest with them and let them know they're hurting. Sometimes they don't even know they are orchestrating, not



seems to produce 'power' in recovery. The truth is that what we used to waste is simply available to us in useful forms.

If our members in service to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous learn from the beginning to respond to the needs of those they serve with the love and support of other members who contribute the ideas, suggestions and financial support needed, they can serve long and well. The unified group is 'stronger' than the sum of its members, and a unified effort always produces results. It is the grace of a loving, all-powerful God, that this power turns in circles, rarely extending beyond the range of the group until its members can reflect enough recovery to take a spiritual direction. This protects us from the harm which can stem from personal limitations and self-will. Only through spiritual growth can spiritual goals be approached. Most of us will notice how ineffectual it is to try to disrupt a meeting or a service effort. True, time and effort may be wasted, but isn't this the price we have always had to pay for our foolishness? We know that when this happens we are letting them as well as ourselves down if we stand by and wait for self-correction to take care of the problem. If we feel our membership strong enough, we take up for ourselves.

Members who have learned these lessons will always be working to extend the N.A. message. They know N.A. is the only way out for suffering addicts of our type. In other words, those for whom nothing else would work. As we grow and the wisdom of the N.A. way is seen with increased clarity, we develop a healthy respect for the program of Narcotics Anonymous.

Trouble can come when members who should be supporting the service effort see themselves as powerful, forget their own responsibilities and go beyond their supportive roles. Where this happens, intrigue and rumor can severely

Our basic addict fear of others, expressed in our antisocial behavior, fades out when we realize the miracle of our having survived an impossible history of conflicts, sabotage and character assassination. The knowledge breeds respect. Somehow we have come through it all and are better off today than we ever were before, regardless of the dark periods. We learn that love is real and that the lies have no power over us unless we give them power by lacking faith. All our personal answers are in the Twelve Steps of N.A. Our group answers are in the Twelve Traditions. We find repeatedly that our growth and continuance always comes from those who don't give up hope, who keep trying to do whatever they can to help another suffering addict. In time this becomes a great comfort to us all, and we get back to the important things like helping another addict stay clean one day at a time.

We find that the service problems generally come from one place: poor priorities. If we are truly putting the needs of some hurting addict ahead of our own, we can't afford to disagree too much. We can settle any differences we have along the lines of common sense, a little prayer and maybe a phone call or two. Our service structure makes sense only when it is a vehicle for helping others. The need for structure should never come ahead of the needs of our members, whom we exist to serve. Our additional needs beyond recovery aren't that important, theirs are. Too often we have found ourselves quibbling over the fine points of parliamentary procedure while our newcomers to service walk out the door shaking their heads and needed services take second place to the concerns of hair-splitting perfectionists. If we stray too far from common sense, we are probably falling into a trap. If our minds could be trusted to carry us beyond the feelings of hopelessness and endless conflict, our Twelve Steps would be written very differently. We rely on daily miracles to stay clean and for the strength to help others. When we find

With recovery comes the temptation to see ourselves as powerful. We can forget who we are, what we are and where we came from unless we stick with the N.A. Program and follow the Steps to the best of our ability. The disease of addiction has had us trapped within ourselves for years, and getting to be a part of society again carries a great emotional impact. Our success in recovery can be seen as our own, especially by non-addicts. They may encourage us to make stands, write articles and make personal appearances which flatter us and make us feel like someone special. A lot of us love the crowd and crave recognition in any form.

"N.A. is a non-profit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem." This sentence from the second chapter of our Book tells us what N.A. is. We maintain our integrity as a fellowship by right of the fact that we stay out of the affairs of any other entity - legal, social or spiritual - as a fellowship. In this way we can stay clean, grow spiritually and help others. To go beyond this, as a Fellowship, would affect first how we feel about recovery and second how others would feel about N.A.

As a spiritual program, N.A. can never be threatened by an outside force. As a Fellowship, we keep up appearances because we want our message to be widely available. Remember, others see us through their eyes, not ours. If we don't represent something worthwhile in their eyes, addicts seeking recovery won't be referred to us. We care about those who are hurting. We are willing to put our best foot forward. We draw the line at compromising our spiritual principles. In the same way, we draw the line at telling other people what we think of them. It can have a negative effect on how others see us, which could limit our effectiveness in carrying the message and rob us of the spiritual aspect of anonymity. We try to keep our priorities straight and are often able to set aside our personal differences. Hopefully,

recovery itself is a miracle. We can't explain it among ourselves, much less to anyone else. In our program, we learn that acceptance works where understanding fails.

When we are asked to answer questions which have nothing to do with N.A., we simply don't answer them. We know that even with the disclaimer "this is just my personal opinion", the chance for misunderstandings is too great. Better to say nothing than risking mistakes which don't need to occur. By doing all this, we keep ourselves and our program out of the public eye. We don't need adverse publicity. We're not selling anything; We're trying to stay clean. As we grow those who need us will increasingly be able to find us. Our public information workers primary task is to help make our message more available without sensationalism or violation of our spiritual aims.

### TRADITION ELEVEN

"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."

As we learn in recovery, hiding from our problems is no way out. Today's escape is tomorrow's pain. They either get worse or recur in our lives. In a spiritual sense, it might be nice if we didn't have to worry about what others thought of us. That doesn't work out very well either. So the choice we have in service is to get out the message that recovery is possible so those who want us can find us without attracting non-addicts who may have other serious problems to deal with. There are others to help them, and sometimes we can help them along but they cannot come ahead of our primary group purpose. In terms of N.A. recovery, there isn't anywhere else we know of for them to go and get help with their addiction. If we discover something of value to addicts

our resources have grown, many old dreams in N.A. have become possible.

If a member or group of members tried to represent us without our express consent, they would be facing a thousand witnesses to the contrary in a day! Our trusted servants only have the power we give them. It is ours to give and ours to withdraw. Our structure is set up so that while a great deal of good can be done, little in the way of money, power or prestige attaches to any one of us.

We are just as concerned about what happens to one of our members who might violate the Eleventh Tradition at a podium or in the media as we are about the trouble we might have to go through to restore our integrity. For us to allow them to be placed in such a situation would be very unloving. They would be bound to think themselves as more equal than others and it would give power to their disease. We have had these troubles in the past. No one knows for sure how much damage to our name arose, maybe only a little. The question we had to ask ourselves was did they stay clean? Too often they did not.

Again, we love all our members and wish harm to none. Anytime we're addressing a large group of people in public, speak as an individual, make it plain that we have no spokesmen and women. If people are interested in N.A. and want to know more about us, we are friendly but draw a line between cooperation and affiliation. If a mishap occurs, it is best if the members involved bring it to the attention of others immediately. Through our unity, a remedy will be found. A letter to the right parties. A statement of disclaimer to the media. Just learning from the error will eliminate the harm which would come from the repetition of the mistake.

others and a lack of concern for rewards. These things support our Traditions and all our service effort.

Until we have some clean time and recovery, we aren't qualified for service. The likelihood that we will see the members in service in personal terms, themselves somehow gifted to set up helplines, distribute literature and chair meetings, is too great. It looks easy, but our experience shows us that our members in service are really miracle workers. We have defects, we lack basic skills and we have trouble getting along with others. Somehow we are guided, we find others who understand our need to help others. They show us that we're not alone in our desire to serve. They share with us the feelings and the miracles they've seen.

We work together and discover that our problems aren't that unusual and that somehow we are able to do the impossible. Our direction comes from some power greater than ourselves, and nothing is wasted. Sometimes we pay a great price, and this gives a certain spiritual value to what we receive. We learn that alone we can do little. There is always someone who will understand and many who can help if they are asked. Sometimes we wait for others to see we are hurting. If we jumped in every time we saw someone hurting, we would become self-styled saviors. If we were to do this, we wouldn't understand one of the functions of anonymity. In most cases, we wait until a member surrenders and is able to ask for help. Also, we have found that it is best to wait for a member to ask for help because otherwise the idea is planted that we can make it without the surrender which makes real help possible. As long as we are fighting, we are helpless. Take up for yourself, don't be a doormat, but lighten up on fellow members who are only trying to help! Our inability to ask for help when we need it is denial and one of the ways the disease isolates us. Sometimes, we wonder if our fellow members really care when they are only practicing their

carrying over our disease into our recovery? The answer to all of these questions is that we are different people clean. Through our anonymity, we are able to shed our former identities as a butterfly sheds its cocoon. In time through our Steps, we make amends where to do so won't cause more harm. Anonymity gives us a chance to lead new lives without other people putting us into the only category they have for addicts: untrustworthy, dishonest and self-seeking. Our shared anonymity gives us a share in the successes of all our clean members. This meets many of our fundamental needs.

When we break this Tradition by taking personal credit or misrepresenting facts about N.A., we run a serious risk of losing the recovery which has given us a new life. Others may have to pay a price for our violation, but we will be the first to pay. We will feel powerful inside and not want to hear those who love us. If we are criticized, we feel personally threatened and find it hard to admit fault. We forget who we are, what we are and where we came from. We forget the patience, love and understanding which kept us coming back. What 'we' do then, is stop doing what we are doing, turn around and come back to the Program of Narcotics Anonymous. We have spiritually lapsed, and through surrender we renew our sense of recovery and go beyond our old limitations. We consider the God of our understanding and how much faith we are able to put into our Higher Power. We decide to let our loving God take charge of our lives again. Though we may be the only one who knows we have done anything wrong, it is important for us to get back on the right track. Just as in the problems we faced getting clean, the problems will drop away one by one until we find ourselves at a point where our egos try to step in. We have learned to say no to our selfishness and yes to surrender and recovery. When we try to go it alone, we fail! When we go along with others, great things are possible. We are anonymous because we can't honestly claim credit for what we didn't do. We didn't get ourselves clean, we can't keep ourselves clean and we can't help others without a Loving God to guide and strengthen us.

### CHAPTER THREE OUR HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

As with the other material contained in this manuscript, changes will be required to insure accuracy of dates and various specifics. These changes can be supplied easily as the material develops by informed members. We have to begin somewhere! Also, examples specific to the topics discussed could be useful as illustrations. Many of our historical episodes are sequences of events played out along similar lines in each community within the Fellowship; i.e., original members get used to stepping out on faith and taking charge through the embryonic local structure. We learn surrender! Similarly, at one or more points, the procedural difficulties will foreshorten or overshadow the service effort completely. We learn balance!

#### EARLY DAYS

N.A. began when the first two addicts seeking recovery got together and found they could stay clean through their common desire. God only knows where and when this occurred. There is a written record of "an organization similar to A.A. which operates among addicts" in 1944. Reference is made to this in Alcohol, Science and Society page 472. The earliest written reference we know of to "Narcotics Anonymous" is from The Addict, page 166 published in 1963 which mentions a founding date of 1948 by Daniel Carlsen in New York City. Articles in the Saturday Evening Post, Newsweek and Time in 1950 and 1951 speak of N.A. spreading to other major cities like Chicago and Los Angeles. More work needs to be done to reference these dates for authenticity and accuracy.

So far no written material from these meetings has surfaced. In time we will know more, but likely the details won't be of great importance since N.A. didn't really begin to grow until the 1970s. What may be of importance to some of us is that the long hard struggle for addicts to be able to live clean lives began some time ago and that many good people have paid a part of the price which has resulted in our being able to live clean today. More than anything else, we are grateful to these men and women. They endured struggles we can only imagine. A



can get a feel for the way to get past the problems and into the solutions.

The founding members in each area have been sincere, willing and open to the needs of others. On the surface they may have appeared crazy, stubborn, self-willed and revolutionary. Still, we know that their desire for recovery and their love for other suffering addicts has to have been behind their every act. Even their mistakes worked out well when they were sincere and willing to admit fault. None were perfect, but the miracle of N.A. is the way we can rise out of our own ashes. They went to great lengths to find or latch onto even one more newcomer. Their personal services backed up the entire service effort in their area. The opportunity to see others recovering helped encourage them, but the real miracle was that they stayed clean. Their lives steadily, if shakily, got better. They established our basic unity of identity, concern and effort. One of their great strengths was the ability to get along with one another in favor of the Fellowship. This lesson was hard won. Many members today have paid this price.

The newcomers added to the numbers of the founders and eventually another meeting got started. When they knew what to do, they elected trusted servants and became groups. This gave members a way to become involved without being accused of "running things." As the number of members grew, the need for some sort of structure made itself evident. There were the inevitable squabbles among members who had no structure. Increasing difficulty in agreeing on basic issues that had more to do with personalities than principles. The problems concerned more who than what and how. Anonymity wasn't yet clearly seen as the underlying principle in all N.A. service. These are problems our structure is designed to deal with along lines indicated by group conscience and within our Twelve Traditions.

our recoveries. Our newcomers were confused enough, and N.A. recovery was finally available. Traveling members helped to weld N.A. communities together. Somehow spiritual principles shared by speakers who were relatively or completely unknown made a lasting impact on members who were able to hear their story from someone who couldn't possibly know them personally. We addicts are a distrustful lot, our need to be sure we aren't being misled or tricked in any way is great.

The reasons for these feelings are dealt with in the course of living our Twelve Steps. Naturally we try to keep everything as simple as possible. We know that the least hint of controversy will harm some of our members. We're willing to go to extraordinary lengths to insure against this happening. To get the personal help needed, most of our members turned sooner or later to the telephone. They could get with other members anywhere and discuss their feelings, their concerns and their hopes.

As our communities have grown, we have reached the point where we are able to stand on our own two feet. Our 'leaders' are sooner or later seen to be simply members who have the love and courage to step out on faith and do what they can. We sort out our problems among ourselves as best we can. We learn sometimes slowly and painfully that we are all in this together and we don't want any of our members turning away from the Fellowship because of hurt feelings or misunderstandings, especially over our efforts to serve.

If we were able to learn from our experience, most of us wouldn't be here. Responsibility is doing the right thing before disaster, not the ability to live to tell the tale. Through surrender and admitting our need for help, we can become teachable. Then it is possible to learn from our mistakes and what others have to offer.

While all these things were going on, as you might imagine, many versions of what was happening grew up. Those who believed that N.A. is a God - given program of recovery from addiction were proved right. All other ways of trying to understand N.A. failed.

#### WORLD SERVICE OFFICE

The communications and distribution center at our WSO made a big difference from its start in the early Seventies. Concerned members could call in or write and get solid information on the Fellowship. As our service structure became a reality in the middle and late Seventies, much of the groundwork for our unity was generated.

In the early 1970s the first World Service Office was formed. It moved among the homes of several members and was sometimes to be found in the back of someone's car. Eventually, it came to be in the homes of one of our members where it stayed until 1981, when it moved to a new office at \_\_\_ Vineland. It was relocated again in 1983 to 16155 Wyandotte Street, Van Nuys, California.

The WSO had many problems getting started and more problems as time went on. The members involved had the task of transforming the idea of an N.A. World Service Office into a reality. Even with the emotional and financial support given them by the growing Fellowship, the job they did was incredible. The effort was entirely volunteer. There were no paid workers until the 1980s.

The main factor in the early 1970s was that there was a stable mailing address at P.O. Box 622 in Sun Valley and a phone number where members could call in to ask for help and information. This was a crucial factor. N.A. began to grow. Literature and group supplies were printed and

members elsewhere have the same problems, controversies and concerns. Much of what is known and what is being revealed to us on a daily basis is shared first on the N.A. phone.

### STRUCTURE

Although there are minutes from the first formative meeting in Sun Valley, structure as we know it in N.A. began with the self-appointment of a group of active members in the early 1960s to form the Board of Trustees. Among the first act of these members was the creation of what became the N.A. White Booklet. They also formed the Parent Service Organization which helped bring people together. By 1970, there were twenty meetings in the world.

One of the biggest needs we had at the time was for some kind of representative service structure. In many area meetings would begin, fold, and begin again. The earliest meetings were called 'rabbit meetings' because they moved so often. We addicts have a need for proper, impartial guidelines to meet our service needs. Personalities may carry us through for a little while, but the service structure allows us to get together on a larger scale without friction and personal difficulties, which come out whenever people are identified with one another without a clear statement of relationship. Among other things, our structure provides for this stable, working relationship. Work on a service structure began in 1973 and was completed in 1975. Though it was regarded as unnecessarily long at the time, it was the first effort of its kind and provided for the kind of structure we have today. It is safe to say that without the N.A. TREE we would have had to wait for some other written structure before we could begin to grow to a great degree. At any rate, the TREE allowed for the WSO, the Board of Trustees, and, for the first time, a World Service Conference where members could come together annually to

seeking recovery, it has always prospered. Where it has gotten lost in procedures and side issues, it has wavered until it got back to our Fifth Tradition of service to the individual.

#### OUR BOOK

Our basic text, *Narcotics Anonymous*, came along in the early Eighties. The effort grew out of the increase in communication with the Fellowship through the WSO and the WSC. As with the WSO, the service structure and the WSC, the WSB was consistent in its support of the effort for our Basic Text. In the course of things, over a thousand of our members had a hand in the writing, editing, compiling and reviewing of our Basic Text. Complete review forms and approval forms were sent to every meeting and group in the world. Funds came from the Fellowship at large and through the structure. Even in this effort, we were able to be self-supporting. There were no professional writers or editors involved in the effort except as members. Our Book, *Narcotics Anonymous*, was written entirely by members like you. From what we know of the pain and frustration of those who have gone before, we are in touch with the miracle of Our Book.

#### TRANSITION

Many times, N.A. got started when addicts seeking recovery started showing up in significant numbers in meetings of other programs. The sense of applying the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous to other problems made sense. Usually, there was support for the meeting from various sources: a hospital, a minister, local A.A. members, and various other sources, family or friends.

Some kind of support was usually present and helped relieve the fear in our founders that they were really on their own. As soon as the WSO was well under way, about 1972, it was possible

that N.A. meetings weren't available. This is no longer true. It used to be said that addicts in recovery couldn't write. This is no longer true. It used to be said that there wasn't enough clean time in N.A. and our members had to seek real answers elsewhere. This is no longer true. All these and more used to be said in all seriousness as if they were unchangeable facts. Members with the courage and faith to open new meetings, write for our Fellowship and work a good program in N.A. have resulted in these changes. More lies ahead. Your part may be yet undone. We want you, we need you and we love you. Through your recovery, you will grow to the point where you have something to offer and you will be the first to benefit. It is the giving that makes us new.

Some of our members get clean and view N.A. and our recovery as a social process, but we know this isn't so. We understand that it may look social, but becoming sociable requires changed personalities. The sometimes silent love which holds us together seeks no acknowledgment. We are an anonymous program of recovery from addiction. The only parts which are visible to the world are the parts which are not anonymous. This means less than the tip of the iceberg is showing what it really takes to get clean or stay clean. We spend literally hundreds of hours, each one of us, going to meetings, reading literature and helping others as we discover recovery. Multiply our own personal experience by our hundreds of thousands of members, and a glimpse of the truth may be seen. When we really get the spirit of service, we often find ourselves doing the impossible. We know that some loving Higher Power is guiding and directing our every move. There is no way to account for our program of recovery in worldly terms.

Strangely, the younger communities carried a spirit of love and dedication far beyond what you might expect in much larger communities. The smaller communities were not hampered by precedent and quite open to current events. They were better

When these periods of apathy and stagnation occur, Twelfth Step work falls off, active support of a home group seems like a rut and interest in what the rest of the Fellowship is doing falls off. The number of members involved in service shrinks to a few. Somehow, the essential services get done.

One possible explanation for this seems to be the fact that when members get serious about working their programs and helping others, the local Fellowship is going to be attractive and grow. As it grows, more and more newcomers fill the room to overflowing. The new people bring with them their assorted character traits. As their numbers build past a point, the attraction seems to fall off a bit. There is a "thinning" effect as far as recovery goes. This is good because many addicts get clean or at least introduced to the program but they may miss out on some of the spiritual principles essential to recovery. They may associate the actions and confusion of other newcomers as representing N.A. recovery. As mentioned elsewhere, it is all too easy to see the program as a social club. Unless a member's respect for the disease of addiction and their desire for recovery is great, they may look no further than the surface. Many of our conventions and activities represent our attempt to bring into clear focus the spiritual nature of our Program. We do what we can.

#### SUMMARY

Still, for all the problems and concerns we are grateful. We remember all too well the dying times. 'Just For Today' means more to us as we accumulate 'clean time'. We learn that it is easy to get out of our time frame. We get caught up, again and again, in our personal viewpoints, our friends and our personal experience of N.A. It is important to remember that no matter how much we think we have learned, there is always more out there. Only our disease would come up with the cruel trick of mind that would have us believe that we have heard it all, seen

in taking the 'easy way' out, letting others do what we should be doing. This 'easy way' can be a step back from recovery.

Bear in mind that these statements do not relate to N.A. service work alone. Service efforts are entirely dependent on the Fellowship and the community. There seems to be no sense in doing a lot of P.I. work if there are only a few meetings to attend. The real strength of N.A. shows up when newcomers are getting rides to meetings, members who care enough to take time and share what the program has given them. The countless hours spent in conversation, one on ones and on telephones are very necessary for our newcomers to have a chance to find our way of life. The literature and the meetings alone can only point the way to the recovery which takes place in this sharing. Personal service is the 'bottom line' of our service effort. Without it, the rest of our promises would have a hollow ring.

When we get to the program, it's like a drowning person finding the shore. We dry off and walk around, hugging the people and glad to be alive. After a while the memory of the gasping for just one more breath fades. This is just when we need to be reminded, in terms of controlled using, we can't swim. If we forget or won't hear those who would help us, we will often find ourselves in over our heads again.

The main thing our history can offer us is a picture of the growth and fun we can have when we're following the Twelve Steps and Traditions of N.A. Our history can also show us how quickly we can lose what we have found if we aren't grateful. This is no weakness of the Program. It is our foolishness which tells us we can make it alone. We have all been lost souls, and N.A. gives us a crash course in spirituality which is as necessary to people with our disease as oxygen is to a dying patient. We need the feeling we get from N.A. as much as a drowning person needs air. As we grow, we are learning to share more about



information constantly with other members, whether they are in small new communities or large established areas and regions. Increasingly, meetings are springing up overseas as well as in the United States and Canada. Today, our message is being carried not only in the large cities, but the smaller communities as well. We look to the day when our message penetrates to those of us who live in Asia, Africa, Russia, the Middle East and South America. God willing, a way will be made to get past any barriers "that no addict anywhere need die, never knowing help is possible."

Our service structure could not exist without a written form. Our members have an intuitive understanding for these things and can set up a committee themselves. Our groups and our service make us into "somebody." We need the Manual to keep it clear that we are surrendered and not trying to 'boss' one another. We will tolerate much from each other, but none of us likes to feel bossed. We need a written way of understanding the relationships among the various service arms so we can do our part without denying the same opportunity to other members. This helps keep our groups and service committees open to our greatest resource - our members.

Our service structure has evolved as a fact, not a theory. It is based on what works and actually happens instead of ideas. The parts of our structure which are new go through a process of projection through written guidelines. These initial projections are then tried out. Where they work to the satisfaction of the Fellowship, they are adopted into the service structure. Where they fall short, they are improved or discarded. The needs of our people are more important than what can be put on paper.

What our service structure cannot do is get an addict clean. It takes members who care to serve the needs of addicts seeking recovery. The structure itself is a collection of functions which support and make available the message that our way of life is possible.

As in other chapters, this material is for members in service who need insight into the unwritten customs of service. Just as N.A. recovery had to precede the formulation of our Basic Text, *Narcotics Anonymous*, so our service effort had to reach a certain degree of completion before there was any way to write it down. Similarly, what can be written can

Recovery can step in and help us let go of our feelings but if we feel our recovery is threatened by what we see as happening - what then? Whatever appears to be happening, even if someone really is busting up our home group, we can still get with other members and start another group. If they really are out of line, they will eventually need help. We pray to be ready and available when the time comes. We can do any good thing clean. What we can't do is use drugs in any form, and sometimes our grave concerns are more a threat to our recovery than any outside force could be. When members who should be combining their efforts choose to fight, they hurt each other and those they love. If each surrenders, the spirit of anonymity prevails. If just one surrenders, there can be no contest. We can't afford to be dead right about anything.

As far as the structure itself is concerned, we see our proper role as servants who carry out the services our members want. Unless the servant is directly responsible, the committee can never be. We, in and of ourselves, are nothing as far as service goes. The Program works, not our own great wisdom and not so great experience. We can do our homework. We can read the paperwork which comes our way. We can ask others when we don't understand. We can do our best to stay positive. As difficult as these things are to do sometimes, the payoff is in realizing our new-found capacity to stay in the solution and not get caught up in the problem.

Mental growth raises us from one level of ignorance to another. None of us ever knows it all. Whatever we think we know is subject to review and revision. So, we stay positive. If it gets too rough for us personally, we detach from it. If there is a real problem going on, we can benefit from the rest and go at it afresh on another day. If not, at least we didn't carry it any further.

self-will only to find we have been wasting our time in futile concerns. The fear we felt encourages us to ask for help. This opens our minds and keeps us willing to learn from those who have gone before.

In N.A., we have found something unique and special to us addicts. We can help others like ourselves. Whether this help takes the form of good old-fashioned 'mushy' love or tough loving honesty, it is still the common denominator which binds us together in recovery. It's what a loving Spirit has given us that we can each do in our own way to help another and offset the hopelessness and despair we have known. We all share in these good feelings. We have paid the price through our pain and suffering. When we discover this river of love, we can follow it to its source. For many of us, this is how we found our Higher Power.

We have had to spend a lot of time surrendering to the principles and successful experiences which can serve us as guides. It hasn't been at all easy. In the course of learning all we could from written material and through discussion and workshops, we still had to pray for strength and guidance on a daily basis or more. A service effort undertaken without prayer and surrender is bound to fail. We don't do it, the God of our understanding does. We are only the instruments giving it our personal best. We all fall short of the goals we set for ourselves. If we see ourselves as the doers, the pain is unbearable when we fall short. If we can learn to accept the honest truth that we are addicts with an incurable, terminal, progressive disease, we have a chance of doing a great deal of good. Fortunately, we have found that our Higher Power is able to work with some pretty dull instruments. Somehow, things keep coming out better than before at any given point. We have to train ourselves to look for these truths. They don't come naturally and, left to chance, may not come at

In the technical terms of structural service, we simply follow the written forms. There is always a way for us to achieve our good goals through the structure. A lot of valuable time and energy has been wasted in bickering over technicalities. When this is going on, stand up for your program. Speak to the love. Speak your feelings. Get back to the principle of N.A., which is helping others. When we look for the differences, we will find differences in depressing abundance. When we look for our similarities, we will feel peace and comfort. The disease of addiction would oppose this. When your committee is busy doing its work, the feeling is that of being a part of something good and worthwhile. When the members are contesting and controlling, the feeling is that manipulation and control are necessary to prevent chaos and disorder from prevailing. If service doesn't feel good, our members won't support it. If what is called service is centered around the goals and purposes of only a few, it won't feel good to the others. Eventually it won't feel good even for the few. The good feelings we experience from helping others aren't selfish. They bring us closer to each other and to the God of our understanding.

Part of the reason for this material is to give us a focus for the realities of N.A. service. When the disease is on us, our members get frightened and try to resort to the Service Manual as a rule book instead of a guide to way it can be done. We learn that when we have to take refuge in rules and justifications, something is terribly wrong. Go with the loving spirit and you will never be alone. Let yourself slip into the ways of authority and control, and you know what will happen - you are building the base for your future pain and disillusionment. We learn to depend on our spiritual growth rather than on our mental perception or emotional reactions, which may or may not be based in reality. Of all people, it is safe to say of us, we have often made fools of ourselves with the greatest of conviction.

way and each falls short in some way. It sometimes takes a long time for us to see these things but they are the truth which underlies our structure. Some of us are flamboyant and colorful, others work quietly. The cautious check the otherwise unbounded enthusiasm of the eager. All play a role which is essential to the whole.

In time we may settle down, realize at a deeper level the ties which bind us together, and put our energy into fighting addiction which is our real enemy. When we can be grateful for the good in our lives and work with others to mend the wrongs we do, we will discover that there is much to do and all are equally important and equally needed. The strength of our structure is that it is designed to include as many members as possible. What may appear to others to be a lack of organization is really our freedom.

Each one of us has the right to start a meeting which can encourage a group to develop. We can work with other groups and start a helpline, write material for the Fellowship, or work to minimize problems of policy and finance within our structure. Our groups can sponsor H. & I. meetings. We help put on activities, serve on committees and do many things with our freedom. If we don't do something, we miss the opportunity and others will have to do without what we alone might best be able to contribute. Each of us has a unique contribution to make. Generally it is true that if we see a problem, we can act to help correct it. If we don't, it may be a while before another is able to see the same difficulty and pray for the strength and guidance to help. This is our freedom and our opportunity. The structure gives us access to other members working along similar lines. We may at times be resources to them or they can be a resource to us. Either way, we work toward common goals.

## CHAPTER FIVE SERVICE PROCEDURES

N.A. is a spiritual, not religious, program. Our service structure is also spiritual in nature. Many of our members know what it is like to walk out of a service committee meeting with a smile on their face and a good feeling in their heart. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Because we are constantly learning about the nature of recovery and giving, we can sometimes get caught up in trivial matters.

We have adapted some of the tokens of organization to lend dignity and order to our service effort. When we take the rules more seriously than we take the purpose of our service effort, we just about always experience some sort of pain. We ask ourselves, "Why am I here? I could be out helping some sick addict instead of sitting in this dumb service committee!" Most of us have had this feeling. In this material, hopefully, our sharing will result in a more surrendered, more effective and less tedious look at the procedures which we have adapted for our convenience.

Procedures are important. They can make a difference for better or worse. Still, they should never be seen as a solution or answer in themselves. More paper has been wasted trying to write guidelines, which were really rules for others to follow, than we like to think about. The trouble with this approach is that we're all addicts, and if we don't like the guidelines, we tend to change them instead of give them a chance to help us! Our instinctive dread of authority gives rise to fear. We forget the wisdom we can discover in the hard-won efforts of predecessors to pass on to us what they learned the hard way. Our tendency is to imagine that we, too, must learn the hard way. Once we get past this form of self-

none of our trusted servants ever effected any real improvement for us without our active support and participation.

Our service structure is not a power structure. Other organizations we have known, studied or participated in may give us misleading ideas about what we think is going on in our N.A. service structure. This is not the military, a corporate structure or a political organization. A successful trusted servant is someone who has stayed clean, done a good job for the Fellowship and feels good about it. Our service positions are not power bases. It is more the function than the title which counts. When they are able to a good job for us, we all benefit. If a member goes slack and is unable to fulfill their service commitment, we don't hate them. Only a sick group needs a scapegoat. They may be going through a difficult period in their recovery. We love them and look for ways to help. We take care of our own.

Who else can we turn to for help if we make a mistake? Are we responsible or, is the group conscience which put us in the service position? Do we rescue a member in trouble or drive them away? This type of problem may make everyone a little uncomfortable because it is one of the areas we've found most difficult to deal with. Our instincts tell us to stop the wrong doing and punish the wrongdoer in some way. Is this spiritual? Is this the best we can offer our members in difficulty? It is well to remember that when it is our turn, and we are the ones who are hurting, those who help us will not only gain our lasting gratitude but will be maintaining the message of N.A. Most of these problems have occurred during periods of rapid growth, where newcomers to service as well as N.A were put in positions of trust where they failed to meet clean time and service experience requirements. It was assumed by the group that they could do the job, and when they fell on their faces, the group was too inexperienced to step in and help set things right. The correct procedure here is for the group to remember who



They intuitively know when something is to their liking or not. We have learned to trust and respect their guidance in all matters which directly affect them. Some things are clearly established in group conscience. How we do our H&I work, for instance. How we avoid piling up money in service committees which was intended to go to help addicts seeking recovery, not just sit in a bank account. It has been clearly established that we pass the funds on through our service structure to prevent the problems which can arise when we don't. Many examples can be given of things which have been clearly considered by group conscience and resolved to everyone's satisfaction. These things are done routinely by our service committees and set forth in our N.A. Service Manual. Other things need to be presented to the Fellowship for their conscience. This is common sense and avoids asking the groups the same questions repeatedly and distracting the groups from their main job of carrying our message.

Changes from what our members have been led to expect and any particular items which our servants want to have clarified need to be presented by the appropriate level of the N.A. service structure. Things which affect members in an area go to that area. Matters which affect or concern a region go to the region affected. Items and issues which affect the whole Fellowship go to World Services. Our World Service Conference sends out information and requests for group conscience to the entire Fellowship through our regions. Our World Service Office sends out a monthly letter to many members throughout the Fellowship, keeping our members informed and sometimes presenting questions which require group conscience. In these ways we honor our Second Tradition, which insures that our Ultimate Authority is a Loving God as expressed in group conscience.

willing to set aside our personal differences. As we come to understand the strength of anonymous principles, this will be easier to do and we can get the feeling we're looking for.

First, it needs to be understood that our service procedures, like the rest of our spiritual Fellowship, represent a 'special case' situation. Every possible thing has been done to simplify our structure and our procedures. Our disease results in our suffering from an ingrained tendency to complicate and create crisis. We can do this with ease, if our disease takes over. Even with this emphasis on surrender and simplicity, most of us experience some difficulty dealing with our feelings. We set ourselves up to get hurt and then blame others. We get past these problems with the help of our sponsors, our home groups, studying the literature and getting with other members who seem to understand how we feel. Remember, just like in the rest of our recoveries, the things we tend to worry about tend not to happen. If they do, we discover that the harm we supposed would follow, fails to happen. This is why we emphasize doing our part and leaving the miracles to the God of our understanding.

These matters need to be dealt with in our Twelve Steps of recovery. Until we can honestly claim the relief and comfort which comes only through recovery, we will be plagued with the effects of our illness, which will affect every part of our lives, including our service. The reason the Traditions keep coming up is that they affect the way we feel and act in regard to our program of Narcotics Anonymous.

We as a Fellowship will always be subject to some of our members who are either unable or unwilling to see our services as the result of loving dedication and gratitude. They are not to blame. We have shared their feelings of concern and isolation. At some point, we were able to surrender a little more to the fact that we really are 'all in this together'

giving them trust. Only individuals can carry out the thousands of acts of love and concern which make our promise of recovery from addiction in Narcotics Anonymous a reality.

### FREEDOM

After we have been clean for a while and feel a readiness to serve, we become aware of the tremendous freedom we enjoy in N.A. Any member can start an N.A. meeting. We can get on a service committee where there are other members already serving in H&I work, literature, public information or other forms of service. Many of our new members have dreamed of something good for N.A. when they first got clean, only to have their dreams come true in the course of recovery. Such dreams can be a motivating force for us in recovery if we are able to realize that the bigger the miracle, the more time it takes. We learn to work the program before we can work for the program.

What works for us may be similar to what works for others - very similar. Still, not knowing enough about what works for others can result in confusion at times. We forget we can all be right, even if we do see things or do things a little differently. These differences have no power if we can remember the principle of anonymity and what we have in common: the disease of addiction. Though we may take difference directions, we all come from the same place.

Many forms of service and service procedures seem to bring out our differences of opinion; therefore, our similarities need to be emphasized regularly. A few well-placed jokes can dispel tension when a group is getting too serious. We bear in mind that these forms of service can never replace the crucial services we provide one another in personal services. Our groups depend on concerned

membership. In many ways our service is to those who may not even know N.A. recovery exists or that they might be addicts. Still, the resources to carry the N.A. message are in the Fellowship, and we can't get far without them.

It may be important to consider the difference between the goals we set ourselves and the methods we come up with to achieve those goals. What we do is a matter of group conscience. How we do it has more to do with N.A. clean time and service experience. We depend on our membership to direct the affairs of N.A., but we depend on our members with successful experience for the strength and guidance to get things done the N.A. way. Most of the 'how' is set forth in our service structure. When we are unclear, we call or write our World Service Conference, our World Service Office or our World Service Board of Trustees.

Any new service procedures must pass a crucial test: Will they be accepted and put into practice by our members? New services suffer from 'blind alley' procedures which may be great ideas but fail to carry our message or make sense enough for our members to apply them effectively. Established services have well-worn guidelines to help us past the rough spots. Following the guidelines can be quite a personality change for most of us, but we want be able to give as well as we've received.

Whenever we can reach and respond to the hearts of our people, group conscience gives us the best strength and guidance we know how to get. When we get drawn off into opinions and conflicts, the solutions we seek have to wait. When we practice spiritual maintenance, we have something to offer the groups we attend, and this includes our attendance at service committees.

## SERVICE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

We open our service meetings with the "Serenity Prayer", followed by readings from N.A. literature, including our Twelve Traditions. The Chairperson has the secretary read the minutes of the last meeting for corrections. After the minutes are approved, the treasurer gives a report. Next, the representatives report their activities and concerns to the members present. They include both the representatives of the service committee itself as well as the representatives of member groups, areas or regions. The subcommittees which function as extensions of the service committee and are dependent on the service committee for direction and support, report next. The effectiveness of the service committee is directly related to its subcommittees. If a service committee does something out of subcommittee, it is done in administration. In other words, the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer have to do the additional work until a sub-committee can be formed. It is better for them to do this than for our members to do without the needed services.

The last reports given come from the groups, areas or regions. This is for several reasons. One reason is that the members present are usually very attentive at this point in the meeting. The preceding reports build to these reports. The effectiveness of the service effort is reflected in how the member groups, areas or regions are doing.

If attendance is poor, it generally means one of three things:

- 1) That the members feel the service committee is ineffectual, in which case they are usually out doing their best in other ways to attend the meetings and give personal service to those in need, or

force' of a particular service committee, these motions with their dates are listed separately and given to attending members.

The final item of business is the announcement of various activities, events, meetings needing help and anything else involving N.A. members, meetings or services. Listing these items at the end of the minutes can help with the reports of attending members to their groups, areas or regions.

The meeting is closed with a prayer.

#### GROUP CONSCIENCE

Group consciousness is a term which has been confused with conscience, which is much more. The word 'conscience' implies something spiritual in terms of feeling. Our Twelve Steps lead us from a world of pain and confusion into a new life in which we are able to live clean at peace with ourselves and others. We learn to make spiritual contact with a "Power greater than ourselves" which gives us a sure and certain conscience.

Perhaps the easiest way to understand these principles is to ask ourselves, "What would the God of my understanding want me to do about this?" If we feel a definite answer, it comes from our 'conscience.' Generally, our conscience is the best we have to offer. Consciousness is great for work and going about the simple matters of living, but periodic consciousness never kept any of us clean. If we are clean today, it is the result of someone giving us the best they had to offer, and it is this best we try to pass on to others.

In Narcotics Anonymous, we try to gauge group conscience on many things. Sometimes, the groups will respond clearly and sometimes not. A 'muddy' response is usually the result

Clean-time requirements as well as clear descriptions of the duties of various offices are contained in the Service Manual also. Subcommittee guidelines address the particular functions and responsibilities of its participants, officers and sub-committees.

Elections have been particularly vulnerable to problems of personalities creeping into our service effort. Whenever we worry more about 'who' is doing a job more than 'what' is getting done, we have problems. Our humanity, our disease and our inexperience with successful action in group efforts of any kind make it certain that we will go through some of these problems sometime. Acceptance can help here. The principle of the Twelfth Tradition can be our guide.

We are anonymous and free to grow spiritually. We are guided by principles which include honesty, openmindedness and willingness. When we return to these principles, we again feel the relief from personal stress which we knew as newcomers. When we think, "What can I do to help?", we will be guided. When we think, "I don't like that so and so", we have forgotten all about spiritual principles and the addict who still suffers. We have slipped into personalities over principles and should stop, turn around and come back to our senses. A little humor can help. We really are good at messing things up. The miracle comes back into view when we realize how much of this sort of thing we have survived as a Fellowship.

You are well advised to keep your elections simple and direct. Less time should be spent on elections than on serving.

Humor, prayer and common sense should apply to all our efforts to serve. We are difficult people at best, and in service we try to give our best. We will always fall short

## CHAPTER SIX OUR SERVICE EFFORT

The service effort within N.A. was initiated when the first addict reached out to help another to stay clean. From uncertain origins in the Forties and Fifties, a few meetings in Southern California held together clean addicts living a program similar to what we know today.

Reports on N.A. origins document beginnings in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. The most important were in July of 1953. Rising above conflicts, we are grateful to all who have helped made our recoveries possible. We can only imagine their agony. In particular, we are sad for those who died never knowing their dream of a clean life for themselves and others would come true someday.

To understand our service effort, begin with where you live. The people who helped found N.A. in your area had tremendous courage. However damaged they were by their disease, they made time to help get meetings started, had the courage to hang in their when personalities cropped up, and surrendered enough of their personal preferences to get along with others who had the same vision. Few were perfect, and mistakes were made. All were forgiven in time. Our recovery process makes self-discovery possible and allows for self-correction. We are more concerned with keeping our meetings open to all who seek relief from addiction than we are with imposing rules and negative sanctions on our members. After all, who among us is not enjoying today a marvelous testament to the wonders of mercy? Thank God we get mercy and not blind justice.



serve on and staff our entire service effort worldwide. They are members who care about N.A. and want to help in some way. Many times their loving concern leads to attachment and pain when they fall short. They endure this pain and continue to do what they can partly out of gratitude and partly out of an intense need to play an active role in something they see as good. They repeatedly attempt to establish helplines, set up literature committees and get our message into institutions and hospitals where we cannot otherwise go. The phone calls, hours and hours of study and talk, wear and tear on our automobiles, and sometimes damage to our personal lives pay off when they see a bunch of newcomers chattering away over the Steps or the need to adhere to our Traditions. We are powerless in the beginning and remain powerless today. However, when we join what we have to the resources of others, the chain reaction allows us to go far beyond what would be possible for one alone.

Our service effort is based in large part on this principle: Like-thinking people in many places at many times can produce a positive effect in terms of recognition of recovery and acknowledgment of N.A. as a proven program of recovery from addiction. All our program is based on this one simple fact: Recovery exists only for those who want it and believe it to be possible. Otherwise we would get tired or bored and wander off into the fog of our previous existence. We have learned a way out, and we can teach it to others if they have paid the price of pain required for an open mind, a certain willingness and a measure of honesty. Whatever good we have in us can grow, and whatever fear and doubt can be replaced with new ideas and good feelings. As we grow as a program, we become somewhat more secure in our recovery. We help create a crowd we can safely get lost in. Our anonymity is assured the more of us there are. The disease is less able to create the fear, doubt and confusion it needs to mask itself in

Easing the way for others is a lot of what our service effort is all about. We want it to be easy for a suffering addict to find out N.A. exists. We want our new meetings to have literature and group supplies available, as well as a few experienced members to attend and help keep an atmosphere of recovery established for the meeting. We want our members to have a say in what is done in their name. We want our activities to be free from any outside issues or potential conflicts. These things and many others are done in the name of N.A. service. Sometimes the difficulties seem overwhelming and we are tempted to stop doing our part. In truth, our part is usually extremely easy. The most important part is not giving into our disease and thinking badly of others. If we do this and stop doing our part to help further the solution, we experience despair and so do those who look to us for solutions instead of problems.

We cannot prevent totally some of the problems members may have, but we have learned through painful experience that we have to stand close to them and try to give them the emotional support, affection and resources we were given if our experience has been good. People studying automobiles could probably learn all there is to know about the subject by disassembling and examining the parts of cars, new and old. The trouble with this approach to service work is that in N.A. we are dealing with a living thing. If someone gets into a service position without learning all the routine chores, which consist of calling, corresponding, learning how different service needs are met through our area, regional and world services, they have no choice but to proceed without having any idea of the important parts they are leaving out. When they have difficulty, they don't realize how easy it is to get help and how procedurally correct it is to ask for help. They try to brave it out and spend their time struggling with their egos when they could be getting on with it. Service consists of carrying out a

## CHAPTER SEVEN TRUSTED SERVANTS

The honor and privilege of serving N.A. in some capacity is extended to every member. Through doing N.A. service, we have found that we get to go through things clean and learn on the personal level many things which would never come up in the ordinary course of our lives. Many of us have found that our learning has resulted in a vastly improved ability to live life on life's terms. We apparently have to be willing to do what we can to help others with no thought of self and only the primary purpose of our groups and our own personal Twelfth Step in mind. The group and its purpose of carrying our message of recovery is the natural result of the combined Twelfth Step of several members. Willing participants in service at all levels are exponents of the Twelfth Step and the primary purpose of our groups.

The concept of 'trusted servant' is important because it allows us to give our surrendered best to the services we offer others. This can be important to us because our addiction, even in an arrested state, is liable to reach out and justify our attempting to take control again and do for others what we need to be doing for ourselves. The real truth is that we find that service doesn't make us feel good unless we are servants worthy of trust.

The strength of our Fellowship lies in our ability to surrender ourselves totally in those areas of our lives where we find that we are powerless and just as thoroughly work diligently and patiently toward discovering and acting on the things we can do to help ourselves and others. This is a simple way to understand a truth so obvious that we have difficulty seeing it, especially when we desperately

Whether you go to this trouble or not, the truth is that we have had a lot of times where our services have just about gotten shut down. No one knows the exact reason for this. A reasonable guess is that we can only take so much change and that sometimes our service efforts have jumped ahead of what the average member can keep up with. We just have to wait for things to settle down again. A lot of times egos and feelings of envy or hatred have played roles. This is unfortunate, but true.

Through giving, we get the law of recompense to work in our favor. This spiritual principle has been clothed in many phrases and languages and spans the history of mankind. It simply means we get back what we give out as a sort of reflection of what is in our hearts. Addiction as a classic case of impulse gone wrong, it is easy for us to get confused in a sea of conflicting sensory information. We feel good when things are going badly; we feel comfortable in confusion. Worse, in time we require confusion as a part of our existence. We use the raw material of our lives to manufacture confusion to mask our fears and promote what we see as control, which is only our setting ourselves apart from the process called life.

In days now gone by, we had no substantial body of literature and most of what we knew about a subject came to us through individuals. While these individuals were almost always conscientious and tried to pass on what they had learned with as little personal interpretation as possible, differences were inevitable. Without a written reference, it often seemed that everyone was making up their own script, as indeed they were due to the unavailability of written material. The good they had to offer has survived and can be read in the words of our N.A. Basic Text and the N.A. Service Manual. Studying these with some idea of the tremendous difficulties in getting members to agree on the written forms,

to win. If we fight those we should be working with, we are only being self-destructive and laying groundwork for our future pain.

If we fight, those who might otherwise benefit from our efforts suffer. We can't really get anything out of 'victories' over one another. We are only trusted to serve the will of our groups. They elect us, support us and expect us to do things with the support we get to help those who suffer from our disease. Addicts seeking recovery may not otherwise know we exist, where our meetings are, or even get our message if they come to the program seeking help.

We know the disease of addiction well enough to acknowledge that the disease will seek out and exploit any opportunity to turn us against one another. Sometimes, when we get our feelings hurt, we might do well to imagine how the shoe feels on the other foot. Just as we may feel our efforts to serve are misunderstood by others, so we may misunderstand where they may be coming from, when their dreams are at stake. If the disease can't get us down, it may try to get us up. Somehow, when we are being critical of others, we can feel invulnerable to criticism. Many of us have benefited from watching attentively when things seem to be going badly, to learn how to avoid future problems. We see members puff and strut their brief hours upon the stage and know well their fear. In time we outgrow our need to take sides, at least where divisions within the Fellowship seem to be occurring. We learn to side with N.A. and the needs of those who are still suffering. We abide by the Twelve Traditions, knowing that we can only cause harm to ourselves and those we truly love by infringing on the right to recovery of others. Nothing in service can be sadder than watching members who have everything to be grateful for drawing imaginary lines and contending among themselves, as if some human power were capable of running the show. The harm wreaked by the few is amended by the many

Sometimes great and lasting emotional and spiritual damage is done when members lose themselves in the heat of the moment and say or do things which may never be fully amended. Of course, the remedy is simple; a little honesty, a little admission of fault. But so often we have seen members divide themselves over issues where there is no one willing or able to step in and make the peace. Members who really have a lot in common wind up split when they should be together. Many times it is the member who believes themselves to be in the right who must make the first move towards reconciliation because, being in the right grants them the liberty to feel as if they have nothing to lose from contact. Whereas the others member or members may fear admitting failure for all the usual inappropriate reasons. It shouldn't matter if we're really surrendered to the disease which is so notoriously able to create conflict out of imaginary substance.

One of the most important points which needs to be made in this material is that none of us is given the right to indulge ourselves in senseless controversy by group conscience. The reason we consistently characterize ourselves as 'trusted servants' is to remind ourselves that servants don't engage in such matters. They serve.

#### THE FEELING

Within us all is a need to feel worthwhile and appreciated. In N.A., one way we get this feeling is through service. First we have to learn the lessons of surrender, letting go of outcomes and paying attention to God's Will. Without these lessons there is no way we will be free of the preconceptions which we all bring with us into the Program from our past experiences.

It used to be that such problems were inconceivable. We were a young Fellowship everywhere and just too glad to be a part of the miracle to imagine the difficulties which might come with our growth. Good things happened and seemed to fall in our laps. As we grow, however, our numbers increase to the point where some of the social demands must be met and dealt with successfully for us to go on.

We are able to respond to the needs of addicts seeking recovery in N.A. We report to the other trusted servants who support us in our service efforts. Generally, we get support in direct proportion to our willingness and ability to give support. We are responsible to those we serve in terms of needful people as well as the service committee of which we are a part. It would be nice if there were never any conflict between the two. Where conflict arises, it is sometimes possible to hang in there and be as honest as we possibly can about the facts and our feelings. There are times when a resolution is not possible and we have to make other arrangements. If you are sincere about your desire to serve, a way will always be open for you. You may have to be reminded in some way of your addiction and open your mind a little to see it, but we know it is always there. Just as there is plenty of suffering, there is plenty of need for service.

#### THE ESSENCE

We come to a place where we are between having someone direct to turn to for our exact answer and acting on our own recognizance with mainly our literature, our prayer and meditation and our N.A. experience to guide us and those who turn to us. If discovery is a big part of recovery, we will break some new ground ourselves. This is in part where what we have to offer in N.A. has come from. It comes down to what we ourselves want to do and see as possible to help others.

For us as surrendered trusted servants of N.A. to be guided by a loving group conscience, we need to consider a few items. Groups can make mistakes. They can be misinformed, overwhelmed by the question, or under the influence of a personality who makes personal expression impossible. As trusted servants, we have a duty to ourselves as well as our members to keep them informed and up to date on any matters which are likely to matter to them or us at some point. This is important to prevent ourselves from being caught up in a dilemma as to where our responsibility lies: with the suffering addict or with the group we serve.

When these things are kept simple and clearly defined, everything is easy and works out well. When our members get drawn into personality struggles or asked for directions on matters which go beyond their knowledge, experience or concern, the expected problems arise.

Leaders of various sorts must be cultivated and nourished for us to have stability and order. No one is in charge of these occurrences, they just happen whenever a large group of people get together. Our Twelve Traditions keep these members from becoming bosses, but the fact remains we all have those we look to for strength and guidance. Our service structure is usually, but not always, the framework which allows these members to be of maximum service. A lot of confusion exists over the nature of our leaders in N.A. The situation is complicated by our disease, our need for anonymity and an unclear picture of the difference between a 'leader' and a 'governor.' A leader has to be able to demonstrate some ability which attracts the support of members who see value in that ability. A governor depends on position and title for support. A leader may have a following if one is needed beyond simple service requirements. A governor has a following by right of title and position. The governed have little voice and no alternative short of discounting the system



**CHAPTER EIGHT**  
**-ONGOING SERVICE-**  
**THE SERVICE CONTINUUM**

We have a choice of continuing service by the seat of our pants - each newly elected chair starting from scratch - or we can have continuity of service - each new chair building on the past and getting better. We learn to live our program a day at a time, and we learn to do service just the same way. By following the service structure of Narcotics Anonymous, abiding by the N.A. Twelve Traditions, and putting to work the very same spiritual principles which have revolutionized the rest of our lives, we become capable of doing good, selfless service. Continuity saves time and insures that our contribution will have a chance of enduring to the benefit of those we serve. We realize that if we expect to pass on some day the learnings we gain in service, we need to set the process in motion by doing our best to be good listeners: we give someone who has gone before us the chance to pass what they have learned on to us. That way, when our time comes to move on in service and recovery, we will be familiar with the feelings of giving and receiving which are so necessary for us to have when we are truly learning or truly giving.

We need a quiet place in which to grow and recover. We need the spirit and enthusiasm which will only come out when we are among ourselves. No one understands the miracle of N.A. We just know it works. It doesn't work, though, where members are more concerned about fighting personal battles; that's just the disease. When this occurs with any frequency, another meeting is often opened which can offer what we need to stay clean: a meeting of addicts, seeking recovery, free of the things which would interrupt the process of a meeting or break the flow of communication when we share our real feelings with others like ourselves.

If you have a lot of material, it is recommended that you make copies of the material either for the new chair or for your personal records, with or without your service committee footing the bill. If you really want the service effort you have been a part of establishing or maintaining to continue, you will see the sense of this. The new chair won't really feel like much has gone before unless they have written records. Only you can do this. Also, in passing these materials on, you will build in a chance to have a detailed discussion with them which will be at least one opportunity to give them a feel for their service position. Maybe they have a lot of clean time and service experience; many do not. In any event, if all goes well, you may find yourself in a position to be something of an ongoing resource and a person to be called in if there are any difficulties in the transition from one chairperson to the next. If we have not already been active in the committee we are elected to chair, we will face certain problems. One of the questions we need to ask ourselves is why wasn't a member who has direct personal experience elected? Is the committee composed of active members, or is it just an active member serving under the banner of their service title?

When we spend time with a member who has been the former chair to get familiar with what the committee has been doing, we are denying our disease a chance for us to become important in an unhealthy way. The enemy of recovery is the sick need to feel powerful. We are being 'anonymous' in the sense that we are setting our personal preferences to the side and really hearing out another person who may have a great deal to offer if we are going to be trying to do our best. When we do our best to serve the interests of those who look to us for help, we are being anonymous, and when we are willing to help others who are carrying on the work, we are being anonymous. If at any one of these three stages we think we know better than anyone else what is going on, we have

filing box or cabinet if you don't already have one. Get file folders and a notebook to keep your records straight. This will be good staging and a way to let yourself know you are serious about living up to your service commitment. Most of us know about the feelings we get when we get behind on something like this. First, you can usually get someone to come by and help restore order if your files get out of hand. You might just need the presence of another member to help motivate yourself. Second, people who deal with paperwork a lot share with us the fact that they set things up in an orderly fashion so that they only have to set papers in the correct file folder as they receive them and can review the groups of material when they need to. They don't live with a great emotional obsession to keep their records straight. Through luck or some prior learning experience, they have simply learned that they can do this, count on it and it will work. One of the great things about recovery and service is that by learning some of these simple things ourselves, we benefit in the rest of our lives. Third, have a special place where you put papers you have to respond to in some way. That way you can set aside some time to make the response without having to worry if everything is in one place or not. These things are simple when done correctly. Ask for help if you are one of the vast majority of people who don't ordinarily have to deal with these things. You can find a simple way which works for you.

Another type of record we keep is our archives. This is any material which has emotional, spiritual or historical value to members of our Fellowship. These originals should be kept by the chairperson of your service committee and made available to members and committee participants as needed. Special occasions can be made more special by bringing out a display of these materials to make real to the membership the fact that we've been around a while and as evidence that the N.A. way works. Newsletters, old minutes, flyers and

An addict who hasn't yet found the program of Narcotics Anonymous to be a source of loving comfort and relief from addiction can be very disruptive. We know how the cloud of anger will float over us and take control whenever we realize we're missing out on something good. We're not amazed when others do this. We know how it is and try to respond with love and compassion when this occurs. Still, if it gets too bad, they are asked to leave. We can't help everyone and have never claimed to have all the answers to anything. If an addict can't admit their need for help, there is nothing we can do but pray for them and stand ready to help when asked.

Sometimes you will hear someone speak of service as a burden rather than a gift and opportunity. We are all human, - so human it almost killed us. Recovery allows us to see where we have been our own worst enemies and allows us to take personal responsibility for the things which bother us. When we can do this, we are free to change for the better in any way which suits us. When you hear an addict suffering in this way, realize that the scars of addiction are not always easily recognized, and we pray for the ability to love the unlovable. The logic of the thing is not so much our concern. The ingratitude doesn't bother us. We know that sometime, somehow, some N.A. member was there to provide a service for any one of us who is clean today. We try to bear in mind that this person is suffering, and we try to alleviate their pain. It is far better to distract them from a problem which is unsolvable today and remind them that they are loved regardless of their feelings about service. We want them to stay clean and live to better things.

One of the best ways to maintain 'continuity,' which is an intended form of 'unity,' is for only members of a steering committee to vote in N.A. business meetings. The

## CHAPTER NINE STRENGTH AND GUIDANCE

We get the strength for N.A. service in many ways. We learn directly from those who have gone before. We read and talk with others who know something about what we are trying to do. We bring with us our individual abilities, work skills, past experience and background. This can be good when our experience has been successful in areas which might help us set up or maintain a helpline, deal with an H. & I. situation, serve as a service officer, contribute to a newsletter effort or simply deal with people. Still, we didn't qualify for Narcotics Anonymous by being successful. The many areas in which we failed will be problems in recovery also until we have learned better in some way. The best way we know of to learn is through our Steps.

Through our Twelve Steps, we are freed from having to do it on our own and relieved of burdensome defects and the inability to admit fault. This is also a way to understand how we benefit from our service work in ways which go beyond the peace of mind and freedom to grow we get from having done something worthwhile and helpful to another human being. Sooner or later, we will find ourselves doing something we never believed possible for us.

To understand what we are describing here, think of the stories you have heard of someone trapped under a car and one or two people inexplicably being able somehow to lift the car enough to get the person out. There has to be an intense moment of incredible willingness for these stories to have basis in fact. Another story describes two men scrabbling up the front of a burning building with a washtub of water. They made it to the second story until they looked at one another, realized that what they were doing was impossible

Recovery is all about going beyond our old boundaries. This is why we stress asking for help, going to meetings and reading the literature. When we learn that others have gone beyond their former boundaries, we are more apt to go beyond our own. We are less willing to accept problems when we know there is a solution. We don't allow ourselves to be drawn into negativity. It only makes our problems worse. We pray to find something positive we can do to help today. When we act badly, with intention or through error, there is only one thing to do, admit fault and go on doing the best we can. If our reactions stay the same, at least we can change our actions. When we are tempted to act badly, we can learn to 'shift gears' and let recovery take over. It may feel funny or insincere, but if you will give it a chance, you will see much pain and trouble avoided. For many, this is the first step toward real personality change. We often hear it called "Acting as if." the continuance of this might be, "As if we feel better" or "As if we liked the person" or "As if we believed God could handle it." When we are wronged, many of us have found that love is the most honest revenge.

It is a law of life, we discover, that we are not permitted to give something for nothing. Life insists on repaying us for our actions in kind. In our past, we have been driven to desperation and hopelessness by our 'selfishness.' In recovery, we give and yet we are not wanting. Here is the key to our puzzle.

Our view of ourselves is rightly based on our past experience. In recovery, we are constantly having to make allowances on a daily basis for the fact that we're clean and we are no longer subject to many of the problems and failures which resulted from the limitations which came from our using.

as with the rest of your life, the first thing you should do is pray about it. The guidance you seek is limited only by the energy you put into pray and the degree of openmindedness you have to the will of the God of your understanding.

The first things have been said first. With these things in mind, approach an opportunity to serve with a spirit of adventure. Be open to the ideas of others, both those who have gone before and those who are in service with you today. Remember, all you need to know at any given point is what needs to be done next. Belaboring points which will make no difference are exercises in futility. Our prayers are not empty rituals with no visible result. Each one of us is a visible reminder that spiritual principles are stronger than the disease of addiction. It is hard to imagine any member staying clean who has no other member or members praying specifically for them. It is definitely alright to ask other members to pray for you, especially if you are in a time of need.

The routines will get done if you're keeping your mind on the suffering which comes with the disease of addiction. All service in N.A. is directed to alleviating this suffering in some way.

Workshops and learning days can be set up to help provide an atmosphere in which attending members are free to discuss and learn about what they can do as members to help. Many written materials are available to the Fellowship today, and there will be more as we grow. Speakers can be invited in to share their successful experiences in service. At these events, minutes and archives can be shown to attending members to make real the history of your Fellowship and your community. Questions and answers which come up frequently can be made available to your members through a local newsletter.

**CHAPTER TEN**  
**THE JOY OF GIVING**  
**DARE TO DREAM-CREATIVE SERVICE**

Our structure is a shifting set of relationships where the same language is applied to relationships among many members whose real positions to one another are constantly changing. This is a great strength because it allows us to be extremely flexible and adapt to any situation of concern or need.

Remember, you are never alone. We are free to go our way because we have no opinions on outside issues, feed on no controversy for the kind of fear and negativity which used to guide us and keep us motivated. We are free today to go our way in peace. Show love and compassion whenever you can, but don't be afraid to take up for yourselves. Enough of us have died.

In gratitude, we commit ourselves to service. A commitment to service goes far beyond a term of office, it is a commitment to living and to recovery. Through service, we participate in the fact that N.A. works: addicts can get clean and stay clean. We can even reach levels of competence and dedication which show up in ways which even the world cannot deny. We like to keep low profiles and let our growth speak for itself. The growth of our Fellowship is a reflection of the individual growth we all experience played out on a greater stage. We were the hopeless, the ones written off as incapable of staying clean and dealing with life on life's terms. In this sense, service is an opportunity to show how we feel about ourselves and those we can help. We are free to say yes or no. The fact of our great growth is based in a great many members saying yes to giving through service. Groups



alone can achieve. Remember where we came from and how it was with us when we were going it alone? If we are any different today, it must be something which came to us through working our personal programs based on the spiritual principles of Narcotics Anonymous. About the only credit we can take is for having the good sense to finally admit our failure and availing ourselves of what N.A. has to offer: a new life clean.

We don't win our new lives with old ways. We learn to avoid people, places and things which might get us loaded. Keep your meetings within Traditions and they will grow. Inside the meetings as well as in personal recovery, stay close to the Steps. The entire purpose of the Traditions is to be able to have recovery meetings without interruption. The Traditions themselves should be discussed outside of the meetings unless it is a special meeting for that purpose. Our primary purpose of carrying the message ordinarily keeps us from discussing group concerns in meetings where members come for recovery. These concerns are reserved for our business meetings.

For practical purposes, we have to attend to the routine elements of service to counterbalance our theorizing and philosophical pursuits. The love of learning has specific application for us because it is how new ideas enter our minds. It is important to emphasize that the stability and continuance of our way of life comes from the maintenance of our routine services. It is of equal importance to realize that our growth comes from our theorizing and philosophy. We need both! We would not cut our bodies into two parts and hold up one side as good and desirable and the other as bad and ugly. Our two halves are in God-given opposition to one another. Does that mean that one is good and the other bad? Through acceptance, we become whole people.

Our 'hot shots' in service cool off sooner or later and may become resources to those who give them recovery through love and acceptance. God gives us new 'hot shots,' and the interaction between those who want to help and those who are already in service provide either a workable solution from our past or a creative new approach. It requires courage and faith to apply either one.

We are forced by what we see happening in N.A. to believe that there is a spiritual plan for us as a Fellowship. We pray and meditate in our Eleventh Step for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out. Our internal growth is more important than our external growth because it's where the changes are needed most. It is relevant to consider that as we grow in spiritual terms, our relationship to reality changes. This is as true for our Fellowship as it is for us as individuals or groups.

We dare to dream of more addicts getting clean in N.A. than anyone ever envisioned. We dare to dream of our service as being able to change the world, at least the part of it having to do with addicts, for the better. Our dreams of a better life for ourselves and others, of a better fellowship, may come true. Denying our dreams is a rejection of the spiritual nature of our recovery and of our fellowship.

The policies of Narcotics Anonymous insure that the will of a Loving God as expressed in group consciousness is carried out. Group consciousness isn't mob rule. We are able to refer to written material and match our efforts with those of others. Efficiency must sometimes be sacrificed to allow members to sort out their feelings. If it appears that several basic issues are up in the air, we wait until the matters before us are resolved before we get back to 'service as usual.'

