

## The Twelve Principles of Service for Narcotics Anonymous

The Twelve Traditions of N.A. have guided our groups well in the conduct of their individual affairs, and they have always formed the foundation for N.A. services. They have steered us away from many pitfalls that could have meant our collapse. Our various service units *serve*, for example, they do not *govern*; we stay out of public debate; we neither endorse nor oppose any of the many causes that our members may feel strongly about; our approach to addiction is a non-professional one; we are fully self-supporting. The traditions have provided our fellowship with essential guidance throughout its development, and they continue to be indispensable at every level of service.

The Twelve Principles of Service described here are intended to be practically applied to our service structure at every level. The spiritual ideals of our steps and traditions provide the basis for these principles, which are tailored to the specific needs of the various committees, boards and corporations that make up our service structure. The principles of service allow our groups the freedom to more readily achieve our traditions' ideals, and our service structure the freedom to function efficiently and responsibly in the face of the complex realities of the world around us.

When we conscientiously study and apply these principles, our services are stabilized, much as our steps have stabilized our lives and our traditions have stabilized and unified our groups. It is in this spirit that we present a set of principles to guide our services and help insure that the message of Narcotics Anonymous is available to all addicts who have a desire to stop using and begin practicing our way of life.

1. The final responsibility and authority for N.A. services rests with the N.A. groups.
2. The groups delegate to the service structure the authority necessary to develop and maintain services on behalf of N.A. as a whole.
3. Group conscience is the spiritual means by which a loving God influences our decisions. It is not, itself, a decision-making mechanism.
4. Skilled leadership is highly valued at every level of N.A. service. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.
5. Each service responsibility must be balanced by a carefully defined service authority.
6. The "principle of decision" provides that trusted servants responsible for the fulfillment of particular N.A. services be given the authority to use their best judgment in carrying out their duties.
7. The "principle of participation" allows all those entrusted with responsibility for our services to take part in the decision-making processes affecting those services.
8. The "principle of appeal" insures that minority opinion will be carefully considered in the decision-making process.

9. The "principle of petition" provides that any member of our service structure may, without fear of reprisal, make petition for the redress of a personal grievance against those exercising delegated authority.
10. The final point of decision should be clearly defined for each responsibility. Two-headed management within the N.A. service structure should be avoided at all times.
11. At all levels, the N.A. service structure should take care never to accumulate funds beyond a prudent financial reserve.
12. No one element of our service structure should have unqualified authority over any other. Our structure at all levels is one of service, never of government.

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**1. The final responsibility and authority for N.A. services rests with the N.A. groups.**

The essence of Narcotics Anonymous is not found in boards or committees, offices or corporations. The essence of N.A. is found in the simple message of recovery, carried from one addict to the next in an N.A. meeting. The groups which hold those meetings each week bear the final authority in Narcotics Anonymous, and the final responsibility for seeing that N.A. continues to reach out to the addict who still suffers. So it has always been, and so it shall always be.

The Twelve Principles and the N.A. Service Charter work together to spell out the process by which the groups exercise their final authority. Because of the great number of N.A. groups now in existence, the groups cannot themselves be directly involved in the numerous, often complicated tasks undertaken by the service structure. Groups remain focused on their own primary purpose, and they delegate the general service work to the rest of the service structure, as we will see in the principles to follow.

The groups do have direct involvement, however--clear means by which they exercise both their primary responsibility for N.A. services and their final authority in service matters. They send a steady stream of new group service representatives (GSR's) into the service community, who serve as delegates from their group to the service structure as a whole. These GSR's form the foundation of our entire service structure. For that reason, the groups must exercise great care in responsibly selecting the best possible GSR's. By this exercise of their primary responsibility for N.A. services, the groups also exercise the influence over the service structure that arises from their position of final authority.

Not only do the groups send the first wave of trusted servants into the service structure--they also supply much of the money necessary for those trusted servants to accomplish the service tasks they've been asked to do. This is an important exercise of the groups' final responsibility for N.A. services. This gives the groups "the power of the purse." Should an *extreme* situation arise in which substantial numbers of groups felt strongly that the service structure was running off in the wrong direction completely, the groups could withhold the funds necessary for continued movement in that direction. That would send a strong signal to throughout the service structure, and would demand immediate attention.

Fortunately, the principles and the service charter together virtually insure that sufficient communication will pervade our service structure so that it will never be necessary for the groups to take this extreme step. Nonetheless, the power of the purse is there, should the groups ever need to exercise it. And the final authority of the groups represented by the power of the purse flows directly from the exercise of their final responsibility for supporting N.A. services.

The groups themselves are the heart of the N.A. Fellowship, carrying our message of recovery directly to addicts. And all service efforts at every level arise from a single common goal: to serve the primary purpose of the groups. N.A. services either increase the exposure of addicts and the public at large to our message, thus attracting addicts to our meetings, or they provide written materials and other services which assist groups in carrying the message to the addicts who have been attracted to the meetings. Given that, it is clear that the service structure must always remain responsive to the guidance of the groups it serves. The First Principle exists to insure that the fact of the groups' final responsibility and authority for N.A. services remains forever without question.

**2. The groups delegate to the service structure the authority necessary to develop and maintain services on behalf of N.A. as a whole.**

The Fifth Tradition says, "Each group has but one primary purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers." It follows that when a group engages in activities which compete or interfere with that primary purpose, such actions are not consistent with that tradition. The First Principle of Service suggests that the groups are responsible to guide our services. Yet the issues faced by our service structure worldwide have become increasingly complex, requiring intensive planning and careful, studied execution. How, then, can the groups give their attention to this responsibility *and* their primary purpose?

We have experienced growing pains over this issue throughout the years. In the early days of our fellowship, it was possible for the groups to give their attention to the agenda of world services. Back then, N.A. was much smaller, and the "world" services agenda wasn't very different from the agenda of today's area committee. Over time, however, the business of world services has grown to include the management of a large corporate headquarters responsible for sorting out complex international issues, producing translations, publishing and distributing literature, interacting with the public, and providing services to the thousands of new groups, areas and regions as they develop. As you can see, it has simply become impractical for the many thousands of N.A. groups currently in existence to be directly involved in it all. And to attempt to involve them directly in such complex affairs would certainly distract the groups from their primary purpose. The growing pains have come as we have attempted to do just that.

This Second Principle of Service holds the key to unraveling what at first glance seems like a conflict between two important functions of N.A. groups: their responsibility to guide our services, and their responsibility to carry the message directly to addicts. The one word which sums up its spirit is "delegation." The groups discharge their responsibility spelled out in the First Principle of Service by delegating the responsibility for our many service efforts to the trusted servants they elect.

In the person of its GSR, elected directly at the group level, each group sends a delegate into the service structure, and then trusts that servant to become part of a team which will do together what the groups cannot--and should not--do for themselves. Together, the trusted servants make up a team called the N.A. service structure, which is composed of several smaller teams, each with clearly defined authority and responsibility. The rest of these principles spell out the many delicate balances that make up the fabric of that service community.

The essence of the Twelve Principles of Service is found in the combination of these first two. The groups bear the final responsibility, and have the final authority, for the conduct of our fellowship's services. The main way in which the groups carry out that responsibility is by electing the most qualified members among them to service positions, and then delegating to those people the authority to act effectively on behalf of the groups.

This delegation obviously requires trust. Some voices have been heard to say "Let's be realistic. We're all drug addicts! It's just not a good idea to give addicts that kind of trust." The Twelve Principles of Service are firmly rooted in the belief that the steps and traditions do work. They express our faith that when we ground our lives individually in those principles, and then come together as a community in a spirit of service, such fears are unfounded. Perhaps many years ago, when almost all of us were new in this way of life, the fear that our disease would prevent us from being trustworthy was a reasonable one. But our principles of recovery and unity have had many years now to put that fear to rest. Trust in one another, and in the collective conscience expressed among us when we are working together, is one of our highest spiritual ideals. These principles support that ideal. They have no meaning in an atmosphere of mistrust.

That trust, however, does not mean that checks and balances are not needed. It must be remembered that the groups' authority, when they are acting collectively, is *final*, while the authority of the servants is *delegated* by the groups. Clear, open communication in both directions is essential, and always encouraged. Groups may express themselves in many ways. If the service community gets badly off track, the groups may withhold the operating funds until the problems are corrected. Members can express themselves in service workshops and open forums held at various levels of service for the purpose of providing just that opportunity. Clear reports and other communications from service bodies keep the members informed of service activities and plans. A constant flow of new GSR's sent by the groups into the service community keeps the ideas and activities of our service bodies fresh.

In summary, the Second Principle of Service holds that when our trusted servants are selected with care, and are given the authority to apply their best judgment to the duties they are given, our services are most effective. Such an arrangement gives those closest to the issues, and most familiar with the processes involved in resolving those issues, the authority necessary to make informed decisions. The groups have the power and the responsibility to support the service structure by exercising careful judgment in electing trusted servants, by staying informed to a reasonable degree about broader fellowship matters, and by contributing funds to support the efforts of our service boards and committees.

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**3. Group conscience is the spiritual means by which a loving God influences our decisions. It is not, itself, a decision-making mechanism.**

This principle complements our Second Tradition by providing a clear description of the spiritual process we call group conscience. If group conscience is the means by which a loving God provides guidance to our fellowship, then it is a subject which must necessarily command our most intent consideration. In that spirit, let's consider the words "group" and "conscience" separately, then look at how powerfully they work together to form one of our fellowship's highest, most cherished ideals.

First the word "conscience." This word should not be confused with other similar words, such as "conscious" or "consensus" or "consciousness." Members sometimes use one of those words inadvertently in referring to this principle. All of those words sound similar, and are even related in some way to group conscience, but the word "conscience" is distinct, with a powerful meaning all of its own.

Conscience is essentially a spiritual faculty. It is our innate sense of right and wrong; an internal compass that each of us may consult in our personal reflections about the best course to take. Our Basic Text calls conscience one of our "higher mental and emotional functions" which was "sharply affected by our use of drugs."\* Our steps seek to revive it, and call upon us to exercise it directly. Our Fourth Step, for example, is a major undertaking of the conscience. The Tenth Step describes the role of conscience in our ongoing recovery.

As our spiritual awakening progresses, we become people of conscience. As we steadily apply spiritual principles in our lives, our decisions and actions increasingly become less motivated by self-interest and more motivated by what our conscience tells us is good and right. So the first stage in the development of group conscience is the application of the steps in the lives of each individual. Then, as individuals revive a healthy conscience--one which reflects the guidance of a loving God--they come together to form group conscience.

The word "group" then comes into play. To illustrate the full impact of the phrase "group conscience," try reading the Second Tradition, substituting the word "collective" for "group": "For our collective purpose, there is but one ultimate authority--a loving God as He may express Himself in our collective conscience. . . ." The Second Tradition then comes alive with meaning. The principle of group conscience--collective conscience--is being applied whenever members share with one another their honest reflections, having consulted their conscience.

When a single member holds a particular position of conscience, that position should influence his important decisions. But in an imperfect world, as a member of the human race, he can never be sure whether his individual reflections on the matter represent only his own thinking, or whether they reflect sound spiritual guidance. When we pool those reflections in a group setting, and we establish a fairly strong consensus, we can be more confident of spiritual guidance. That is the essence of group conscience. It is the means by which we seek the ongoing guidance and influence of our ultimate authority, a loving God.

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\* *Narcotics Anonymous*, Fifth Edition, pp. 4-5.

Group conscience is not a decision-making mechanism. There are many different ways, when group conscience is adequately exercised, to make a final decision. An N.A. group, for example, will exercise group conscience, or collective conscience, by allowing members to freely share their perspectives before a decision is made. Each individual member, during the exercise of group conscience, is making a clear effort to consult conscience rather than the more ego-driven forces within. Then, N.A. groups almost always opt for a purely democratic way of actually making the final decision. Group conscience is exercised during the discussion, and *then* the decision is made, having been spiritually influenced by that collective pooling of conscience.

To further illustrate the difference between group conscience and the decision making mechanism it influences, consider the case of a staff meeting at a large service center. Imagine that the manager in charge of the office has an important decision to make that is within her delegated authority, but will have broad impact on the office's operations. She has raised the issue for broad discussion among the staff, and that discussion is vigorous, with several different viewpoints shared. A group conscience is operating there.

Later the manager will make her decision and the staff will receive their instructions regarding its implementation. In this case, the decision-making mechanism was "executive authority" rather than "majority rules," but group conscience was still an important element in the decision.

These two examples were used to demonstrate the clear separation between the expression of group conscience and the particular method used to make a decision. Individuals who are in the process of spiritual growth make their best effort to express their conscience to the group. That pooling of conscience in a group setting is the means by which a loving God guides and influences our decisions. Finally, by the method most appropriate to the nature of the body in question, that decision is made.

**4. Skilled leadership is highly valued at every level of N.A. service. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.**

Our Second Tradition says, "...Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." Clearly implied in that statement is the assertion that we do indeed have leaders in N.A. No group or society can function well without able leadership. N.A. is no exception. Able leadership at every level of service is one of our most valued assets.

The Second Tradition also implies some very important things about the *style* of leadership in N.A. Our leaders are not dictators or order-givers. They are servants. Good leaders may be confident and decisive in taking the actions that serve the fellowship, but they plan thoughtfully and consult thoroughly with others before acting. Able leadership in the spirit of service does not drive by mandate, demanding conformity; it leads by example, commanding respect.

An N.A. leader is a person who is well versed in this fellowship's principles and policies, and remains consistent with them in taking carefully planned action. He consults with others, and seeks always to establish an appropriate level of consensus among those delegated with the authority to act on the matters at hand.

Good leadership understands that plans and ideas can come from anyone, anywhere. It is not uncommon for a skilled leader to discard his own ideas and plans for those that are better, crediting the source.

A quality often associated with good leadership is the ability to compromise when compromise is called for. In a society such as ours, which places a high value on broad consensus in its decision-making process, progress is usually characterized by a series of compromises. Skilled leaders watch for opportunities to compromise in ways that will improve our prospects for effective action and increased unity.

A good leader does not, however, compromise blindly. Sometimes she stands up for her convictions, sticking faithfully to her position. Sometimes during a group discussion the majority is wrong, and the lone voice must persist in making the case for sound principle and sound thinking. Our principles of appeal and petition provide for the thorough exercise of this kind of leadership. When the appeals are exhausted, and the minority opinion has been considered carefully and still did not prevail, a good leader also knows how to surrender and accept the decision that arose from group conscience. No matter how right we think we are, our respect for group conscience in N.A. must always prevail.

The ability to accept criticism is another characteristic of good leadership. Constructive criticism may provide new perspectives or information that will modify positions our leaders have taken. Sometimes, after receiving criticism, a member in a leadership position will still disagree with it. Though he may hold his ground, he accepts the criticism gracefully. If those in leadership positions are unable to accept criticism, our fellowship has fewer options for growth and development at its disposal.

There will always be destructive critics, people who place personal acclaim or self-interest above the best interests of N.A. The principles of appeal and petition require that our leaders hear these voices well. Some truth may be contained even in personal attacks, and a good leader must be able to look for the truth and discard the rest, carefully applying principles.

N.A. leadership begins at the group level, where several thousand group service representatives (GSR's) are chosen every year. They are the foundation of our service structure. If we are vigilant in choosing stable, qualified leaders at this level of service, the remainder of the structure will almost certainly be sound. From this strong foundation, a service structure can be built that will nourish, inform and support the groups, as the groups nourish and support the structure.

Effective leadership will always be a highly prized commodity in our fellowship. Our service structure can only be as good as the individuals who serve in it. Therefore, we must constantly search our ranks to find the very best among us, people capable of serving our needs by filling our service positions at every level.

## **5. Each service responsibility must be balanced by a carefully defined service authority.**

This principle lends greater definition to the kind of delegation called for in Principle Two. We do not simply send our trusted servants off without clear guidelines describing the extent and limits of the authority we have delegated to them. Instead, we look carefully together at the amount of responsibility we are

placing on a given board, committee, volunteer or staff member, and then match that responsibility with the authority necessary to fulfill it.

This principle calls upon us to maintain a sensible administrative umbrella over our services. For example, in the business world, a corporation's board of directors usually has the broadest kind of authority, making policy decisions and setting organizational goals. It has the broadest scope of authority, but refrains from interfering in the day to day work of its employees. Instead, it delegates the next level of authority to upper management.

Management, in turn, is usually broken down into layers, each with a clearly defined scope of authority. Department heads have more responsibility for day to day decisions in their department than the executive director has. Each element in the overall structure is clearly defined, and given a specific amount of authority based upon the nature of its responsibilities.

While our service structure, from the boards and committees at the world level to the group secretaries, treasurers and GSR's, is not a corporate structure, we nevertheless apply this sound administrative principle to its operation. We don't ask a member to chair a committee, and then expect her to come back to ask our permission or guidance on every decision she must make in carrying out her work. Instead we send her with our blessings and our trust, confident that she is the right person to exercise the leadership and judgment needed to serve our fellowship well-confident, because we have taken great care in selecting her for the job.

When sufficient authority is specifically delegated to those who are given service responsibilities, our services run smoothly and efficiently. Groups that explicitly direct their representatives on every issue, discounting the value of the collective conscience expressed and developed when those representatives meet, are not applying the Second Tradition to its fullest potential.

The N.A. groups shall always have the final authority necessary to remedy the failures of those empowered with delegated authority. They may take action to elect new trusted servants, call for the correction of specific errors, or even alter the structure itself. However, enough delegated authority must be given to our trusted servants for them to fulfill their responsibilities; and those responsibilities and authorities must always be clearly defined.

Groups allow their servants to exercise the good judgment for which they were elected in the first place. We similarly allow our service committees, our office staff, and our board members to be the resourceful, creative servants acting on our behalf that we have chosen them to be. Without the authority to perform the tasks we assign them, our service entities would bear large responsibilities but have no authority to fulfill them, no ability to make effective decisions, and no capacity to exercise effective leadership. We have seen how paralyzing that can be, and we have felt the atmosphere of fear and mistrust these limitations on delegated authority engender. This principle calls us to greater maturity as a fellowship, so that we need not repeat the mistakes of our past.

**6. The "principle of decision" provides that trusted servants responsible for the fulfillment of particular N.A. services be given the authority to use their best judgment in carrying out their duties.**

This principle gives our trusted servants, both volunteers and paid workers, the discretion and latitude they need in order to act effectively. Without this freedom, they would be unable to do the jobs we have asked them to do. It gives them the freedom to decide, within the framework of their responsibilities, how best to respond to problems and situations as they arise. This principle grants our trusted servants, service boards and committees the right to decide which decisions call for greater consultation, which fall within their own established authority, and which should be brought back to those to whom they are directly responsible.

The principle of decision does not, however, relieve those responsible for our services of their obligation to make regular reports of all significant actions they take. Nor can the principle of decision be used as an excuse for failure to seek guidance from those to whom a trusted servant is directly responsible before an important decision is made.

As a spiritual fellowship, we are tolerant of reasonable mistakes, and we look with love and mutual respect on inevitable human error--including errors in judgment. Defiance and maverick actions, however, have no place in our structure. The Twelve Principles of Service provide sufficient safeguards against these kinds of problems. It should be stressed, however, that our steps and traditions, applied in the lives of our trusted servants, provide the greatest safeguards of all.

This principle lends a significant margin of efficiency to our structure by allowing those in leadership positions to act decisively. Sufficient consultation and thorough reporting are always expected in N.A. service, but these necessary practices should never be stretched beyond the bounds of reasonable trust, thus undermining the efficient operation of our services. The principle of decision gives our trusted servants--whether they be special workers or volunteers--the practical means by which to lead effectively. It is the most direct expression of our trust.

**7. The "principle of participation" allows all those entrusted with responsibility for our services to take part in the decision-making processes affecting those services.**

It is a basic premise of our service structure that those who carry out our services should be able to participate in creating the policies that affect their work. As a member of a group, for example, each of us has the right to participate in that group's business. Our leaders at every level of service--volunteers and paid staff alike--are chosen for their experience, their working familiarity with our principles, and their ability to apply those principles in carrying out their responsibilities. The principle of participation insures that we draw from that pool of experience when we are making the important decisions of our fellowship.

This principle has implications for how we best benefit from the experience of the trusted servants who make up our structure. Committee chairpersons and administrative officers, for example, should be granted the right to participate in the decision-making process in a way that matches their responsibilities. N.A. service is

a team effort. The voice as well as the vote of each member of the team is of great value as we seek to express the collective conscience of the whole.

Before these principles of service were adopted, there was not general agreement on these points. As a much smaller fellowship, we once believed that we could make effective decisions on a purely representative basis. That is, we viewed the GSR as a group-level position rather than an area-level position; we believed it was the GSR's responsibility primarily to represent our group's thoughts on the area's business, rather than to serve as an active participant in the area committee in her own right. Similarly, we viewed our region's representative to the World Service Conference as a messenger from our region, carrying the expressed wishes of our groups on matters pertaining to the WSC agenda.

With the principle of the principle participation in focus, such a purely representational service structure is not necessary. For the service body to represent as true a cross-section of our membership as possible, each person's contribution to the discussion is important. Thus the GSR becomes not a group-level trusted servant, acting as a messenger to the area, but an area-level trusted servant, his group's offering to the team which bears the responsibility for area-level business, and the area's communication link back to the group. The general officers and subcommittee chairs on that area committee are also members of the team, having the same status in the discussions and votes as each GSR.

Again, a key concept that forms the fabric of these principles is *delegation*. We call our region's representative to the WSC a *delegate*, and we expect her to participate fully in the conference, bringing to bear her freely expressed individual conscience as part of the fabric of group conscience on a world level. When we view our service representatives as being responsible to the fellowship as a whole, rather than thinking of them as having a specific constituency, it makes sense to view all the other trusted servants on the team that way as well. The delegates are the regions' offerings to the spiritual mix that makes up the group conscience of the World Service Conference, and the rest of the trusted servants with world-level responsibilities make up the balance of that same mix.

The addition of "special workers" to the service team was a relatively late development for our fellowship. Our Eighth Tradition has always provided for their inclusion in the service structure, but not until the mid-1980's did we begin to fully develop that element of our service structure at the world level. Since then we have been sorting through the issues related to the level and the kind of participation they should have. Should they vote? Does the fact that they get paid for their work place them on a different level than the volunteers?

The principle of participation lays that confusion to rest. Special workers are trusted servants, members of the team of that makes up the service structure of N.A. They should participate in our service decisions in proportion to the degree of responsibility that they have been delegated. They should carry the same voting privileges as volunteers do. They were chosen carefully for the expertise they bring to their area of specialization, and their participation in the decision-making process is one way in which they bring that valuable experience to bear in service to the fellowship. The exact nature and level of that participation is spelled out clearly in the charter or guidelines of each board or committee.

There is no "second class" trusted servant. Our Twelfth Tradition points to the importance of that kind of leveling of our own relative importance. If we are

members of the service team in N.A., we have the right to participate. We don't *all* participate in *every* decision, but we all have the right to participate in the decision-making process according to the level of responsibility we bear.

**8. The "principle of appeal" insures that minority opinion will be carefully considered in the decision-making process.**

The principle of appeal acknowledges that minorities perform a valuable service by forcing thorough debate on important issues. The well-heard minority protects us from the dictates of a misinformed or hasty majority. In the best interests of the fellowship, any member, including members of our committees, boards, and service center staffs, should be encouraged to enter debate or issue minority reports on matters at hand. The body should always take the time to hear them well before making final decisions.

Members may at times feel that decisions made by those with delegated authority have the potential to be harmful to the fellowship, or are not consistent with the spirit of our steps, traditions or principles of service. Issuing an appeal at such times is not simply the right of those members, it is their responsibility.

Perhaps the main way that responsibility is exercised is in the presentation of minority reports to the various service boards and committees. When a decision is reached, those who argued against that decision can prepare a report outlining the reasons for their objections. Those responsible for implementing the decision then have the responsibility to carefully consider the points raised by the minority. In some cases the decision may even be overturned. Our decision-making process is not always perfect. The principle of appeal encourages us to continue to consult our group conscience when the wisdom of a decision is questioned.

The expression of the individual conscience to the group is the most basic building block of group conscience. Without it, we block out the guidance of a loving God who is our ultimate authority. The individual, board or committee whose decision is being appealed should always treat such appeals with great respect and careful consideration. This principle, cherished by the majority and minority alike, is vital to the delicate overall balance of our principles of service.

**9. The "principle of petition" provides that any member of our service structure may, without fear of reprisal, make petition for the redress of a personal grievance against those exercising delegated authority.**

This principle provides another of the important checks and balances in the overall body of service principles. Petitions for the redress of personal grievances may be made when any trusted servant feels he or she has been treated unfairly. This principle builds into our structure a sense of respect for the individual.

At the same time, members should not exercise this principle hastily. We consult with others, check our motives, and ask ourselves honestly: Is it our ego that is bruised, or were we actually wronged by an inappropriate action? With open, frank discussion and sound application of our recovery principles, this principle should seldom be exercised. It is included here to safeguard our respect for each individual member, and as a means of discouraging those in positions of delegated authority from abusing that privilege.

**10. The final point of decision should be clearly defined for each responsibility. Two-headed management within the N.A. service structure should be avoided at all times.**

This principle is not new to our members with experience in business. It is a simple, accepted principle of sound management. Consultation and careful consideration go into good decisions, with many perspectives coming together in search of the best approach. But ultimately a decision must be made, and someone must be charged with the responsibility to make it.

There is a challenge in striking a balance between taking measures to insure that sound decisions are made, and taking measures to allow decisions to be made with decisiveness and efficiency. The Twelve Principles provide a framework in which sound decisions can be made. They work best when a firm commitment exists at all levels to choose capable, responsible trusted servants. Boards and committees should always develop clear guidelines regarding the delegation of authority. Trusted servants should respect those guidelines, and exercise their conscience and best judgement regarding the question of when to seek further consultation.

This principle of service specifically addresses the other side of that balance: the efficiency and decisiveness of our decision-making process. It is often tempting to delegate responsibilities to someone, and then look over their shoulder, second-guessing all their decisions. Almost no one can act decisively and confidently under those conditions. Once again, delegation requires trust if it is to be effective.

A board often delegates responsibility to its subsidiary boards, a committee to its subcommittees, an executive to subordinate managers. These are everyday facts of life within our service structure. Included in that delegation is the authority to manage the tasks involved in those responsibilities. Unless some specific problem surfaces, revealing abuse of authority or an inability to do the job, the delegating body does not directly oversee or second-guess the actual execution of the work. To do so would be an example of two-headed management, and would bring inefficiency and mistrust into our services.

"The final point of decision" should be a single point, but that single *point* is not necessarily a single *person*. Nearly all broad, important decisions in N.A. service are made by a board or committee. But this principle holds that for each responsibility, a single board or committee--and indeed at times a single person--should be delegated to make the decisions. Experience suggest that power struggles or disharmony result when we expect two boards or committees, or two trusted servants, to have final say in a particular decision.

If two-headed management is to be avoided, and our **worldwide** services are to run smoothly, we must give clear executive authority to those in the highest leadership positions. Exercising that kind of authority takes a special set of skills, and these positions should be filled with great care.

The point of authority for routine management decisions must rest with a single person. We must charge the executives of our primary corporations with ample authority to act decisively. These special workers should be willing and able to make sound business decisions, and they should be the type of leaders who naturally inspire the cooperation of those who must act on those decisions. When

their orders are met with something less than cooperation, they must know how to be firm.

The largest goals and policies of the fellowship are defined by the fellowship as a whole; the single point of authority responsible for those decisions is the World Service Conference. The conference meets once a year to review the work that has been done by the various elements of world service over the year, and to set the direction for the year to come. The conference recognizes that its directives must be stated broadly, leaving the specifics of implementation to the boards and staff members who will actually organize and carry out the work.

When trusted servants at every level maintain a firm grasp of the realistic limits of authority and responsibility at every level, those who are charged with the actual work are given two important things. One, they are given the general direction in which to proceed and some clearly defined parameters within which to operate in moving in that direction. Secondly, they are given the freedom to make specific kinds of routine decisions without fear of being continually second-guessed or contradicted by others challenging their authority to do their job.

**11. At all levels, the N.A. service structure should take care never to accumulate funds beyond a prudent financial reserve.**

The Narcotics Anonymous program is a spiritual one. One way of understanding that is to say that it is a "non-material" program. The essential act that defines N.A. is one addict freely helping another apply the principles of recovery, asking nothing in return. No payment is ever made for this service. No fee is ever charged. This keeps the spiritual essence of what we do primary, and keeps troublesome diversions from that spiritual essence at a minimum.

N.A. groups, as the primary vehicles for carrying this message, function best when they are poor. This may sound like an odd thing to say, but our experience bears it out. With only rare exception, groups that involve themselves in activities that generate or expend large sums of money are asking for trouble. The kinds of difficulties that arise are summed up in our Sixth Tradition: "...problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose." Groups that do not take on the distraction of managing large sums of money can give their full attention to freely giving away the spiritual message of N.A. to all who walk in the door.

Does this mean that groups should not pass a basket at every meeting, or that members should feel that there is no need to place money in the hat at meetings? No it doesn't. The Seventh Tradition states clearly that we accept no money from outside sources, so our own willingness to provide the money for N.A. services is essential to our primary purpose. If the area, for example, is to provide adequate public information, phoneline service, literature for institutionalized addicts, and all the other services it is responsible for, money is required.

This principle is not, then, a statement that no money is needed to effectively carry the N.A. message. For the group it is a statement that its expenses should be paid, and a small sum kept to pay unforeseen expenses that may arise, and the remainder should be passed along to the rest of the service structure.

At all levels of N.A. service the same principle applies. The size of the budgets may vary greatly at different levels of service, but at no level should there be an excessive hoarding of funds. If we've delegated a particular responsibility to

someone else, it becomes our responsibility to provide them with the means to carry it out. It is always unacceptable to have a large sum of money sitting idle, begging to become the subject of squabbling over what to do with it, when literature is needed in the jail, or a workable system is needed for our helpline.

Money in Narcotics Anonymous is always used to further our primary purpose. The group uses it to buy literature and pay expenses related to renting the meeting room and purchasing supplies. At other levels it is in various ways turned into services. All of this is done in support of each N.A. meeting's single spiritual aim--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

It is not likely that we will ever see in N.A. an accumulation of money that is greater than the need for our services. That is our best safeguard that this principle will be upheld by our fellowship as a whole. It is entirely possible, on the other hand, that a given service committee might wish to engage in fundraising efforts to accumulate large sums, hoarding the money in an excessive reserve fund or badly prioritizing in deciding how to spend it.

Effective service efforts, therefore, necessarily involve good financial management. Committees should have clearly established priorities, and should measure each expenditure against that priority list. There is often more on the priority list than our budgets will allow. Until the fellowship grows and is able to provide more money, only the highest priorities can be funded. Again, this is a familiar picture to most committees, and one that often makes it easier to properly apply this principle.

In setting priorities, a committee may be tempted to look at its own needs only, holding on tightly to its own funds and spending money on its own projects, neglecting its role in providing needed funds to the next level of service. That is not a sound application of this principle. High on the list of priorities should be a commitment to further the goals of N.A. as a whole. Our World Service Conference needs money to do this, and it gets that money from the other levels of N.A. service. For N.A. as a whole to deliver the services necessary to keep growing and fulfilling our primary purpose around the world, the flow of funds must not bottleneck at any point in our structure.

Fortunately, most of our members and groups require no persuasion on these points. We have all had the experience of hearing that Seventh Tradition read the first time, and eventually coming to the full realization that carrying the N.A. message to addicts truly is a spiritual, not a material, enterprise. Our membership often voices a certain level of distaste for dealing with money at all in an N.A. setting. We give this program away, and we're convinced that's just the way it ought to be.

Money is needed, however, to provide internal support and guidance to our own committees; to produce, translate and distribute our message in written form; to bring our members together in a **worldwide** service community committed to the vision of spreading our message to those in need--particularly as we spread into more and more countries and across more and more cultures. It is needed to inform the public about N.A. and to reach addicts who can't get to meetings. These needs will always **challenge** our ability to **meet** them within the framework of the Seventh Tradition.

That's why it's important that we do not, at any level of service, interrupt the flow of funds needed to accomplish these important goals. We set budgets that are

appropriate to the size and nature of the tasks at our level of service, we establish a prudent reserve so that those services are not interrupted if we stop receiving money for a time, and we pass some along to the next level. If we do this within a framework of budgeting priorities that hold our primary purpose always foremost in mind, the spirit of this principle of service is well safeguarded.

**12. No one element of our service structure should have unqualified authority over any other. Our structure at all levels is one of service, never of government.**

Taken as a body, the Twelve Principles of Service go to great lengths to spell out guidelines for effective delegation of authority. At first glance it may appear that such authority in the N.A. service structure smacks of government rather than service. This concluding principle serves as a reminder that this may never be so. Our Second Tradition--woven into the fabric of these principles top to bottom--is clear and specific about this: "Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern."

The Twelfth Principle of Service warns us against placing too much authority with any one service entity. The World Service Conference, for example, is the mechanism by which the fellowship directs and monitors its world service operation. **Its annual meeting is a time during which everyone in the world service community--trustees, directors, office staff, and delegates from the various N.A. regions around the world--all sit down together to carefully examine world service projects.** It is the closest thing to a governing body we have, but checks and balances must always be kept in place so that it does not go beyond service to become government.

The lessons learned in striking the balance of power among the various elements of N.A. service have often been difficult and painful ones. For several years, as our World Service Conference was developing, it attempted to bear the entire burden of work in world services. Not only did it meet to monitor and adjust the course of world service projects, it attempted to carry out all the work itself, specifically managing the details of each project. The result was often an extreme degree of tension and mistrust among key elements of world services, and ultimately an inefficient, unwieldy vehicle for getting things done.

The Twelve Principles of Service and the N.A. Service Charter describe an ideal for world services with a much more highly developed division of responsibilities. The World Service Conference--an annual event in which all parties come together to evaluate and adjust the course of world services--delegates the specific management and implementation of its projects to the trustees. Meeting only a few times a year, they also must manage only with the broadest brush, and must delegate yet again to boards of directors and smaller trustee committees. The chain continues, as it must in any properly managed large organization such as ours, until it reaches the staff members who are responsible to manage the details of the project.

One effect of such a chain of delegation is that responsibility and authority are not concentrated in any single governing body, but are spread throughout the world service community. Each individual or body is directly responsible to those who delegated to them their responsibilities. By that multi-leveled chain of delegation,

the entire structure is directly responsible to the groups which formed it, and which it exists to serve.

We have been using the word "authority" throughout these principles. What do we mean by it? Does it not itself imply a degree of government? Those questions will always be asked by some, and they should be asked. Remaining clear about the kind of authority we speak of in N.A. is important indeed. Those who have been delegated that authority should be keenly aware of the limitations on that authority implied in this principle.

By authority, we mean permission to exercise judgment and take action to accomplish the service tasks for which one is responsible. Such permission starts at the group level, and is granted to the other levels. Government would be the other way around. If the area, for example, had the authority to tell the groups how to conduct their meeting, the area would have power to govern.

Instead the area has the authority, for example, to develop an approach to H&I and implement it without asking **each group** directly for input on how to do that. The groups have sent their GSR to provide that kind of input. The GSR has the authority to participate in those discussions and help shape that H&I approach without asking all the members of his group what his input should be.

Authority to act in service to the fellowship without being inefficiently tied down by the delegating body's direct control over that involvement, that is the appropriate definition of authority for our purposes. No element of the structure has the authority to govern N.A. members or groups. It is our sometimes hard-won experience that quality recovery and service can only be accomplished in an atmosphere of mutual respect, mutual support and mutual trust.

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