

IN LOVING SERVICE



**Georgia Regional Literature
Work – In – Progress
Unapproved Literature
For Review and Input**

IN LOVING SERVICE

*In Trust with
latitude, love, respect
& sincere regard for
this work!*

GEORGIA REGIONAL LITERATURE SUBCOMMITTEE

WORK IN PROGRESS - ALL RIGHTS TO N.A.

FIFTH PRINTING, WITH ATHENS INPUT

FEBRUARY 1987

*Love,
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IN LOVING SERVICE

Our Service Manual describes our service structure without really addressing the how's and why's of service. Hopefully, this work can fill these gaps by providing a reference where members can get specific answers to their questions about service and benefit from the ideas and experience of others who have been involved in and committed to service. In this way, perhaps, we can pass on some of what we have learned.

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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:

Georgia Regional Literature Subcommittee
c/o
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Smyrna, Georgia 30080
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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 have 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.

This material has come from thousands of conversations about service among members at all levels of service over a period of many years. Mostly, from those trusted servants who successfully started groups in areas and regions which had not had N.A. meetings before. They ran up huge telephone bills, traveled, and corresponded with more experienced members whom they knew, respected and trusted.

Our WSO played a significant role in this which was expanded through the efforts of the World Literature Committee. The young Fellowship of the seventies and eighties patterned themselves after this successful approach. Even so, word-of-mouth communications can result in inconsistencies. This material contains direct quotes from what was said and done to help extend our message into the hundreds of new communities where only a few short years ago, N.A. recovery was unknown.

A lot of new members find themselves in oldtimers' shoes today. Our Basic Text was written by members just like you, praying to be used as instruments. The thousands of new meetings founded in the last few years were started by new members, just like most of you. The changes effected in World Services are the result of our Fellowship's growth. Improvements can lie ahead for us all in N.A. Together in gratitude to those who have gone before, faith in what works today and hope for those who still suffer, we will endure.

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

God and attempt the impossible. Recovery teaches us to live in reality. Through helping others, we ourselves are helped. This is the great spiritual lesson of Narcotics Anonymous.

If all our Program consisted of was service, nobody would get clean in N.A. We must get help before we're in a position to give it. Our surrenders, our faith, our inventories, our amends and our spirituality allow us to carry the N.A. message. After we learn to meet our own needs, we have something to offer others. Through recovery, we are able to recognize the effects, good and bad, we have on others. Our identity as human beings increases. We find it impossible to feel good about ourselves unless we are doing something to benefit others.

As we learn and grow in recovery, we discover the good we do for others, comes back to us. Even the most hardened and embittered of our members eventually realize they have been given a new life by those of us who were able to love them before they could love themselves. Without the nature of service there would be no N.A., no newcomers and no helping of others.

In the beginning, the giving of our meager resources seemed like utter foolishness. We were all takers, one way or another. We didn't think much of ourselves for doing it but our disease had reduced us to the point where we had no choice but to put our needs first. We couldn't care and we didn't share anything of importance to us. Our using ate up our resources and we had to replace them as part of our using. As our needs are met in recovery, we find our desperate way of life fading into the past. Someone who is insecure about what they have isn't likely to part with it easily. When we have more, we can give more.

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.

Though they may seem to have no good purpose, certain problems experienced by N.A. members in service, teach us how to live. We get to go through situations which teach us things about ourselves and getting along with others we might not learn any other way. By staying clean through these experiences, we are led into a greater personal freedom.

Our experience shows us that we can never wish harm to another person without suffering harm ourselves. We learn to wish them the happiness and joy we would like very much for them to receive. We can usually identify with their pain. Again, the freedom we find in recovery allows us to do these things. We are fortunate to be able to make some of our mistakes in a spiritual environment where we can get help from understanding members and stay clean through our periods of self made adversity. We learn how to forgive when we are forgiven. Our fellow members forgive us because they know they could easily be in our shoes.

Many of these interactions constitute some of the personal services we provide one another. Going to meetings, we discuss our problems with others and find a store of practical wisdom which provides the sort of answers we are seeking. Somehow, the more we seek, the more we find. The member in need is a service to the member who helps them. Problems which made no sense to us can be seen differently when we realize we are not alone.

The nature of service brings us into the room where the meetings are held. Service helps us fulfill our healthy need to be appreciated. We discover a new life clean is possible for us. We receive and accept help through N.A. After a while we find ourselves facing an addict, sick and confused, who reminds us a lot of ourselves when we were new.

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

back for various reasons but we all have in common the pain and confusion from our addiction and the desire for recovery. The ties which bind us together are composed of our pain and hope for something better. While we feel the love and understanding, we know our unity is based in our instinct to survive.

Through N.A., we learn many things. We learn that we don't have to use today. As we grow in the program, we can pick up new ideas from other members which produce relief and good feelings in our lives today. Instead of 'good advice', we get the actual experience of what works in recovery from those who have experienced it directly. Our belief in the program of N.A. and its members grows because NA works. Nothing else had worked for before. Seeing other addicts recovering is clear evidence that we can recover. We learn to look at daily events as special opportunities to improve our lives. We are constantly going through situations clean which used to be impossible for us.

Practicing the things we learn at meetings, in our literature and directly from other addicts in recovery, we find ourselves succeeding. Our reaction is puzzled amazement combined with a feeling that it's too good to be true. Through abstinence and spiritual growth we come to believe that the N.A. way is real. Any disruption in this belief building process is a threat to the recovery of our members.

With our common welfare at stake, we are forced to disallow a member or group of members the right to use our name for personal purposes. A meeting which does not adhere to the Twelve Traditions of N.A. in the eyes of their local area or region should not be listed in the directory of N.A. meetings in that area or region as well as our N.A. World Directory. While members can go in before violations go too far and try to share their concern, a service committee

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.

A meeting which knowingly violates our Traditions is not surrendered, cannot be relied on to carry our message and by simple definition has no right to the N.A. name. Our name has been built up by the good efforts of many and none have the right to tear it down!

We have learned to stress our anonymity. This means we set aside our personal preferences as members to effect our primary group purpose: to carry the N.A. message to addicts seeking recovery.

Members working to service the needs of our groups for administrative, literature, public information, hospitals and institutions, policy and activities feel uncomfortable when those who hold the N.A. name in contempt and perpetuate contradictions are listed on N.A. directories. This is because they do their best only to have their newcomers directed to a listed meeting where the Fifth Tradition is not honored. This is the contradiction which has been so hard to see. Addicts seeking recovery in N.A. have a right to receive our message in our meetings. If we knowingly allowed our newcomers to go into a situation brought on by ill-informed members who speak of their personal preferences instead of the N.A. message, we ourselves would be in violation of the principles of our Twelfth Step!

At some point in recovery, we develop an awareness of the dedication of those who have blazed our trail. Our early members made sacrifices to make available to us what is known today. Simply, they made some of our mistakes for us. Further, they endured the ridicule and laughter of those who didn't believe N.A. would work. What has sorted out from their total experience are only the things which worked. They had to go through the things which didn't work and somehow manage to hang on to their recovery. Some of them didn't make it. Still, we are grateful to them all.

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

they are again able to ask for help. We feel for them because if they are hurting, at least a little part of us is hurting. We cannot turn our back on these members lest our own recovery be threatened. Neither do we have to kill them with kindness. When we love one another we say something when we see our fellow members participating in their disease. A real friend won't ignore our sickness or overlook our spiritual lapses.

A little simple honesty can go a long way. Other times just waiting seems to work best. If they can continue in a way which seems inappropriate to us and stay clean, sooner or later we have to re-examine ourselves and our beliefs. We can never do this too often. It is one of the primary ways we grow in recovery. If they are in the wrong, we can usually find a way to help them through patience. If not, at least we have the comfort of knowing we tried.

As we grow in recovery we learn how large N.A. has grown. More and more we are made aware of the miracle of the Fellowship of N.A. There are meetings everywhere today! Some of us travel within the Fellowship to satisfy our curiosity. We find members thousands of miles from where we live who make us feel at home. Sometimes we discovery the meaning of an elusive spiritual principle at a meeting or through a member because we are new to them. When we learn how much we have in common, we can break out of some of the notions which have kept us apart from others.

We can perceive spiritual principles through imperfect personalities. Who has been totally released from their shortcomings? How would others treat you if they knew the real you? Once we come to know these things, we have a basis for appreciating our need for unity.

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

threats to our lives. In N.A., these threats are empty if we are living the Steps on a daily basis. When we really need to, we can surrender, rely on the God of our understanding and take our own inventory. We are constantly reminded that we do not use unless we lose our desire for recovery.

We hear our members share the fact that we can get caught up in the mechanics of service work to the extent that we forget to take care of ourselves, physically, mentally and spiritually. We work the program while working for the program. We can see the application of the first three Steps to service work more as time goes on. How can we truly serve others under our own power? We all do what we can, of course, but true N.A. service is the stuff of miracles that cannot be accounted for by logic and rational process. There are too many coincidences.

The statement that we ourselves don't really do anything makes more sense as we learn and grow. Through our Eleventh Step, we come to see ourselves as extensions of our Higher Power. We get goosebumps sometimes when we have prayed to be used as instruments of our Higher Power, things go so much better. Somehow, these are always the important things. Sometimes the lesser things seem to actually go wrong. It is interesting, a day at a time, to wait a while and see how we feel about the big deals that almost got us loaded! Maybe God is so loving that He lets these lesser matters go by to give us time to grow and see the pointlessness of fear.

Through our Twelve Steps we are given the power to surrender. We can pray for our God to use us as instruments of His Will. We can step out on faith if we have that good feeling in our hearts and know we have prayed for the strength and guidance we need to serve.

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

difficulties of others and how we can help. If it's not, it's no service. Individual awareness can only aspire to conscience. The difference between consciousness and conscience is prayer! We open and close our service functions with a prayer just like our recovery meetings. The equivalent to the atmosphere of recovery in our meetings is the atmosphere of service in our committees. It is made implicit so there can be no misunderstanding: the nature of our Ultimate Authority is loving.

The Second Tradition clearly states the fact that Ultimate Authority rests in the group. Knowledge of the implications of this statement makes the group responsible for the actions or inactions of its servants. We have to take care of our own. Only N.A. groups can do this. Group conscience refers to the members of Narcotics Anonymous. When self-will and personalities prevail the principle of anonymity is violated and with this goes the conscious contact we need to go beyond our shortcomings.

Those who act as our leaders are in reality only acting on our instructions. They embody the signals they have gotten from all of us. They cannot rule, censor, decide or dictate except according to those they serve and are accountable to. Authoritative actions exclude; service actions include. All our services and the recovery promised in N.A. is based on the freedom we find as individuals from our active addiction and lives it forced us to live. We as individuals have our own lives, opinions and beliefs. In service, we act as members of something greater than ourselves. For this reason we set aside our personal feelings in favor of group direction.

When we cannot do this in all conscience, we step down. Games of power and manipulation do no one any good. How could the most arrogant and proud among us hope to impose

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,

much less love us. Since we felt unlovable and had been used to our pain and terror, there was plenty of room for us to assume that recovery was beyond what we could hope for. Any indication that we weren't wanted or failed to live up (or down) to a standard not related to the basic fact of our desire for recovery would have fed into our disease and allows us to say, "See, I never should have gotten my hopes up. I don't belong here!" We can all remember some sort of feeling that we were welcome and that somehow the people in N.A. really cared for us.

We addicts are good at messing up a good thing. This Tradition keeps our message simple and available. As we grow in recovery, it is amazing how we get busy setting up rules for ourselves and others. The growth which comes from our Twelve Steps allows for some imperfections. We still get carried away with "a good idea" and go far beyond what is normal for other people. Haven't you ever had the feeling that everything would be OK if 'they' could just let go. It can seem as if we and the members we're close to have a pretty good understanding of it all. We're not seeking power, you understand, but those 'other' guys just can't be trying. If they really cared, they would be more open minded. We forget that others have their problems and rough days just like we do. Often we can be quick to judge another by their performance while we judge ourselves by our motives.

Since most of us, if not all of us, go through these types of changes as we grow from fear and desperation to faith and inspiration, this Tradition redlines the fact that we all have a lot to be grateful for and have all come a long way together. It at least minimizes the harm we might do to others before we can really take care of ourselves. There is nothing sadder than to sit at the funeral of a member who didn't make it and remember the last time you saw them

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.

Like any of the other Traditions, violations of the Third are nearly invisible to those who are in the middle of them. Usually others nearby can see more than we can. Correction is almost always dependent on our open-mindedness. If we won't listen to those who love us, we miss out. Another way of saying this is that by the time we can see the harm being done to others, some of the others might be dead or we may find ourselves missing the relief we found in the past and risk relapse when it is only self-obsession that is at the root of our problem.

Insuring that when we see someone reaching out for help in N.A., we ourselves jump in to welcome them takes care of most of what we can do as members. Sometimes members isolate themselves but they have to reach out in time if they are to stay clean. If God lets us see them reaching out, God will give us the strength to meet their needs.

Our services make membership in N.A. available to those who are suffering but don't know we exist or how to get in touch with us. Our literature gives our newcomers a better chance of becoming members by letting them study written material. Our policies are meant to minimize politicking in N.A. which could confuse our membership and run off people who may not stay to find out how N.A. differs from other groups. Our finance work simply keeps money moving toward some level of service which needs it, which furthers our primary purpose and helps make membership in N.A. available. Our H&I folks help carry our message where it can't otherwise go in jails and hospitals for the benefit of our members and would-be members. Our activities bring members together and help us overcome the fears which may hinder our membership and threaten our desire for recovery.

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.

One of the big ways we can run across the line between what works in N.A. is to forget or act as if what we do in service has no impact on others. If we want to throw a fundraiser or set up a service, we can get so into our vision that we forget to check with others for strength and guidance. We can think and act as if we were on our own. Sometimes this approach can seem to work for a while, especially if we are sincere in our effort to serve without directing or controlling those we serve. If we cannot see what is happening or hear the efforts others make to help us direct our energies into useful channels, we can lose our surrender and our respect for those who are our main resources. You'd think that we addicts could see all this happening but most of us have an inability to see ourselves as others see us. Our whole recovery process is based in our growing relationships with other addicts seeking recovery but we have difficulty applying this to our service.

Our actions should be guided by a Loving God as expressed in our group conscience. If we forget that we are only instruments of that Will, we can fall into the trap of seeing others as powerful and get caught in acting powerful ourselves. This happens fairly often and none of us should have any difficulty in admitting our need for help in this area if we are in touch with our First Step.

Since the autonomy referred to in this Tradition is a reflection of what happens in our individual group members, these things need to be brought more out into the open so fewer of our members will feel fearful or cutoff from their group just because they are less than perfect. We know well that if we are harsh or judgemental, it is we ourselves who will be unable to live up to the standards we would set for others.

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.

The members who attend a meeting on a regular basis are responsible to a great extent the quality and availability of our N.A. message. If we forget what others have done for us or what we can do for others, it is easy to imagine that our meetings are gathering places of the knowledgeable with new people to impress with our great wisdom and insight into spiritual truths. We can fail for a time to remember that our lives depend on our willingness to stick out our hands to help or to receive the help found in N.A. If what we share doesn't work for those who give it a try, we have good reason to be nervous and get back to our basics! Addiction is a disease which kills. We all need help. Through helping others, our own real needs are met. Once we have our help, we can enjoy great personal freedom but we cannot turn our backs on N.A. or act contrary to our principles.

With these principles in mind, we can exercise our freedom to set up a new meeting which offers a special format for newcomers, Step study, H&I, men and women, speakers, open and closed discussions and many others. We can attend an old meeting and freshen it up with love and gratitude. We can set a meeting some distance from where we live to make recovery more available. But when a member or a newcomer walks in the door, it is our hope that they will find what we found: a special place and a special feeling among others like ourselves who are living examples that N.A. works.

TRADITION FIVE

"Each group has but one primary purpose, to carry the message to the addict that still suffers."

People with our disease do not recover alone. We have other addicts in our lives who show us recovery is real. From the beginning we are in some sort of contact with other

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

little chance of going beyond the room where the 'meeting' takes place.

Distractions of various sorts will begin to take up much of the time and resources of the members seeking to serve. Less and less time will be devoted to the needs of those suffering and more time will be spent in pleasing members present or absent. Even with the grace of an all loving and all powerful higher power, it seems to be impossible to satisfy everyone. This seems to be related to the fact that we are not only powerless over our disease but also each other. We can each only do our best. When enough members are giving it their best, the distractions will be overcome.

A title doesn't insure that the person elected can or will do their job. They have to want to. Likewise, a title of service committee doesn't mean a thing unless services to those who suffer are actually provided. There is no good feeling in contending with others. Without the same feeling we have in our regular meetings, a committee is just a committee. A committee has to have the primary purpose of our groups in their minds and hearts to do service. Service is emphasized over the committee in N.A. instead of the other way around. Committees without hearts are heartless and feelings go by the board as bureaucratic concerns become more important than people. Our anonymous workers who are the real strength of our structure cannot function and make their sacrifices unless they have a good feeling in their hearts about what they are doing. Violating that good feeling short circuits the services our structure is meant to provide. We have found our heart felt feelings to be more reliable guides than our heads. Still the need to read and re-read the minutes can sometimes help us get at what others are really saying when communications have become a problem.

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

to find the inevitable loop hole. We had trouble believing the promise of N.A. in the beginning because we had been let down so many times. It is not surprising that there are some special difficulties we have had to overcome in our growth and development.

A lot has been said and written about the Sixth Tradition. Most of the references concern keeping N.A. free of involvement with external efforts. We need to address the difficulties which arise out of involvement within our service structure which can give rise to similar problems.

These difficulties arise in two categories. The first is the case where our members work in institutions or hospitals which have to do with addicts. The second and more important for our present attempt to share insight into problems which arise and how we can successfully deal with them, is the case where our members find themselves overwhelmed by a service title or commitment.

In the first case, we simply need to keep N.A. simple and comprehensible to our membership. Clearly, we are on our own here. The message we got when we were new and what N.A. means to us today need to be fairly close together lest we risk going against our personal basis in recovery. What attracted us in the beginning had the power to keep us coming back when we were at our weakest and most vulnerable. The message we heard got through to us where nothing else would. The Program of Narcotics Anonymous is a miracle in its own right and stands on its own. In keeping with our spiritual aims, any notion of dependence or obligation to another group, institution or program is futile. This way we can consistently work towards maintaining our own recovery and work towards carrying our message. In addition, because we have integrity, we can cooperate with almost anything which works to help get addicts to N.A. We are fortunate in our

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

own inventory. Get the facts directly from those who can help and bring them together in a room for the purpose of reestablishing the spirit of N.A. The problems have to be dealt with in terms of personalities so we have a special need for spiritual principles. From fear and isolation, let any who has had difficulty know they are loved, ask them what can be done to set matters right and give them help if they ask for it. They will be very concerned about their recovery and will fear condemnation prior to investigation.

Painful experience has taught us that equipment is best rented or kept in the hands of members and not committees. In this way the equipment never plays a role in motivating a member to seek a certain office. As we grow we will accumulate more successful experience relating to how an area or regional office can be maintained in terms of equipment, but it is already safe to say that there will be problems to overcome when they are first set up.

Third on the list from the Sixth Tradition is prestige. Few of us have had the opportunity to hold prestigious positions any where. We love N.A. and want to do what we can to help. We can be overwhelmed with the thought of holding a position we never dreamed. If we are elected, we feel light headed and our peace is shattered. It can still be OK and we can do a good job. Get with your sponsor and home group. Carefully read the literature one more time looking for messages you couldn't see the need for before. If you don't feel good inside, decline the nomination or step down. There will be other times and opportunities to serve. Put your recovery first.

Probably the reason these problems come up, is because we are put in positions where it is easy to imagine that we ourselves are responsible for the miracle of N.A. this is not so. The newcomers keep us clean. We need service

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

directly to help others where ever the opportunity to do so exists in recovery.

When we were a small, struggling Fellowship, we often had to do without a lot of things. Some of our members went through a lot of personal hardships in order that we might be able to get clean. They drove thousands of miles, dug deep into their pockets to fill the basket and did whatever they could to help the Program grow. To those who have gone before, we are grateful and our gratitude shows in our acts.

Today our needs are greater than ever. Fortunately, our resources have grown with us.

When it comes to getting service work done, we know we could get members to serve out of love for the Fellowship even to their personal injury. We feel, however, that they would be unable to do the best they could for us under their own steam. If we want it done, we pay the price! In this way the service comes from us and our servants are assured of their spiritual anonymity. Through group responsibility, our members can say, "Thy will, not ours, be done." Our support protects the recovery of our servants.

Where we would otherwise have to hire a non-member to get a job done or do without the service, we employ our Seventh Tradition of being self-supporting. Our Eighth Tradition makes this possible where the job involves some type of work not related to Twelfth Step work. We generally pay the going rate for clerical work or an eight-hour day for office work. This is never done where the spiritual nature of our service is involved, but applies only to functions which back up our service effort. We pay the travel expenses of our representatives when they go too far beyond what an individual member can afford or reasonably be expected to meet themselves. In this way they remain our servants and many of the

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.

TRADITION EIGHT

"Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers."

The basic tenet of N.A. service and Twelfth Step work is that we give freely of what we have received from N.A. to those who are asking for our help. We serve on committees, helplines, H&I panels, give people rides to meetings, share one on one, sponsor members in recovery, and many other things through our membership in N.A. This giving helps us maintain our recovery and avoid relapse by placing us in helpful situations with others who suffer like we do. Their pain reminds us of what the next usage holds in store for us. Our being able to help keeps us in touch with the miracle of N.A. If we charged for our service, the idea that money was a basic motivation would undermine the spiritual nature of our program. We make it abundantly clear to all that we act out of love and a special sort of self-preservation. Something about us and those we would serve is very alert to insincerity, and we can't afford to allow this principle to become blurred. We are too vulnerable to the fear and distrust of those who need our message. Those we would serve are not apt to stay around to get the facts straight.

"Professional" means that a charge is made for goods or services received. So much of our recovery in N.A. comes to us moment by moment when we are exerting ourselves to get through a rough period or in helping another that we have found that it is impossible to guarantee recovery or to control recovery in any way. As it says in our Basic Text, all we have to offer is our message. Our message is that if you're an addict like us, you can get clean and stay clean through practicing the Steps and applying the principles of N.A. We

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

available to members with a single address and phone number to which any member anywhere could turn. We have had to struggle to gain every inch of ground, and yet we have come so far. Our communications needs suffered. When our world service effort was entirely dependent on the contributions from our members, groups, areas and regions, we often had to do without. This is not due to lack of funds or generosity among the Fellowship. Much is spent by groups, areas and regions on local services without which N.A. as we know it could not survive.

Today it is different! We are able to afford special workers at our World Service Office as well as at some area and regional offices throughout the Fellowship. These workers don't do the essential work of the Program but act in supporting roles. Clerical, secretarial, management, finances, and legal matters require the employment of a capable person, addict or non-addict, to do the job. We are finding that when we shortchange our workers, we often shortchange ourselves. It is possible to do a job for a time only out of love, especially where there is no way to be financially responsible. When it comes, however, to marketable skills - and N.A. is not a marketable skill - we pay people who work for the Fellowship a fair wage. This is in keeping with our Seventh Tradition of being self-supporting.

We are grateful that today we are better able to respond to the needs of our growing Fellowship. Keeping our love and what we share in staying clean free to all and yet being able to pool our resources to meet our common needs helps us become responsible.

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

support to do a good job for us, we provide it in various ways. In special cases we employ the Eighth Tradition. These cases constitute the smallest fraction of our service effort, and even then, they only carry out the will of our Higher Power as expressed in group conscience. These practical considerations do not imply that only volunteer service is spiritual. Our special workers exhibit personal dedication as well as spiritual motivation.

This Tradition is sometimes applied to mean N.A. service shouldn't be organized. Maybe this is true to the extent that we work through volunteers. If they don't do a good job, they may be replaced or other members may pitch in to allow them to serve out their terms in office. We generally don't mind giving an extra measure of support if a member wants to serve and is doing their best. It's just another way of giving to us. What we can't do under the Ninth Tradition is to 'fire' anyone, cut their pay or arbitrarily change their position in service. We applaud their good efforts and help where we can if they fall short of the mark. Our group role is to provide emotional and financial support as part of our group responsibility. They are our members and we care for them just like it says in the Third Step and Second Tradition. We believe God runs this Fellowship and we are only instruments of a will greater and more loving than our own! Our personal faith, humility and honesty is reflected in our groups and is the gauge of our group conscience.

For all these reasons and one more, we learn to see service positions as opportunities to give and not positions of power or prestige. We laugh and joke with members who fall into the trap of taking themselves too seriously. They usually get the message with no harm done. The one more reason we don't take ourselves too seriously is relapse. We are more susceptible to a false sense of personal power than most people, to put it mildly.

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

serving. A lot of members see this as a threat to their surrender. If one can do so much damage, are they not powerful and where is God? You can answer this one yourself by thinking of a meeting. Is your recovery threatened if a member or would be member is acting badly, yelling or disrupting the meeting. We don't hate them, we love them. From our own early experiences, we remember wondering if N.A. was for real and when we were out of line, how the members preserved the atmosphere of recovery without running us off. We pray and look for ways to help. Sometimes, we can talk with them directly, sometimes not. Sometimes, all that is needed is for someone to sit down with them and tell them how it is with us. That we all have survived this period of rebellion somehow clean. That we have to be responsible because we have so much freedom. We have no one to watch us in N.A. If we mess up, we pay the price, and so do those who are looking to us for help. Sometimes getting with their sponsor can help. They may be able to help us see what the member's concern is and thereby work towards solution. Sometimes we just have to let go and do the best we can without them, even if it hurts us to do so. We can't help them unless they realize their need for help and are open to our love and help. The rest of the members just stay clean and do what they can.

We have welcomed some pretty powerful people in this Fellowship, but they all surrender sooner or later. Sometimes they just want attention and don't know another way to get it. They may not realize the 'power' which comes from surrender! Our personal power always fails, so we have learned not to go for it. By being clean and positive, you are speaking well for recovery. Since we're not fighting, no one has to change for us to be happy. We can maintain our position indefinitely with no expenditure of energy except what it takes to pray. When we consider all the energy we used to put into fighting, it is easy to see how surrender

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

disrupt a service effort. Something about our disease makes these problems exciting. The needs of those we serve go wanting if we put our differences first. What unifies our service is our common desire to do something to help the addict who still suffers. Without this bottom line, we fall apart and nothing makes sense. We get into personalities and forget principles. For as long as this disorder prevails, there can be little in the way of service.

We used to hide from these problems, pretending they didn't exist. Today we learn to be honest about them. They only prevail when we are afraid to speak the truth.

When we are surrendered servants trying to do our best, we will be guided past the difficulties which appear to block our progress from time to time. We have to use our honesty, openmindedness and willingness as guides to tell us what to do.

When our efforts have enough order to prevent conflicts and enough freedom of movement for our members to do their best, great things can happen. We don't try to organize our meetings beyond the format and the basic need to share in a manner which works to grant relief from our disease, which we all need so desperately. We do try to organize our services to prevent problems which always occur among people. These difficulties may be aggravated by our disease, but they are common to all humanity. We learn to deal with them honestly, and we are growing in recovery as well as service. We carry what we learn into all areas of our lives. Sometimes we become qualified for a better job or a promotion though what we learn in service even though that was the last thing on our mind.

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

ourselves in conflict among ourselves, we all need to pray. We need to remember where we came from and how we were helped in the beginning. When we can remind ourselves of these things, we can forget the feelings of distrust and disunity and get back to getting along with our fellows members.

The important function of our service boards and committees is to see to it that a good suggestion from members get proper attention and is implemented wherever possible. This helps us grow. This keeps our services 'wired into' the Fellowship. When members see their suggestions taken seriously, they will take their service bodies seriously. All the good things we enjoy in N.A. began as suggestions from members. Otherwise, we gain a deep personal joy from seeing addicts pulling together doing the routine chores associated with their service efforts. Maintaining the helplines which blanket America and are beginning in other countries. Carrying our message into jails, hospitals and prisons where we know there are addicts who can't get out to the regular meetings. Those who have the honor and privilege of working on carrying our message in written form. Those who do the tough jobs in maintaining order in our service committees through good policy in keeping with our Twelve Traditions. Those who do the fantastic work it takes to have a calm, serene convention where everything seems to come out even. And those who work today to carry our message to the ends of the Earth, so that no addict anywhere need die never knowing help is available...

TRADITION TEN

"N.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy."

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,

our personal opinion is not the first thing on our mind when we are in a position where someone else is looking to us as a member of N.A. rather than as an individual.

Most members want to know how to avoid mistakes and seek guidance from those who have had to pay the painful price for their mistakes with no one to tell them any better at the time, even if they were asking. Abiding by these spiritual principles doesn't take anything away from our individuality. It may be the basis which makes our individuality possible in any positive terms.

For practical purposes, just remember we're not dealing in fantasy here. When the time comes, and we know it will if you're active in N.A., for you to answer questions put forth by a reporter, a hospital worker or a prison employee, keep it simple! If they aren't an addict themselves, chances are that they will never understand N.A. at all except that we stay clean and that our lives get better. That's really about all they need to know to give us a good recommendation. Because they want to understand, they will ask certain questions. These questions may relate to us personally or to N.A. as a whole. We answer their questions as honestly and accurately as we can. We try not to indulge ourselves in personal interpretation of events or issues. If we don't know for certain, we say so. If its a touchy issue, we just decline the question by saying we don't know the answer to that one. We emphasize our gratitude for recovery and our desire to help others. It sometimes seems, everyone wants to understand addiction.

Sometimes this quest for understanding makes them oblivious to the facts. We suffer from a disease, not a primary psychological illness or a moral flaw. We are allergic to using drugs in any form. We never know for sure how long we will be clean or what life holds for us. Our

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

seeking recovery, we can make it become part of the program. If it is valid and proves itself in time, it becomes available to every member. We have to keep to our primary group purpose and serve the needs of addicts seeking recovery.

Promotion of Narcotics Anonymous would bring many who would buy our literature and attend our meetings. They might even speak well of us and give us their money. We know these things are a threat to us in recovery and do not seek them out. We would become caught up in the impossible task of servicing people who weren't addicts and who have no need for us or our recovery. Addicts would see this and leave the program in fear and confusion. We would have our recoveries on the line with relapse around the corner and a bunch of let-down people to satisfy who weren't even addicts. Probably some of those who left would start some meetings which observed this Tradition carefully, as if their lives depended on it.

Thankfully, we don't have to worry about this happening because we have been very fortunate having had little promotion. We had instead a whole lot of attraction which has resulted in our unparalleled growth. Our message is available almost anywhere in the Western world today with good beginnings in the eastern hemisphere. It is the pain and desperation brought on us by our disease which accounts for our growth. Our groups and members have prospered wherever they put our principles into action on a daily basis.

As far as members representing N.A. goes, who can say they understand us? In certain cases the Eighth Tradition gives us the right to have jobs done for us. We have the kind of growth which requires the signature of legal documents, for instance. These people don't represent N.A., they fulfill the law of the land where it is unavoidable. It is a convenience and a function we support where necessary. As

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.

As we grow, these sort of problems are more likely to occur. We have learned that it is easier to avoid these problems than to do anything about them later. Refer to the material from the WSC Public Information Committee, or contact them directly for specific help not covered to your satisfaction in the material. This is your Program. Your questions will help improve our resources and, if we check around enough, somebody else has likely faced the same problem you have today. The help they have to offer comes from direct personal experience. They can describe what worked for them. You can pass on the benefits to those who will in time look to you.

TRADITION TWELVE

"Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."

A lot of the program makes no sense if it is viewed in terms of personalities. Without principles like surrender, humility and faith, we couldn't get very far in recovery. In N.A., a lot of what we only sought spiritually before the program becomes everyday reality for us. Humility, patience and tolerance make no sense at all unless we are guided spiritually and believe that these things will effect the real changes we seek.

At the core of these principles is anonymity. Elusive, here one minute and gone the next, intangible except for the change others can see and we can feel, is the principle of anonymity. As a principle, anonymity requires that we be in touch with something or some feeling which we can trust to take care of the problems, goals and objectives which we can't face alone. The intrinsic value of an act or statement which gives it meaning comes from a selfless concern for

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

programs. They know help for us is only possible when we ourselves are ready. They know their limitations. They are anonymous. When we ask for help, the principle is set in motion and we can get our priorities in order.

Especially, anonymity is our way of being part of, but not taking credit for, the miracles in N.A. By not taking credit, we open the way for more. In the past, when we would do something, we would take credit and immediately rest on our laurels. We would hide all our misbehavior behind a few good acts. Now we can do more and grow more without feeling like we're the only ones. We all care and have the ability to know God's will and have the strength to carry it out through the Twelve Steps of N.A. There is plenty to do for all of us!

While it's not referred to very often, there may be another side to all of this. Anonymity is an escape clause for us from our active addiction. As long as we are clean, we have a choice. We don't have to be the people we once were. We don't have to pay the price for many of the actions which got us here. No one knows, after all, what has happened in our minds. When we feel guilty and self-destructive, we may have forgotten the real basis we have for these feelings. Our anonymity protects us. As long as we don't use, we don't have to act or think as we once did. The social stigmas do not apply to us as clean addicts unless we break our anonymity. If we do, we label ourselves in the minds of society and the burden of the disease is often put on us. In our meetings, we practice being our best. We get the identity with clean addicts who have gotten honest about their inability to make it alone. This helps us get honest too.

The question arises, are we being dishonest by being anonymous? After all, we did many people wrong. Some of the things we did were illegal and harmed others. Are we

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

handful may still be alive today. Most have probably died feeling that their contribution was in vain! They had problems like being arrested, walking out the door after a meetings, valiant support from a few but indifference from the many - all the obstacles which occur when a new idea is taking form. Surely they each made a contribution which encouraged others to carry on and helped them do so.

N.A. as we know it today began in July of 1953 in Sun Valley California with a few members getting together to discuss their needs and visions of a Twelve Step Program for addicts. Little is known of the intervening years through 1963, but meetings were held and, with perhaps only one interruption in 1959, they continue to date.

In the early 1960s, several members stepped out on faith and formed the Board of Trustees. These members believed that they could help somehow by formalizing and considering what might be done to encourage N.A. growth and development. They took action which resulted in establishing a coherent basis for our service structure.

In 1963, the material which grew into our little White Booklet was first compiled. Initially there were no stories, little material and a list of questions for newcomers. The material has been added to over the years until it reached the form we know today.

FOUNDERS

All our Fellowship has grown along similar lines in each community. Sometimes the meetings were started more than once by the same people. Their desire for recovery the N.A. way led them to give it one more try. One of our advantages today is in being able to find out how N.A. has gotten started in other communities. Not all their experiences will apply to us, but we

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.

Naturally, some of our founding members became zealots for N.A. Their enthusiasm was often boundless, and their energy attracted a lot of newcomers. While in the early days we were mainly concerned with recovery from heroin addiction, we increasingly became open to any addict seeking recovery. N.A. grew as never before as our Third Tradition became more established. Many members coming out of the Sixties were ready for a change. Addiction had become epidemic. Those of us who had survived were sick of the dying and the phoniness. As our message became more available, so did the need for the message.

Addicts seeking recovery in N.A. were no longer exclusively heroin addicts. Pot heads, speed freaks, acid heads, pill heads and prescription addicts began to show up in increasing numbers. A lot of our members brought new talents and skills to the Fellowship which helped us grow and prosper. Many felt that they were more than lucky - they felt they were somehow chosen. Why had their friends died and while they had lived? Recovery was seen as miraculous and special. The sharing of recovery took place in hushed tones of gratitude and respect.

GROWTH

Contact with members in world services, other N.A. communities and reading the literature allowed the founders to realize that N.A. was a real program in its own right. They broke off from some of their early supporters wherever and whenever conflicts of interest arose. They didn't want to be offensive about it, they just wanted to work their program and help others the N.A. way. They came to realize that for the good of N.A. warm bodies and warmer hearts were needed. Identifying themselves as 'addicts' with no other qualifier became the accepted course for most members. They understood that as addicts, they suffered from addiction, the disease which lies. Any form of denial, dishonesty or word games can be dangerous to

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.

Our history shows that those who had early faith succeeded in helping to found N.A. Their way may not have been easy. Folks may have laughed at them and criticized them personally. Newcomers may have come and gone with depressing frequency. They kept the first meetings open, established some contact with N.A. members elsewhere from the beginning or later on. They read the N.A. mail and responded where they could. They learned from other members the language of N.A., which reflects our collective wisdom. They traveled and they hosted other traveling members. They had a burning desire to help and to learn. These members passed on to their communities whatever came their way. A lot of times the things they had to pass on were upsetting to local members. They might run afoul of local members by stressing total abstinence. What they learned about our service structure might have seemed ungrateful or untrue to local members who were unable to see N.A. as a total program of recovery in its own right. Traveling members were the main source of finding out more about Narcotics Anonymous.

A member might go away to a service conference or convention as a more or less average member and come home full of information and facts about the growing Fellowship which were previously unknown to members in their home area. Many times they were seen as carrying their personal opinion instead of N.A. wisdom. They had learned from other members. It didn't help matters that these members were in fact imperfect. Sometimes they had indeed gotten some of their facts confused. Enough of the truth about N.A. must have gotten through, though, because we grew and grew. Despite all the shortcomings, character defects and the personalities, we grew.

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

distributed through the WSO. Fellowship communications were effected for the first time on an ongoing basis. Group supplies were developed and made available to the growing Fellowship. These activities set the stage to encourage other members to go to work addressing other needs our Fellowship had in those days. The members who were lucky enough to be a part of the original efforts to establish our World Service Office will enjoy our gratitude forever.

TELEPHONE SERVICE

This material is drawn in large part from the kind of love and sharing which took place over a number of years among an uncountable number of our members in service who had nowhere else to turn. Many of the problems turned out to have similar answers. It was a very anonymous solution in that it allowed members with local growing pains to turn to members from outside communities for help. These members were able to get impartial help which was drawn from their Fellowship. A lot of telephones got cut off for bills that couldn't be paid, but the good being done was stronger than the telephone company.

Active members in service usually have quite a few out-of-town phone numbers they use from time to time to stay in touch with the rest of the Fellowship and to get the help they need to keep going. One - and two - hour calls are not uncommon, as our service workers can tell you! The effect of this over the years has been to bring members together wherever they happen to live. These calls provide a quiet time to ask all the questions which fill our minds as we grow. They can also be lifesavers if a pressing problem comes up in a member's home community.

One of our greatest reliefs is the knowledge that we are never alone. Long - distance communication allows us to chuckle over some of our difficulties when we find out that

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

discuss and resolve matters relevant to the Fellowship as a whole.

The N.A. TREE was developed by a member of the Board of Trustees who was also active with the WSO. The member had three years clean when the work was begun. The first time the World Service Conference met was in 1976. Among its first motions was the adoption of the N.A. TREE, which in a sense created the WSC. By 1978, the WSC was attended by members from the East and Midwest, as well as California and the Pacific Northwest. We were on our way. In 1979, the N.A. TREE was edited and renamed the *Service Manual of Narcotics Anonymous*. In subsequent years, the manual was changed, again and again.

Regardless of the changes, however, the material directed to the member, group, area and regional levels of service remained practically unchanged. At the world service level where there were the most variations, all versions allowed for a WSC, WSO and WSB. The variations may have been required by the shifting needs of the Fellowship. When we needed a group of members to see to the business of N.A., the WSB was formed. Their first job was to get a WSO, and the structure became centralized in the WSO. As we grew, our need for an annual service conference including the whole Fellowship became important. This was achieved by members working through WSO with support from the WSB. As relations between these three, WSO, WSC and WSB stabilized, so did our structure.

To meet our need for simplicity and to get the job done, all committees beyond the group and utilized sub-committee systems. Reflecting our basic needs, the 'standard committees' were administrative, policy, public information, hospital and institution, finance, and literature. In addition, activities and outreach sub-committees were sometimes added. It has been a long, hard struggle for our service structure to evolve. Where the structure has been effective in helping addicts

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

to find and contact the Office and get supplies, literature and encouragement with their growing experiences. They were not alone. They could find the closest meetings and contact them. When this started happening, N.A. started growing as never before.

Many of our members get caught up in a controversy, which is common in transitional areas when N.A. is forming. They get N.A. confused with other programs and messages. Sometimes it can come as a great shock to someone who has become accustomed to going to several places for help to see other members acting and believing in N.A. as a real program in its own right. Alcoholics Anonymous had similar problems with the Oxford Movement in their early years. The sooner we can bring this problem out into the open the better. No more hiding. We put N.A. first because we know we are the only ones who can. If the program or Fellowship lacks for something and we can see it, it is our place to find a way to meet the need. Making sure our recovery is in working order is a good idea, but if we wait for perfection, we'll never even try. By doing what we can, we discover abilities and resources within ourselves which we may have never even suspected. The key to these things is our love and concern for others who need our help. We can't unlock the doors for selfish purposes without running serious spiritual risks. When we are able to experience these good feelings and hidden abilities, we can easily fall into our old addiction patterns clean if we forget where our help comes from. We give the credit for the miracles we get to share in to the God of our understanding. We have admitted our powerlessness and unmanageability in our First Step! If we are any different today, it must be the Program working.

We are addicts, and confusion about surrender and recovery can cost us our lives. We deal with the disease of addiction: all its lies, gossip, and confusion. The disease hides and can flourish behind these lies. It used to be said

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

able to jump in and get involved than communities which had gotten used to doing without the services which were just becoming available, some for the first time in our history. Change seems always to be upsetting to our people. They have been victims of rule changes so often (and victimizers) that any change seems suspect and fear is our greatest enemy.

Still, a lot of support came from larger communities. They hosted some of the early service conferences. They held fund-raisers and sent in participants and material, particularly for the Policy and Literature Sub-Committees of the World Service Conference. The work got done, and when the dust settled, we found we had come a long way towards our goal of a worldwide Fellowship. Along the way, we had to learn to keep minutes, have a working knowledge of Robert's Rules of Order, and maintain a spiritual condition amid some confusion and change. If the larger communities hadn't supported the positive changes, many of us would be dead.

Finally, many of the communities which have come into existence in the early eighties reached the point where they had seven meetings a week or more. New difficulties became possible. apathy and stagnation sets in when members feel recovery is too convenient. We have to provide the energy for our program to work. Local Fellowships splinter into groups and sub-groups. Often these groups of members were centered around a large meeting, a clubhouse where N.A. meetings are held or simply a bunch of meetings in a metropolitan area with little contact with outlying groups and members. Sometimes a speaker would share and the members listening would be surprised to find that they'd been clean for two years on the other side of town.

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

it all and read it all. Nothing can justify closed-mindedness more than this form of self-centeredness. We should know better. When we relax, open up and take fresh stock of what's really happening around us, we can resume our recoveries through surrender.

Our history teaches us that we are constantly growing in our viewpoints and our resources. Faith gives us the freedom to change for the better or stay with what works for us. Fear takes this choice away. Only our spiritual way of life can protect us from the illusions that we are safe from relapse and need today, more than ever, the yearning to know God's will, just as we did when we were new to N.A. Unless we pray to the God of our understanding for help and guidance, we will find ourselves slipping back into our old ways of thinking and being. We will grow cynical and apathetic. We will find more to complain about and less to encourage us. We will find it hard to face the truth that we have only let ourselves down again.

To survive clean, most of our members are going to spend a lot of their time anonymously working our programs. We will be praying, helping and communicating with other like-minded members. We can utterly miss the boat if we fall into going to meetings as if the program owed us something. We need to go to meetings to make sure the meeting is a good one by doing our part to help. If we attend as observers, we're setting ourselves up. That's not N.A., although a lot of our members fall into the trap. The hope is that they will realize that if they see a problem, they are the ones to help remedy it. Complaining, criticizing others and setting yourself apart will only isolate you from those who are doing the best they can without your active support. Talking about your feelings in a meeting or with your sponsor can help by bringing these insanities out into the open. You will feel better. The lesson from our history is that it is possible for our members to stay clean under impossible difficulties and that our greatest danger is

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

ongoing recovery and surrender. The Program is a series of unaccountable miracles. Sometimes we may be the only ones able to see them, and sometimes we can be blinded by ego, but it's the miracles which keep us coming back. It is a miracle for each of us to be clean today. It is another miracle to be able to see God working in our lives. It is a miracle for self-centered egomaniacs like us to be able to reach out and really care about another human being. Each time we acknowledge one of these miracles, the basis for our faith and surrender is deepened. Other members no longer have to tell us it works, we know!

What's around the corner for us as a Fellowship at any point is always anyone's guess. It has kept getting better for quite a while, and a lot has been accomplished. Our Loving Ultimate Authority wouldn't have brought us all this way for nothing. We will grow to be the greatest force in the history of mankind against the disease of addiction. Quickly or slowly, we will find solutions to all of our present problems and see later on the absolute necessity of each one to prepare us to face the future together. Our resources and abilities will grow as long as we can be consciously thankful for all the Program of Narcotics Anonymous has given us. Where we become complacent or apathetic, we will be reminded quickly of who we are, what we are and where we come from. Our unity of feeling and purpose will grow beyond the bounds of what is now conceived of as possible with our present limitations. Fellowship growth reflects our personal growth.

TODAY

N.A. today has grown beyond a lot of its early problems. By 1984, over 50,000 copies of Our Book had been distributed all over the world. We are better able to let those who seek help with their addiction know who we are, what we are and how to find us than ever before in our history. We exchange ideas and

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

only hint at the reality of N.A. service. That reality is much more beautiful and comprehensive than our elections and procedures. Still, we feel that this is one way of sharing in written form what has been worked out among members active in service up to this point. It is our hope that this will help you avoid some of the stumbling blocks and illusions which can make your way more difficult and your efforts to help others less successful. Based on our experience, it is your integrity and sincerity which count. When others have problems, willingness to try will help keep you out of the problem and into the solution. We have survived tens of thousands of unsolvable problems. This is the basis of our faith.

In service, we become expert at patching up bruised egos. There is no way, so far as we know, to get every member to agree on everything. We have a great need for surrender. When our feelings are hurt or we feel that crucial issues are going badly for our Fellowship, we naturally experience frustration and pain. We are reminded that when we disagree with what another member is doing, he or she is just as committed and concerned in their own way as we are. What we try to avoid is the "fallout" which occurs when disorder and confusion result from conflicts among our members in service to N.A. If we can only agree to disagree, we can spare others the pain of taking sides in conflicts they understand poorly, if at all. Imbalance is at the root of most of our difficulties. If we are honest about it, we can all remember times when we felt so strongly about 'input' and 'group conscience' that we forgot 'continuity' and 'output.' We addicts weave miracles of confusion when we loose our surrender and take charge as if we were able to run the show. We can be honest about these things because we have learned that dishonesty gives fear power.

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.

Each of us put a lot of time and energy into recovery. Our formal service to N.A. is at most only a part of the service we perform going to meetings, welcoming newcomers, telephone calls, sponsoring other members and pitching in anyway we can. If we're just staying clean, we are still giving the program one more member. If we spend three or four hours a day in formal service work, we probably spend even more time talking with and listening to other members about some aspect of recovery. Even members who never hold a formal service position may spend most of their time doing personal service. We can never afford to forget this because they are the ones who give substance to our promise of love and help in N.A. What would it be like if no one showed up to attend the meetings because we were all out doing service? We hold personal service to be the highest level of service because without it our other service efforts would be meaningless.

We love Narcotics Anonymous! Without the love and care we have received in N.A., each one of us would be out there using to the death. We have to be creative in our love. We have to come up with new and better ways of keeping our program simple. The same principles which help us in the rest of our lives are essential in our service work.

While none of us is perfect, we have found our spiritual condition is the key to good service. We have heard many who were severely disappointed with their service experience. They felt that their efforts have been unappreciated. In some of these cases, the members felt that the rules governing the rest of their lives were suspended. We know from our experience that this won't even begin to work. Each successful trusted servant has had to spend hours and hours reading and discussing our service function before we felt comfortable getting involved. Our greatest fear was that our personal defects would result in harm where we only wanted to help. Addiction can control us so easily. We know what it's like to spend years in

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

all. As a member once said, "if we'd let nature take its course, we'd all be dead". We exert ourselves spiritually when we have trust and faith in the ultimate goodness of one another.

Another item should be brought out now. Since we are human as well as addicts, we can get so caught up in results that we become unable or unwilling to do the basic footwork. Later we may even complain when things go wrong. The point is that some of the ones we have been most able to help will never be known to us personally. We will run into a few who will thank us, months or years later, if we're lucky. Try to bear in mind that we are just the instruments and we leave outcomes to our Higher Power. This principle gives us the freedom to serve.

We have to face the fact that sometimes things really do go wrong. What then? First we take our inventory and then admit our faults. This frees us from our defects to an extent. We seek strength and guidance through prayer and meditation. Then we apply the principles of honesty, open-mindedness and willingness to try. If our spirits are awakened and we are focusing our efforts around carrying our N.A. message, a way will open to us. We will remember that the group is responsible for what happens in N.A. The service structure will again become a means rather than an end in itself. Fear, guilt and complications will fall away and a solution will form and develop often times with no additional effort on our part. We will be amazed. From then on we will know what really runs N.A.; the collective conscience of the members. We will be able to respect the miraculous nature of our Program as never before. We will think of the thousands who have had to reach the same frontier for us to find the Program and get clean. The basic miracle of N.A., which must be felt to be believed, will be marked in our own being. This collective vision guides us.

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.

It has been difficult to see these things. Sometimes the mind can project images which seem so real. The truth seems to be that when we slip into fear and reactionary tactics, we are only giving strength to the problem. Surrender is a powerful principle here. The very idea that we have to fight others goes against all the principles of N.A. When we can stand clear of the problem, counsel with others and re-check our feelings and motives, we give ourselves a chance to consider what we are doing. We never have to plunge blindly ahead. If those we would oppose are truly negative, their negativity will fall in on itself more quickly without us. Negativity needs positive opposition as an energy source. Without opposition, negativity has to come to rest. It can't keep itself going. It may only be a fearful reaction to positive change. Meanwhile, we can be busy at positive things. This truth has guided us past some real difficult events and knotted feelings which had no true solution. In time the negativity disperses, and we can see with grateful eyes the wisdom of our ways.

Addicts as a rule have never had any positive experience with groups of people over a period of time. We carry a lot of misconceptions with us. We have to learn that the combined love and wisdom of thousands of our members has made our service structure a special case. Some of the rules which govern other groups seem to apply to us but, this is true at the level of appearances only. In N.A. we don't make money off those we serve. We don't have legal control over our members. We can't give someone a raise or demote them for 'bad behavior.' We certainly can't send them back to the streets. We must learn to live together somehow.

Our members in service are self-motivated; we are each reacting to our inner voice and the need for recovery. We are all doing the best we can. Each of us is right in our own

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.

Whenever we think we have a rational, moral way of resolving our conflicts and problems, our perceived need for a power greater than ourselves diminishes. We then tend to disassociate the spiritual from the everyday, routine events which make up the substance of our lives. We may apply spiritual principles to parts of our lives or our programs, but really we think we have reached a plateau where we can make it without further learning. Nothing could be further from the truth.

There comes a time for each of us when we have to ask ourselves, what have we done for the program? Until then we should try to be good takers. For most of us, this comes relatively easy. But how do we sick addicts become able to help others? The answer is in the Twelve Steps of N.A. Through the Steps, we surrender, find faith, and clear the wreckage from our present and past which frees us to live to the fullest, just for today. With these freedoms comes the freedom to help others. We ask ourselves, "What can I do to help?" Each one of us has a special opportunity to do the impossible and directly or indirectly help another. The hard fact is that if we don't, no one else can. It's not that others don't care or don't try. They do try and they do care, but they can't give what they haven't got. What we have is a simple way of living clean, free from active addiction.

To be effective we must learn the lessons of surrender and love. None of us is all that right or all that wrong. When we comprehend these truths, we will no longer feel the need to be immoderate. Our desperation will disappear and with it, the need for personal assertion. We become examples of the spiritual truths upon which our new lives are founded. Self-will severely limits our goals and accomplishments. Through surrender and love we can work with others and greater things become possible.

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-

centeredness, we can surrender to good guidelines and even add to them in a positive manner after we've learned what was known before. The reason for doing this, apart from its common sense, is that a great number of our members often depend on our efforts for services which have gotten lost in the shuffle when we have allowed ourselves to get too caught up in rewriting our guidelines.

Rules and paper didn't get us clean. We're miracles. Nothing can explain the fact that N.A. work; all we can describe is what happens and what works for us. When we get together to serve, we follow good procedures to help us achieve our main objective which is to do all we can to help those who might otherwise die.

One of the possible reasons we have difficulties with procedures, beyond the basic fact that we are addicts, is that we sometimes get caught up in appearances. If we see someone chairing a committee which is doing a lot of good, we can mistake what they are doing for personal power rather than the power which comes from our unity, combined resources and effort. Sure, they are happy with what they are doing. Why shouldn't they be, after all the failures they have known? We feel good when things go well for a change. Nothing wrong with feeling good clean.

What may not be so obvious, is the exhaustive work and education which generally precedes this kind of successful service. What is very important to remember is that our trusted servants are a product and function of our group will. They themselves have known our pain and desperation. When we feel like they are on a power or ego trip, it is possible that we are only jealous or envious. They may make us feel like we haven't even got a chance to play a truly useful role. Our study of history shows us that

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

elected whom. Responsibility in N.A. rests squarely on our groups.

In N.A. we have only one Ultimate Authority and that is a Loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. When this principle becomes a working part of our service, we go to great lengths to stay in touch with the feelings and directions our members want us to take, and are not likely to oppose those we serve or represent on any basic issues. We are all in this together, and we each can play a useful part if we want to. If we feel left out and confused, we are supposed to speak up. If we don't, our discomfort can affect others. We have to learn to get over our fear of others. The truth is that if you feel funny, so do others. By holding your feelings inside, you may in effect be saying, "These people don't really care what I think. They don't care how I feel!" You are only selling yourself short if you fall into this lie. Your feelings are part of how N.A. feels. You are a member too.

The Program of Narcotics Anonymous has been built up from the dreams of our members who have believed in themselves and the others members clean. They knew they were onto something good. They were inspired to go beyond what had been possible before. They did what they could to open the door to recovery a little wider, to make room for you. Let them be an inspiration to you who are their dearest dream come true.

Group conscience is how our members feel about something which affects N.A. Our members either feel good about something, don't really feel strongly one way or the other, or are dead set against something. When they are asked how they feel casually, we have learned that their response is usually casual. When they are asked with respect what they honestly feel about something in clear simple language or in writing, their response is usually clear and meaningful.

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.

N.A. flourishes where everyone knows what is going on and feels a part of it all. When our members feel left out, they naturally wonder why; what did they do wrong? If they feel uninformed or misled, they may begin to experience the fears and desperation which used to be with us always. Sometimes the minutes don't get mailed because the secretary didn't have the postage or the money to have copies made. Good procedures can help here, but the real help comes when we are able to trust and honestly express our feelings. If we check into what's happening, we can usually find someone needing our help. Of course, we have to have some sort of trust in ourselves before we can even begin to trust others. We try to never allow our personal shortcomings and fears to hurt other members of this Fellowship. When we have learned trust and faith, keep ourselves informed and feel moved to do our part, then the 'business' of N.A. comes easy.

Most of the material in our service manual is concise and clear. To be effective, we have to go beyond the black and white of our service structure and our guidelines. There is a need for the clarity of our structure, but as recovering addicts we have a greater need for the experience of those who know how to get things done within our Fellowship and within our Service Structure without violating our Traditions.

There will be many times when a good idea has to wait due to priorities not of our making. When we see one need and group conscience is focused on another, we will not always be able to get our way. We will need to be working a good program and maintaining our spiritual condition if we are to survive some of the feelings and emotions that we experience when we get into services for real. Getting our way has little to do with service. Service has to do with giving love, care and understanding to people who have little to look forward to without our message of hope and recovery from the disease of addiction. We become

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'

and that we weren't the only ones frustrated or who felt left out and misunderstood. What a revelation! Afterwards, we were better able to assume some responsibility to improve and correct things which needed doing. We had to realize that 'somebody' had to be willing to address a need which was important to us as well as our group. It took a while for us to realize that we could be 'somebody.'

After all this, adherence to the Fellowship conscience was able to provide the strength and guidance we all need to serve. Our structure provides the necessary checks and balances for all our members to participate in service without anybody really 'running the show.' We addicts are particularly sensitive of anyone trying to control or manipulate us. Our service guidelines are an acknowledgment of this sensitivity.

In our past we have been ruled by our fears. Surrender and trust do not come easily to us. We have to learn them first and earn them later, when we are able to put into practice what we have learned. It is good to remember a little common sense can go a long way in service procedures. If a procedure doesn't make sense in the beginning for us, we most often accept it on faith. If it doesn't make sense later on, we may need to bring it up for our own understanding or to support changes for the better. We are constantly growing. Neither our guidelines nor our service structure should inhibit our members from doing their personal best.

Meditating on the relationship between a 'group' and the 'individuals' who compose the group can teach us a lot. Neither can exist without the other in N.A. A group can decide to do something, but individuals have to carry out the will of the group. The group has to be free to decide what needs to be done, and the individuals have to be free to do the job. Only the group can make its servants 'trusted' by

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

members to show up, set up the meeting and see to it that we leave our meeting place a little better than we found it. Our other service efforts are aimed at supplying the group with literature, letting addicts know N.A. meetings are available in an attractive manner, or carrying our message into places where we find addicts unable to attend regular meetings. We have found that these things give us a good feeling about ourselves and our program. By reminding our members in service of these things, we keep our members pulling together to do whatever they can to help. If we ever allow these things to be forgotten, we lose the support of the Fellowship which is essential to our services.

The first rule of service is that no trusted servant, service board or committee has the right to violate group conscience. If we feel we have a valid viewpoint, we can bring up topics and make material available to others, which can give them information which they may be lacking and which is necessary for agreement among members on important issues. We can make our feelings and concerns known to others and trust in their conscience to act when the time comes. It can be awfully hard to hold back from jumping ahead sometimes, but generally it is best to wait until we have a solid basis in group conscience before acting on a general concern. We can act individually, expressing our feelings to others and placing items on agendas. It is important to be open to the conscience of the group, especially if we don't get the support we expect. It means that we're missing something. We need to find out what it is before we try to go on.

If circumstances result in our acting prematurely, we should be surrendered enough to get with any members who may be affected by our actions and let them know what happened. That way we minimize the risk we run of cutting ourselves off from those who have the final say in all things N.A.: the

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.

Whatever type of service committee or subcommittee is involved, we employ discussion procedures which allow our members to have a say in their Fellowship and minimize the effects of powerful personalities which have trouble with spiritual principles as applied to service. The most famous of these is "Robert's Rules of Order." These rules contain by design several elements which allow for successful group actions. Read a copy for details. Few of our members understand more than a few of the basics contained in "Robert's Rules." They are used more frequently in larger service committees or where discussions are getting out of hand.

In general, with a group of surrendered, recovering addicts, proceedings can go smoothly on an informal basis. As long as the members present have surrendered to Narcotics Anonymous and are in attendance to do what they can to help others, all goes well. The need for rules of order results when our primary purpose gets lost amid bickering personalities. We can never reasonably expect arbitrary rules to be a substitute for real, honest, caring and sharing. If there is disorder, it usually is a symptom of someone's fear justifying a need to control. In all honesty, these problems have been among our most painful. How can we assert ourselves and contest basic issues when we admit we are defective ourselves? Our only hope is that in time we learn to put our trust in the "Power" which is the source of our group conscience.

Members with longer clean time will be able to provide stability and our growing numbers will be able to provide the energy and funds to carry our message to the ends of the Earth. Though we all have a lot to be grateful for, experience has shown us that we can get so wrapped up in policies and procedure that we can forget the simplicity which has granted us new lives.

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

2) That they feel that the service committee is acting against their group 'conscience' in some way and the only way they can express their dissatisfaction is not to show up, or

3) Perhaps a third possibility exists where members have gotten complacent and are unaware of the opportunity to serve.

In any case, holding a learning day with plenty of food and perhaps some activity can get members together to talk out their differences and get together again. We can't get any where in service if our members aren't aware of their interdependence.

After the reports, old and new business are discussed, in that order. Old business consists of matters addressed in the minutes of the last business meeting which need to be brought up. These matters might consist of something which needed to be done or information which needed to be gathered to inform the group so that some action can be taken. New business can consists of items on the agenda which is mailed to members who will be attending the service meeting at least ten days in advance or matters which need to be addressed for the reports given in the first part of the current meeting. Voting on old and new business is done by motions made and seconded. Voting is done by members elected to represent some group conscience. The right to vote is called participation. All service committee meetings are open to the Fellowship, which means that N.A. members may attend.

Motions are emphasized in some way by the secretary in the minutes. For example, "MOTION: THAT THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES CONTAINED IN THE N.A. SERVICE MANUAL BE ADOPTED BY THIS SERVICE COMMITTEE. Made by _____, Seconded by _____." To effectively make available the 'motions in

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

of a 'muddy' question. Stating clearly in writing what is needed and what effect will result gives the average member a good basis for a clear response. Our groups and members should never be put in the position of having to vote on something without the information required to let them know what has gone before, what is happening currently and what effects will likely result from their conscience. Anything else is an abuse of the Fellowship and leads to despondency instead of spirited service action.

Where we find ourselves in this well-known trap, we admit fault quickly by public apology and ask the members involved to bear with us. We have to remember that we are only the servants and can lead only by acceptable example. We work hard to stay in tune with those we represent and serve. Our First Step can help us remember what we are, who we are and where we come from. We all have a lot to be grateful for today. We have all benefited as much from our mistakes as much as our successes. We have to be able to learn from both and go on together.

ELECTIONS

Election procedures vary somewhat throughout the Fellowship, although they are well covered in the N.A. Service Manual. At both the area and regional level, the Manual states that the committee officers should be elected from its active participants, taking into account prior service experience. Active participants show up, do as asked and are voting members of the service committee. Other methods such as elaborate nomination systems can bring personalities into the service effort with devastating effects. We recommend that you keep it simple and go with what works in N.A.

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

but we have the program to support us. When we make the connection between our service effort and one clean member, it is all worthwhile. Our procedures have been kept as simple as possible to allow us the freedom we need to serve.

A committee or subcommittee can save itself some trouble by adopting the policies and procedures presented in our N.A. service manual. Many hours wasted in futile, endless discussion can be avoided since the 'motion to approve' the section of the Service Manual which applies to us cancels out the 'recommended guidelines' debate. This debate consists of arbitrarily bringing up the Service Manual when it serves our ends and refuting the Service Manual when it conflicts with our viewpoint on the basis that it is only recommended. Specific motions can still supplement your committee's need for direction and order.

Pray hard, and do all you can to help. Your reward will be in the feeling you will be able to carry in your heart that once, just this once, you have been able to set aside the lesser parts of your personality and given yourself to some greater whole selflessly. No greater miracle is possible for people who suffer from our disease excepting only the fact of being clean.

Good service procedures get results in terms of providing direct service to our membership and in making our message available to those whose need it. Poor procedures result in personal conflicts which have no remedy. All we can do is get back to basics and go on together clean.

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 there 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.

Contact with other members in other areas resulted in cross pollination, Fellowship-wide. N.A. was blessed with increasing consistency wherever meetings were held. Many traveling members can attest to the amazement they felt when walking into a meeting far from where they lived and feeling right at home. Written, telephone and personal visits as well as various conventions stimulated contact and exchange of viewpoints among members from all over. Formulation of our Basic Text from the spoken tradition of N.A. recovery worked to strengthen our Fellowship and spread the N.A. message as well as providing an impersonal source for finding out what N.A. is all about. Income from the distribution of Narcotics Anonymous allowed our service effort to grow into areas previously beyond our reach.

Following through from our earlier example, we learn a lot about our service effort from those who began N.A. where we live and those who have welcomed us to the Fellowship. In the beginning, we are usually amazed by the intensity and quality of the love and understanding we find among members. In time we learn that the members who welcomed us are addicts like ourselves who have learned a new way to live. Of course they understand. They have walked a mile in our shoes. They are just as amazed as we are to be clean day after day. Their pain, despair and hopelessness motivated them to seek something better, as does ours. We are all in this together.

In its simplest dimensions, our service effort includes all those who call themselves members of N.A. We cannot conceive of real recovery without some concern for others and some efforts to help others who suffer like we do. To simplify the matter of discussing our service effort, we will somewhat restrict the matter to those who sacrifice a measure of their anonymity to serve N.A. in some more obvious and conspicuous way. They are the members who open the meetings, chair, give leads and so on. They are the members who meet,

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

self-righteous wrongdoing and manipulation and control of others, which is anathema to us and our program.

The effort to give back what we have so freely received gives us our worth in spiritual as well as social terms. Only you, the trusted servants of N.A., have any idea of the labor of love N.A. service is. Imagine if some great corporation had to hire all the members who open our meetings and pay all the rents, meeting supplies and the various expenses of our area and regional service committees and conventions. We give freely what has been given freely to us. This is the measure of our gratitude.

Rule-making and efforts to dominate other members through structural service may constitute a separate disease. Our basic surrender to our disease and follow the recovery process outlined in our Twelve Steps gives us a basis to believe we can surrender to anything, if necessary. Still, we are aware of what happens when self-willed, inexperienced people are thrust into positions they feel are powerful without years of preparation and gently advanced experience. They are either paralyzed or jump into frantic activity. Though the end result of a sadder, wiser, trusted servant is possible in some cases, most often our promises of a good feeling and a closer relationship with God are made to seem lies and the cruelest deception. We ease the way of our newcomers to service in just the same way and for just the same reason we do in recovery. We know it is easy for a newcomer to get in over their head before they have the least idea of how to swim in the N.A. service world. We know first impressions are lasting, and we all know of members who got burnt from their service experience. Why we have to hurt so badly before we can surrender and become teachable, only God knows.

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

few simple tasks along with prayer and meditation. We can't serve well without help anymore then we can recovery on our own resources. N.A. is a Fellowship of sharing and caring. The most important thing to know is that we don't have to go it alone.

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

need to. Our desperation blinds us to this truth when we most need it.

Trusted servanthship is a state of functioning in accord with the will of our own personal higher power and the will of the Fellowship at the same time. Anytime we have difficulty bringing these two together, it is a good time to stop what we're doing at once and appeal to our fellow members for guidance. Anytime we find it difficult to carry out the express will of our membership, we should resign to protect our own integrity. Perhaps an unthinking group will reconsider the gravity of their actions. We can always stay active and useful in many ways. Service is not a trap, and we should never act against our own best judgment. If something 'feels' funny, it is coming from either our inadequate understanding or something is really out of line with the loving principles of anonymous service. These principles are: 1) genuine concern for other suffering addicts, 2) a willingness to share what we have been given so freely and 3) reliance on a power greater than ourselves for strength and guidance.

While new knowledge is being gathered all the time, a lot of written material is available to those who wish to inform themselves on the history of their area and region as well as N.A. as a Fellowship. Minutes, old newsletters and various members can answer a lot of our questions. We are able to see for ourselves the struggles we have had to be willing to go through to get where we are today. Some areas and regions may not be set up to make these materials easily available to the average member who wants them, but if you really want them, keep asking. Someone knows whom you can see, and the time and effort can be crucial to your effectiveness in the long run. You will be able to see for yourself and draw your own conclusions about the need for clarity of thought and action in doing N.A. service work.

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,

you can gain insight into the clear path before you. Sticking to the guidelines lets you know your surrender is intact and gives you the benefit of what others have learned and attempted to pass on to you.

Reading minutes, will allow you to feel the pulse of group conscience when things went well and when they went badly. You will surely notice that when your members had the faith and courage to act and were excited by their mutual service successes, amazing miracles of service took place. When members became confused and tried to control what was happening, the simplest and most basic service actions became impossible. There are many ways of seeing the Spirit of this Fellowship in action, and this is one of them. When the feeling of love and mutual respect is there, all goes well. When for any reason this feeling is cut off, our members stop coming to service committee and devote their efforts to staying clean and helping others directly. This direct help is what helps us all stay clean, but it sure is nice to be able to give a copy of our Book to someone from your local literature committee than to wait for the mails. It sure is nice to think about the reality of a good helpline service to help addicts who are ready to ask for help. It's great to be in touch with what's happening in other areas and regions within N.A. through reading newsletters and other materials which carry our message. It is truly wonderful to know our message is being carried to those of us who are locked up in prisons or shut away in hospitals where they can't get out to regular meetings and just a short time ago, we couldn't get in to them. As we know these things don't happen without trusted servants.

One of the catches that is best learned from the first is that a lot of the rules which might well apply to other group actions outside of the program are strictly out of place in NA service. We don't fight each other. There is nothing

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

in N.A. We have only to remember our origins, the pain, fear, desolation and despair which drove us to seek help in N.A. to see we really are better off and constantly remain in a position to help. Rescue comes in many forms in our Fellowship, but the source is the love, acceptance and understanding we have for one another. Against many of our instincts which may have served us well in days gone by, we find we must learn to trust. If we trust someone in a reasonable manner, expecting the best of them and letting them know it, we are rarely let down. Even then, our pain is mostly concern and sadness. Trust is a way of growing closer to others, and it grants the gift of being able to keep our own word and make good on our own commitments. When we show distrust and our addict members become aware of it, the whole basis for doing well and giving their best to whatever they are trying to do to help is threatened. It takes more courage to stand in the face of this sort of adversity than most of us are willing to put up with. Spiritual things have a certain movement, and we do all we can to keep moving in a positive direction.

It is part of our nature to contend with one another. Some of us like to fight, even if we have to go looking for trouble. We may be looking for the shot of adrenaline which comes from anger, or we may be unconsciously trying to find fault with the Program of N.A. so we can get back to our using. These facts are obvious when you think about it. What is sad is to see them take temporary precedence over the efforts of those who really want to serve and help out any way they can. They are being ripped off for their chance to serve and get the good feelings which come from loving service.

We aren't used to working together along spiritual lines and some of the things we hear about service may seem a little too good to be true, especially in light of our past experiences and preconceptions.

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.

Without these lessons, we will get the involvement and the joy of seeing something good being accomplished at least partially through our time and effort, but the real inward sense of wonder will be missing. The likelihood is too great that we will fall into the error of seeing ourselves as the doers and fail to realize the miraculous nature of our services: we do the footwork and God does the miracles.

If we cannot accept this simple idea, we will be too up when things appear to be going well and too down if things don't seem to be working out the way we planned. We need to learn balance. The feelings we get from being clean and being able to do for others what has been done for us sets us free from the pain, fear and uselessness of our past. We have to learn to accept these feelings as real in the here and now and stop living as if we may be happy sometime after a great long while. We can only prepare for so long, then we have to act on our new-found faith. We have to continue doing the things which make us feel good if we want to keep feeling good. If we lose for a while the good feeling, they can come back if we can remember what we were doing that worked for us and get back with it.

THE RESPONSIBILITY

A confusion exists when we ask ourselves just who are we responsible to as trusted servants? The committee of which we are a part or the suffering addict who may not even know they have a disease called addiction. Most of us have to work out the answers to these questions for ourselves. Still, we all know the feelings. We want to do something good and someone is standing in our way, sometimes with the full backing of group conscience. What do we do?

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.

Do we secretly want to run the show? Do we have our surrenders intact or do we see the other members and the rest of the Fellowship as a bunch of doe-doe birds without the sense to listen to us and do things our way, the way that works? If we get the strength and guidance we need to overcome such obstacles as these and go on clean, we will know the real miracle of N.A., which is to be found in our Steps and our Traditions. We will have paid a price of sorts if we are able again to seriously and intently go to meetings looking for what only we find there: a chance to be with others like ourselves, receive loving acceptance and the opportunity to help others. We will be able to realize on a deeper level some of the truths we were taught in our early recovery which we may have lost track of along the way.

It is good to remember that our addiction makes us allergic to power in any form. The reason it is so important for us to have a firm grip on the Twelve Steps of N.A. as we grow in service is that we have to hold back from seeing ourselves as the doers of the acts we take part in. Our foundation is in the love and understanding of those who have gone before which we are able to add to and pass on to others today. Whenever we feel powerful or truly knowledgeable on a subject, our inborn ability to make asses of ourselves is subject to take over. Whenever we think we see another member acting badly, we can always be grateful it's not us because we all have the potential.

"For our Group purpose there is but one ultimate authority, a loving God as He may express Himself in our Group conscience." The spiritual message of the Second Tradition is clear. We spend a lot of time in recovery discovering and learning to make the most of our potential to be the best we can be. From the first, we can sense a rightness or an imbalance in the feelings we share as members.

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

behind the governor. As our Tradition says, "Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." All we can do is look for those things suffering from lack of maintenance or waiting to be done. All forms of service have a bottom line. Some few simple things which we are supposed to do as trusted servants. Most of us have to get in the habit of thinking about and taking seriously our commitments if we are to live up to them. We can expect little in the way of joy or contentment if we stray from these simple things. Many of us are grandiose and look to serve where the 'action' is. This is fine with us, and N.A. service offers a lot of active positions, but the Fellowship rests on those members who attend to the newcomers and keep the meeting rooms open.

If we fail in our sincerity, which is the underpinning of all our efforts as trusted servants, we undo and cut ourselves off from the spirit which knows recovery is possible for us. When we fall in to error, all we have to do is get honest again and we are back on the road to recovery and a new life. We cannot fault our creator with this design. It includes all who would help and made real the hopes and promises of N.A. and merely neutralizes those who do not believe in our way of life. They remain free to alter their relationship to the whole whenever they again give themselves the freedom to hope for better. Without any necessity to engage our resources in a futile process of monitoring the actions of others dealing with lines of deceit and intrigue, we go our way in peace and certain knowledge. We know recovery is possible for any who are willing to give themselves to the process outlined in our Twelve Steps. We have no need to attempt to control what only God can deal with. We spend our time in useful ways. This does not imply that we lack spirit or courage. We know that real courage requires us to withhold ourselves from useless contests and stick to what works.

Though they may seem to have no good purpose, certain problems experienced by N.A. members in service, teach us how to live. We get to go through situations which teach us things about ourselves and getting along with others we might not learn any other way. By staying clean through these experiences, we are led into a greater personal freedom.

Our experience shows us that we can never wish harm to another person without suffering harm ourselves. We learn to wish them the happiness and joy we would like very much for them to receive. We can usually identify with their pain. Again, the freedom we find in recovery allows us to do these things. We are fortunate to be able to make some of our mistakes in a spiritual environment where we can get help from understanding members and stay clean through our periods of self made adversity. We learn how to forgive when we are forgiven. Our fellow members forgive us because they know they could easily be in our shoes.

Many of these interactions constitute some of the personal services we provide one another. Going to meetings, we discuss our problems with others and find a store of practical wisdom which provides the sort of answers we are seeking. Somehow, the more we seek, the more we find. The member in need is a service to the member who helps them. Problems which made no sense to us can be seen differently when we realize we are not alone.

The nature of service brings us into the room where the meetings are held. Service helps us fulfill our healthy need to be appreciated. We discover a new life clean is possible for us. We receive and accept help through N.A. After a while we find ourselves facing an addict, sick and confused, who reminds us a lot of ourselves when we were new.

When it comes time for us to step down, and we have grown to love our service position, we face a crucial test of our recovery. What is our trust worth today? Will we be able to trust others to be able to pick up where we left off, or will the good we have been able to accomplish be wasted by those who take our place? Will they be as sincere as we have been? Do they understand how much we have had to do behind the scenes to make sure that things work out well? Do other members know how hard we have had to work, and will they elect a replacement capable of filling our shoes? Have our efforts been appreciated? These are questions we need to ask ourselves and work out with the help of our Higher Powers, our sponsors and our home groups. We never have to go it alone unless we lose the ability to admit our need for help. Surely, there will be times when things go wrong. They are the fallow times, times when people consider what works and what doesn't. They precede the next period of growth.

Even the sun can't stand overhead all day. All things move in cycles, they come and they go. Beware of appearances. We need spiritual principles to guide us through the periods when we can't see clearly what to do or when to do it. Still, in a healthy community there is no real need periodically to go limp or discontinue services which have helped us find the program and make the most of our recoveries through service.

When our time comes, we just thank those who have allowed us to serve, make sure our books and records are in order, and pass them on to the service committee or the new chair. If we can't surrender the notes and materials needed for our replacement to do a good job and help establish continuity, what have we surrendered? How have we changed?

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

relapsed into a sick way of thinking which will almost certainly lead to pain for ourselves and others unless we take our own inventory, make a joke of it and change our ways. It is sick for us to imagine we can run the show. We can serve. We can support. We can be extremely active in many positive ways which work out to the great benefit of others through N.A. As long as we can remember who we are, what we are and where we came from, there is a chance we will have enough gratitude and respect left to fulfill the basic requirement for N.A. membership.

When we think we can run the show, we may feel superior to those who have had the God-given ability to help us get clean and stay clean. As long as we are open to them, and our need for help, recovery can go on. This has been a great hindrance to our growth as a Fellowship. Our entire program exists to help you be able to do this. Use your program; it works, doesn't it? We understand that these things happen because we are like you and they have happened to many of us. We came through it all clean and no longer fear the dark despair although we reserve the right to look for a flashlight.

This is all part of giving your service your best. If you try these things, they will help offset any let-down feelings you might have, especially if you have been very active. If you have the ability to continue with the service committee in the same subcommittee without being seen as a threat to the new chair, it might be a good idea to build up members who have long-term experience with a particular subcommittee in an area or a region.

It's true in recovery that you can't give something away you do not first possess. You will have a hard time doing good service if you don't hang on to your records, minutes, reports, flyers and notes. Also, you will have nothing to pass on unless you maintain these things as you go. Buy or borrow a

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

other papers can give a lot of our members a quiet moment of real gratitude.

When we talk about 'continuity' we have a way of looking forward or backward. Continuity is also today. What we say, feel and do affects other people for better or worse. When we speak well of others, step in and try to help if we see problems, or pray to be used as an instrument, we are able to provide greater continuity in the present tense. During many times in our history as a Fellowship, one part of our structure grew more rapidly than the rest. Today, it is our hope that a lot of those types of ups and downs are behind us. If necessary, we can accept more troubles, but many of us spend all the time we can to help minimize these difficult transitions, which need not occur at all. Being supportive of others is part of being a servant and, of course, when you help others, even in service work, it comes back to you and your service committee. If H.&I. is hurting for funds, there is no reason why the P.I. folks can't make a special effort to turn out in support of that service. It's all one program.

Our meetings are chaired and led by N.A. members with recovery and hope to offer members in attendance. This is only to say that in N.A. we offer N.A. recovery. In years gone by, this was hard to do because we had so few members, meetings and literature to draw on. We had to do whatever we could just to survive. Today is different because we have grown. In a little over ten years we have grown from a few scattered meetings and members with a lot of love, courage and faith to nearly five thousand meetings with over one hundred and fifty thousand recovering addicts! Our program seems to be working quite well. Sadly, wherever our Traditions are held in contempt by perhaps well-meaning but uninformed individuals, we know the disease of addiction is at work. Why else would anyone attempt to interfere or threaten the love and joy we find with one another when we are gathered together to find or to share recovery?

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

steering committee is made up of those people who regularly attend, support a Group and attend the business meetings. This keeps members from bloc-voting in more than one group and defeating group conscience by underhanded tactics which can hardly speak of recovery, much less surrender and spirituality.

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 and 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.

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

and climbed back down. The message here is that they could do it until they stopped to think about it. Just so, sometimes we get so caught up in helping others we are carried beyond what others (and we ourselves) thought possible for us. The key thing is that while most of us, if not all, are real good at being bad to ourselves. Through personality change, every one of us is able to go far beyond what we will do for ourselves when we are thinking of another. This truth is amazing when we consider, on the other hand, our intense selfishness.

It might be that this moment of intense concern for others suspends the limitations we usually put on ourselves. We forget we can't do things and wind up being able to do them at will. The giving which we call service grants us this strength. Where the concern for others is great, our services and our Fellowship flourish. Whenever we relax our efforts to maintain our spiritual conditions centered around what we can do for others, we experience a setback as individuals, as groups and as communities. Those who care, keep it going. Our strength as individuals and as a Fellowship comes from our desire to help others. This is what N.A. selfishness is all about. It is truly selfish to want recovery so much that we let down our guards and get involved for the benefit of others in some way. First, our obsession to use is quieted and, in time, removed. Second, we find ourselves understanding how we caused our own problems when we help someone else successfully get through similar problems. Third, it is an ongoing process which has no end we know of. We continue to get the strength we need just so long as we direct our energies to benefit others. When we get selfish in the old sense, we find ourselves quickly reduced to our former resources, and it is really hard to do without the benefits of love and understanding we get through N.A.

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.

We deal with our present limitations by inventorying ourselves and through actively seeking to fill in our blanks. In recovery, our actions speak louder than our reactions. New feelings can be sought and cultivated. They lead to new actions as we grow spiritually. One of the facts about spirituality is the difficulty with words. When we cultivate our conscious contact with the God of our understanding, most of our problems evaporate. This is how we get the power to lead our new lives clean. We key into our Higher Power and learn to act in new ways.

Our guidance comes from our prayers, our new learnings and the inspirations we receive to help add to what we find that works in N.A. It is interesting to note that all our service efforts are the result of a single individual impulse to give. The successes accumulate and the errors are replaced with a more successful approach, or discontinued. This is part of the message in 'take it easy'. If we really find our way blocked, we don't recommend putting out more energy until we find out what we've been doing wrong. The result is a highly functional system of service which has proven itself proof against the most insidious assaults of the disease of addiction imaginable, even by our drug addict standards!

Guidance is more than the written word can convey. The limitations of language are puny compared with the knowledge which comes from knowing that a power greater than ourselves directs us and guides our every effort. Most of what is known about this guidance is that it always comes to those who consistently pray for it. While prayer is usually considered to be asking for the help of the God of your understanding in some attitude of reverence and privacy, it might be interesting for you to think of your Higher Power as you go through your daily living. When someone asks for help, pray to be used as an instrument to help them in some way. When you have problems of any sort with your service,

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.

Your sponsor should be able to share their service experiences. You will never run out of other members who can talk for hours about service and never repeat themselves. You may have trouble getting them to shut up.

Because service is such a serious subject with us, we try to offset the seriousness with humor. We all have stories of what happened when we tried to take control. Through remembering that a Loving God works the miracles and that we ourselves are nothing more than instruments of that will, we can do our part without the feeling that we are the ones who count and that the same God which gives us the strength to try can also handle any problems which arise. The message of our Third Step in recovery is "don't worry".

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

don't get formed or their needs serviced without involved, committed members exhibiting their concern for others.

The challenge that no addict need ever die without a chance to find recovery is one of the 'impossible' goals we set for ourselves. The statement wouldn't make a lot of sense without the opportunity to recover in N.A. It used to be that recovery for addicts without eventual relapse and progressive degeneration was thought to be impossible. Each one of us has helped to change that picture by the simple fact of our daily abstinence. More and more, recovery is being recognized, and for those of us who know the truths to be found in our Twelve Steps: relapse is not our destiny.

Service should always be flexible and aimed toward fulfilling the needs of the newcomer, the member or the group. Our emphasis must be flexible enough to mold itself to the changing needs we encounter. We should never stray too far from common sense. Our Fellowship has grown out of our successes and enough knowledge of our failures to avoid their repetition.

Our groups should be autonomous because our spirits thrive on freedom. Autonomy is the freedom to have certain things done in certain ways within the broad spectrum of N.A. meetings and their formats. Nobody we've ever heard of has tried to turn a meeting into a bridge club or a paid therapy session. Autonomy doesn't give us the right to stand against the program and Fellowship of N.A. Autonomy gives us the freedom to stand with N.A.

Being able to take a stand on principle is a sign of spiritual strength. After all, by attempting to carry our message, we are making ourselves vulnerable to criticism, being misunderstood and failure. We have to realize that N.A. success goes against the mountain of ignorance about

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.

Getting to the place where we can be open to new ideas and unfamiliar changes without losing track of our personal responsibilities is a worthy goal. The one absolute essential element of N.A. service is constantly to bear in mind that at best we are only the instruments of our Higher Power. By our claim to 'membership' we establish our need for help and our failure to meet the standards we set for ourselves. Yet how quickly we pick up our old approaches to things in a service setting, as if the principles we apply in recovery have nothing to do with our service. How quickly we judge, condemn and execute when we are fearful. It is only the fear and reliance on old ways which give us trouble.

The beauty and strength of N.A. lies not in the perfection of our systematic approaches to service, but in our almost magical ability to overcome impossible obstacles through simple faith and simple action.

When we allow ourselves to act out of fear, we are giving power to our disease. When we act out of faith we, give power to the miracles of recovery. Fear gives way to all sorts of problems. Members who look to us for help, see our fear and are dismayed. Solutions based on fear and reaction dodge issues and seek to cover up a part of reality we have trouble dealing with.

Positive approaches, based in hope, faith and love have a better chance of success because they have to take into account the real issues and courageously develop solutions which deal with known factors. The details of approaches to N.A. service through structure or application will always become obsolete through growth. The stable parts are the intangibles like love for our fellow addicts, our personal need to feel good about ourselves in recovery, and the faith we share in a power greater than ourselves.

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.'

The joy of giving is the feeling which offsets our disease and lets the promise of freedom from active addiction become a reality in our lives. Our selfishness is the root of our character defects and the basis of our relationships with other people. In recovery, we find real ways to explore these relationships and find levels of intensity and intimacy which used to be beyond our reach. It is our giving which makes all the difference. Our 'taking' got us loneliness, misery, isolation, desperation, unemployable and the only way out seemed to be to become more lost in our using. Through 'giving' we find the opposites coming our way. We have the close company of as many other people as we can handle at the time. Our misery evaporates when we learn our needs can be met through simple honesty. Our isolation and desperation is alleviated when we let others into our lives who are willing to help us with our problems. We even find our employability improved the more we learn that by giving our employers what they want, the more we get what we want. A lot of members can tell you that they learned things through service which opened doors to jobs which had formerly been closed to them. Their attitude towards work and doing meaningful things got better through N.A. service and as their fears subsided through recovery.

We learn and are reminded that prayer, gratitude and faith are the hallmarks of N.A. service. There are times when members who see the service structure as a battle of wills exert themselves to exert control and manipulate service committees.

The strength of N.A. lies in the membership. As a member, you can always try to do the best job you can. You can always find someone who will be willing to take time to explain what you don't understand. It has most often been our experience that when we became truly willing, our solutions were already at hand and our difficulties worth the trouble. The giver gets the blessing.