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**TWELVE CONCEPTS FOR N.A. SERVICE**

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

12 The Twelve Concepts for N.A. Service described here are intended to be  
13 practically applied to our service structure at every level. The spiritual ideals of  
14 our steps and traditions provide the basis for these concepts, which are tailored  
15 to the specific needs of our fellowship's service structure. The concepts allow our  
16 groups the freedom to more readily achieve our traditions' ideals, and our service  
17 structure the freedom to function effectively and responsibly.

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

- 23 1. To fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose, the N.A. groups have joined  
24 together to create a structure which develops and maintains services on  
25 behalf of N.A. as a whole.
- 26 2. The final responsibility and authority for N.A. services rests with the N.A.  
27 groups.
- 28 3. The N.A. groups delegate to the service structure the authority necessary to  
29 fulfill the responsibilities assigned to it.
- 30 4. Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership  
31 qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.
- 32 5. For each responsibility entrusted to the service structure, a single point of  
33 decision and accountability should be clearly defined.

6. Group conscience is the spiritual means by which we invite a loving God to influence our decisions.
7. Trusted servants with substantial responsibility for our services should take part in the decision-making processes affecting those services.
8. The integrity and effectiveness of our service structure depend on regular communication.
9. Our service boards and committees have the responsibility to carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.
10. Any member of a service board or committee can petition that body for the redress of a personal grievance, without fear of reprisal.
11. N.A. funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly.
12. In keeping with the spiritual nature of Narcotics Anonymous, our structure should always be one of service, never of government.

**1. To fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose, the N.A. groups have joined together to create a structure which develops and maintains services on behalf of N.A. as a whole.**

Our fellowship's primary purpose is to carry the message "that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live." One of the primary means by which that message is carried, addict to addict, is in our meetings. These recovery meetings, conducted thousands of times each day by N.A. groups around the world, are the most important service offered by our fellowship.

However, while recovery meetings are N.A.'s most important service, they are not the only means we have of fulfilling our fellowship's primary purpose. Other N.A. services attract the still-suffering addict to our meetings, carry our message to institutionalized addicts, make recovery literature available, and provide opportunities for groups to share their experience with one other. No one of these services, by itself, comes close to matching the value of group recovery meetings in carrying our message; each, however, plays its own indispensable part in the overall program devised by the N.A. Fellowship to fulfill its primary purpose.

Phonelines, H&I panels, public information work, literature development--the fulfillment of these types of services usually requires more people and more money than a single group can muster on its own. The degree of organization necessary to carry out such responsibilities would divert most groups from



69 carrying the N.A. message in their meetings. For this reason, most groups do not  
70 take such responsibilities on themselves. How, then, can N.A.'s groups insure  
71 the fulfillment of these services? They do so by joining together to create a  
72 structure which develops and maintains those services for them, leaving the  
73 groups free to carry out their own primary responsibility.

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74 **2. The final responsibility and authority for N.A.-services rests with the N.A.**  
75 **groups.**

76 The N.A. service structure has been created by the groups to serve the  
77 common needs of the groups. Our fellowship's service boards and committees  
78 exist to help groups share their experience with one another, provide tools which  
79 help groups function better, attract new members to group recovery meetings,  
80 and carry the N.A. message further than any single group could carry it alone.  
81 Because the groups have created the service structure, they have final authority  
82 over all its affairs. By the same token, the groups also have the final responsibility  
83 for the support of all its activities. The two go hand in hand.

84 Ideally, responsibility and authority are flip sides of the same coin; the exercise  
85 of one is also an exercise of the other. When our groups provide the resources--  
86 conscience and ideas, people, money--needed to fulfill N.A. services, they also  
87 provide direction to the service structure. Let's take a look at a few examples of  
88 how this principle works.

89 The most important resource contributed to the service structure by an N.A.  
90 group is almost exclusively spiritual: its ideas and its conscience. Without the  
91 voice of the groups, the service structure may not know what kinds of services  
92 are needed, or whether the services it provides are ones the groups want. The  
93 groups provide the ideas and direction needed to guide the service structure in  
94 fulfilling its responsibilities. By voicing their needs and concerns, the groups also  
95 exercise their authority for the service structure they have created.

96 The people who give their time to service work are a vital resource; without  
97 them, our service boards and committees would not exist, much less be able to  
98 serve. The group's responsibility to the service structure is to elect a group  
99 service representative who will serve the best interests of the group and the entire  
100 N.A. Fellowship. By carefully selecting its GSR, then providing that person with  
101 regular support and guidance, the group exercises its ability to impact N.A.  
102 services, both directly and indirectly. In choosing a qualified GSR, then sending  
103 him or her out to serve on the group's behalf, the group fulfills a large part of both  
104 its responsibility and authority for N.A. services.

105 Money is required to fulfill N.A. services. Without it, our phonelines would be  
106 closed down, our meeting lists would not be printed, there would be no N.A.  
107 literature to distribute, our H&I panels would go without pamphlets, and our public  
108 information workers would be unable to provide printed materials about our  
109 fellowship to the community. In the Eleventh Concept, more will be said of the  
110 use of money in fulfilling our primary purpose. The message of the Second  
111 Concept in regard to money, however, is simple: If the groups want the service  
112 structure to fulfill the purpose they created it for, they will provide the necessary  
113 funds.

114 If the groups feel the service structure is *not* fulfilling the purpose they created  
115 it for, there are a number of constructive steps they can take to correct the  
116 problem. Our experience shows that radical action, taken in haste, serves neither  
117 the groups nor our services well. Since change rarely occurs overnight, patience  
118 and acceptance may be called for. However, in extraordinary circumstances,  
119 where all other means of affecting change have failed, the groups can stop  
120 funding the service structure. Such action usually does little to solve whatever  
121 problem may be at hand, yet there may be times when it is the only way to get the  
122 groups' message across. Extreme as it is, the groups' ability to exercise their final  
123 *authority* in this way arises from the routine exercise of their final *responsibility* for  
124 supporting our services. When the groups regularly provide funds to the service  
125 structure, the withholding of service funds has great impact.

126 So far, we've looked at what the Second Concept says to the N.A. group. This  
127 concept also speaks to the service structure. The groups have, directly or  
128 indirectly, created every one of our service boards and committees. The N.A.  
129 groups have, directly or indirectly, provided the resources used by those service  
130 boards and committees. The groups have established the service structure as a  
131 medium through which, together, they can better fulfill our fellowship's primary  
132 purpose. Therefore, in all the affairs of all its elements, the service structure must  
133 carefully consider the needs and desires of the groups. The Second Concept can  
134 be seen as the groups' way of saying to the N.A. service structure, "Do not  
135 squander the spiritual, personal, and financial resources we have provided you.  
136 Seek our advice; do not ignore our direction."

137 The N.A. groups bear the final authority in all our fellowship's service affairs,  
138 and should be routinely consulted in all matters directly affecting them. For  
139 example, proposals to change N.A.'s Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, name,  
140 nature, or purpose should be approved directly by the groups. Conversely, if  
141 something goes wrong in the service structure, N.A. groups are responsible to



take part in helping correct the problem. The exercise of final authority for N.A. services, a vital part of the system of service established by our fellowship, is both the right and the responsibility of the groups.

**3. The N.A. groups delegate to the service structure the authority necessary to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to it.**

The N.A. groups maintain final responsibility and authority for the service structure they have created. Yet if they must involve themselves directly in making decisions for all of our service boards and committees, the groups will have little time or energy left to carry the recovery message in their meetings. For this reason, the groups entrust the service structure with the authority to make necessary decisions in carrying out the tasks assigned to it.

The delegation of authority can do much to free up both our groups and our services. Service decisions not directly affecting the groups can be made expeditiously; our phonedines, H&I panels, public information efforts, and literature development projects can move forward at full speed to serve N.A.'s primary purpose. And our groups, not required to ratify every decision made on their behalf at every level of service, are freed to devote their full attention to carrying the N.A. message in their meetings.

We often use motions and guidelines to help us apply the Third Concept. We clearly describe each task we want accomplished, and the kind of authority we are delegating to those who will fulfill the task. However, even the most exhaustive set of guidelines cannot account for every eventuality. Our trusted servants will serve us best when we grant them the freedom to exercise their best judgment in fulfilling the responsibilities we've assigned them.

Undoubtedly, errors in judgment will be made when applying the Third Concept. These errors are the price we must pay for allowing our services the kind of discretion they need to accomplish the tasks we've given them. Mistakes, however, rarely spell disaster, and can usually be corrected in short order. Our services must remain directly accountable to those they serve, yet they must also be given a reasonable degree of discretion in fulfilling their duties. A group, service board, or committee should consult its collective conscience in arriving at its own understanding of the best way to apply this concept.

Sometimes we fear that delegation will mean a loss of control over our services. Together, Concepts One, Two, and Three have been designed to help us maintain control of our service structure, without tying our trusted servants' hands. The Third Concept gives our groups the freedom to focus on their own

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responsibilities, while assuring that the service structure is given the authority it needs to fulfill other necessary N.A. services. Our Twelve Concepts do not ask our groups to abdicate their authority, allowing the service structure to do whatever it pleases. The groups, after all, have established the service structure to act on their behalf, at their direction. And when the groups need to exercise final authority in service matters, they are encouraged to do so. However, in day-to-day matters, the groups have given our service boards and committees the practical authority necessary to do the jobs assigned them.

Delegating authority can be a risky business. To make Concept Three work, other concepts must also be applied consistently. Most importantly, we must give careful attention to the selection of trustworthy trusted servants. If we are responsible, we will not delegate authority to those who are fundamentally incapable of administering that authority. When we select our leaders carefully, choosing those who can be trusted to responsibly exercise delegated authority in fulfilling the tasks we've given them, we can feel much more comfortable with the concept of delegation.

When we give our trusted servants a job, we must delegate to them the authority necessary to make decisions related to that job. When our groups delegate sufficient authority to our service structure, our groups need not be overcome with the demands of making every service decision, and our fellowship's primary purpose can be served to the fullest. With the Third Concept squarely in place, our groups are free to conduct recovery meetings and carry the N.A. message directly to the addict who still suffers, confident that the service structure they have created has the authority it needs to make the decisions involved in fulfilling its responsibilities.

#### **4. Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.**

The trust necessary to confidently delegate service authority is founded on the careful selection of trusted servants. In the following paragraphs, we highlight a number of the qualities to be considered when choosing our trusted servants. No leader will exemplify all these qualities; they are the ideals of effective leadership to which every trusted servant aspires. The more we consider these qualities when selecting N.A. leaders, the better off our fellowship will be.

Personal background and professional or educational qualifications, though helpful, do not necessarily make for effective leadership. When selecting trusted



servants, after all, it is the whole person we trust, not just their skills. And one of the first things we look for when selecting trusted servants is humility. Being asked to lead, to serve, to accept responsibility, is a humbling experience for a recovering addict. Through working the Twelve Steps, our trusted servants have come to know their defects and their limitations. Knowing that, they have agreed nonetheless, with God's help, to serve our fellowship to the best of their ability. Good N.A. leaders do not think they have to do everything themselves; recognizing their shortcomings, they ask for help, advice, and direction on a regular basis. Our fellowship's leaders are not dictators or order-givers; they are our servants. Able leadership in the spirit of service does not drive by arrogant mandate, demanding conformity; it leads modestly, by example, inviting respect. And nothing invites us to respect our trusted servants more than clear evidence of their humility.

Capable N.A. leadership exhibits the full range of personal characteristics associated with a spiritual awakening. We depend on those who serve us to report on their activities completely and truthfully. Our leaders must have sufficient integrity to hear others well, yet still be able to stand fast on sound principle; to compromise, and to disagree without being disagreeable; to demonstrate the courage of their convictions, and to surrender. We seek trusted servants who are willing to expend their time and energy in the diligent service of others, studying available resource materials, consulting those with greater experience in their field of responsibility, and carefully fulfilling the tasks we've given them as completely as possible. Honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness, indispensable in recovery, are also essential to leadership.

Any N.A. member can be a leader, and every N.A. member has the right to serve the fellowship. Effective N.A. leadership knows not only how to serve, but when it will serve best to step aside and allow others to take over. An entrenched bureaucracy inhibits our fellowship's growth, while a regular influx of new leadership, balanced by continuity, inspires N.A. growth. Regular rotation helps our trusted servants continue to identify themselves primarily with their recovery instead of their service positions. The effective leader also knows that, in order to maintain the distinction in service between principles and personalities, it is important to observe the practice of rotation.

In some positions, trusted servants need specific skills in order to act as effective leaders. The ability to communicate well can help our trusted servants share information and ideas, both in committee work and in reporting to those they serve. Organizing skills help trusted servants keep small service

responsibilities simple, and make straightforward even the fulfillment of complex tasks. Leaders capable of discerning where today's actions will take us, and of offering us the guidance we need to prepare for the demands of tomorrow, serve Narcotics Anonymous well. Certain educational, business, personal, and service experiences may suit a recovering addict more to one type of service commitment than another. We do ourselves, our fellowship, and our trusted servants a disservice when we ask our members to perform tasks they are incapable of fulfilling.

When we carefully consider the leadership qualities of those we ask to serve, we can confidently give them the room they need to exercise those qualities on our behalf. We can allow effective leaders freedom to serve, especially when they demonstrate their accountability to us, reporting regularly on their work and asking, when necessary, for additional direction. True, our leaders are but trusted servants, not governors; yet we also expect our trusted servants to lead us. If we select them carefully, we can confidently allow them to do so.

Effective leadership is highly valued in N.A., and the Fourth Concept speaks of the qualities we should consider when selecting leaders for ourselves. However, we should remember that the fulfillment of many service responsibilities requires nothing more than the willingness to serve. Other responsibilities, while requiring certain specific skills, depend for their fulfillment far more heavily on the trusted servant's spiritual maturity and personal integrity. Willingness, spiritual depth, and trustworthiness are strong demonstrations of the kind of leadership valued most highly in N.A.

We should also remember that N.A.'s leaders are not only those we vote into office. Opportunities for selfless service arise wherever we turn in Narcotics Anonymous. N.A. members exercise personal leadership by helping clean up after a meeting, taking extra care to make newcomers to our fellowship welcome, and in countless other ways. As recovering addicts, any of us can fulfill a leadership role, providing a sound example, by serving our fellowship. This modest spirit of service to others forms the foundation of our Fourth Concept, and of N.A. leadership itself.

**5. For each responsibility entrusted to the service structure, a single point of decision and accountability should be clearly defined.**

The key to applying the Fifth Concept is in defining the task that needs to be done. When a particular service task is created, everyone should consider what kind of authority must be delegated in order for that particular task to be



accomplished, and what kind of accountability should be required of those to whom that particular task is being given. Then, one particular trusted servant, service board, or committee should be designated as the single point of decision and accountability for that assignment. This simple principle applies to all the services provided in Narcotics Anonymous, from the group to N.A.'s world services.

When we decide a certain service task should be done, and clearly say which trusted servant, service board, or committee has the authority to accomplish the task, we avoid unnecessary confusion. We don't have two committees trying to do the same job, duplicating efforts or squabbling over authority. Project reports come straight from the single point of decision for the project, offering the best information available. An assigned service responsibility can be fulfilled swiftly and directly, because there is no question of whose responsibility it is. And if problems in a project arise, we know exactly where to go in order to correct them. We do well when we clearly specify to whom authority is being given for each service responsibility.

The Fifth Concept helps us responsibly delegate our authority for N.A. services. In exercising the Fifth Concept, we make a simple, straightforward contract with our trusted servants: right from the start, they know what we are asking of them, what decisions they are expected to make themselves, and to what degree we will hold them accountable for the service work they do on our behalf. Exercise of Concept Five is not a task to be taken lightly. It calls for us to carefully consider the service work we want done; to clearly designate who should do that work; to delegate the authority to do it; and to maintain accountability for those duties. It takes effort to conscientiously apply Concept Five, but the results are worth the effort.

## **6. Group conscience is the spiritual means by which we invite a loving God to influence our decisions.**

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 refers to conscience as one of those "higher mental and emotional functions" which was "sharply affected by our use of drugs." By applying our steps, we seek to revive it and learn how to exercise it. 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.

323 When addicts whose *individual* consciences have been awakened in the  
324 course of working the steps come together to consider service-related questions,  
325 either in their N.A. group or in a service committee meeting, they are prepared to  
326 take part in the development of a *group* conscience. The exercise of group  
327 conscience is the act by which our members bring the spiritual awakening of our  
328 Twelve Steps directly to bear in resolving issues affecting N.A. services. As such,  
329 it is a subject which must necessarily command our most intent consideration.

330 The development of a group conscience is an indispensable *part* of the  
331 decision-making process in Narcotics Anonymous; however, group conscience is  
332 not *itself* a decision-making mechanism. To clarify the difference between the  
333 two, let's look at our personal lives. People living spiritually-oriented lives usually  
334 pray and meditate before making major decisions. First, we look inward to our  
335 Source of spiritual strength and wisdom; then, we look forward and chart our  
336 course. If we automatically claim that God has guided us every time we make a  
337 decision, whether or not we've actually invited God to influence us prior to making  
338 that decision, we fool only ourselves. The same applies to group conscience and  
339 collective decision-making.

340 Developing a collective conscience provides us with the spiritual guidance we  
341 need for making service decisions. Our groups, service boards, and committees  
342 often use the vote as a rough tool for translating that spiritual guidance into clear,  
343 decisive terms. Sometimes, however, no vote is needed; following thoughtful,  
344 attentive discussion, it is perfectly apparent what our collective conscience would  
345 have us do in a given service situation. Just as we seek the strongest possible  
346 spiritual unity in Narcotics Anonymous, so in our decision-making we seek  
347 substantial unanimity, not merely a majority vote. The more care we take in our  
348 considerations, the more likely we are to arrive at unanimity, and no vote will be  
349 needed to help us translate our group conscience into a collective decision.

350 When making specific service decisions, voting or consensus may be the  
351 measure of our group conscience. However, group conscience can be seen in all  
352 our fellowship's affairs, not merely in our decision-making process. The group  
353 inventory process is a good example of this. When members of an N.A. group  
354 gather together to examine their group's effectiveness in fulfilling its primary  
355 purpose, they each consult their own conscience concerning their individual role  
356 in the life of the group. They consider the concerns of the group as a whole in the  
357 same light. Such a group inventory session might produce no specific service  
358 decisions whatsoever. It will, however, produce among group members a



heightened spiritual sensitivity, both to the needs of the still-suffering addict and to the needs of fellow group members.

Another example of group conscience being developed without producing a service-related decision, one each of us can identify with, can be found every day of the week in our recovery meetings. Many are the times when we go to an N.A. meeting with a personal problem, seeking comfort, support, and guidance in the experience of other recovering addicts. Our members, each with their individual personalities, backgrounds, and needs, speak to one another--and to us--of the spiritual revitalization they've found in applying the Twelve Steps in their lives. From the diversity of the group a common message arises, a message we can apply to our own lives, the message of recovery. In this message we find "the therapeutic value of one addict helping another." We also find in this message the group conscience, applied not to a service issue but to our own spiritual growth.

Group conscience is the means by which we collectively invite the ongoing guidance of our Ultimate Authority in making decisions. We apply the Sixth Concept when we pursue our own personal recovery with vigor, seeking that ongoing spiritual awakening which makes it possible for us to apply the principles of the program in all our affairs, including our service affairs. We apply the Sixth Concept when we *listen* to each other--when we bend our ears not just to the words our fellow members speak, but to the spirit behind their words. We apply the Sixth Concept when we seek to do God's will, not our own, and to serve others, not ourselves, in our service decisions. We apply the Sixth Concept in our groups, service boards, and committees when we invite a loving God to influence us before making service-related decisions.

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**7. Trusted servants with substantial responsibility for our services should take part in the decision-making processes affecting those services.**

The Seventh Concept suggests that our service structure should allow its active, experienced trusted servants to participate in its decision-making process. There are many roles at the various levels of N.A. service. At each level it is important to identify the roles that entail "substantial responsibility for our services," and to invite those trusted servants to fully participate in the decision-making process at that level. Each board or committee at each level of service will necessarily make its own judgments about how best to apply this concept.

Our service boards and committees represent the best cross-section of N.A. perspective and experience. Each participant's contribution to the decision-making process is important. Delegate participants help keep a service board or

committee in touch with its foundations. Delegates share information, direct from the source, on the service needs and concerns of those who sent them to serve. Administrative officers and subcommittee chairs bring with them a different experience base, and therefore lend a different perspective to the decision-making process. Their ongoing growth and experience in carrying out their substantial responsibilities is an invaluable resource, and should be tapped as much and as frequently as possible. In our experience, it's the full participation of all these trusted servants together that makes for the strongest decision-making process available to us.

Who can vote, who can make motions, who can share at a service meeting--there is no absolute rule about how to best apply the concept of participation in every service setting. The Seventh Concept invites each of our service boards and committees to determine for themselves which of their members have been "entrusted with substantial responsibility for our services." Then, in an atmosphere of equality and mutual respect, those bearing substantial service responsibility should be included as participants in the decision-making process.

#### **8. The integrity and effectiveness of our service structure depend on regular communication.**

Our fellowship's service structure is founded on the unity of our groups; to maintain that union, we must have regular communications throughout Narcotics Anonymous. Together, our groups have created a service structure to meet their common needs and to help them fulfill their common purpose. The effectiveness of the service structure depends on the continued unity of the N.A. groups, and on their continued support and direction. These things can only be maintained in an atmosphere of honest, open, and straightforward communication among all parties concerned.

Regular communication plays a large part in the fulfillment of our groups' final responsibility and authority for N.A. services. Through their GSRs, the groups regularly report their strengths, needs, ideas, and conscience to the service structure. Taken together, these group reports give our service boards and committees clear guidance in their efforts to serve N.A. as a whole. When the groups are regularly given full and accurate information from all elements of the service structure, they become familiar with the structure's normal patterns of activity. The groups are then able to recognize when something goes wrong with one of our service boards and committees, and are in a better position to know how to help correct the problem. And, knowing what kinds of resources are



needed to fulfill service tasks, our groups are also more likely to provide the service structure with adequate support.

Clear, frequent two-way communication is an important prerequisite for delegation. When the groups ask the service structure to fulfill certain responsibilities on their behalf, they delegate to the structure the authority needed to make decisions related to those responsibilities. We need to be able to trust our trusted servants before we can confidently delegate them that degree of authority. That kind of trust depends in large part on continuing communication. So long as our service boards and committees regularly issue complete, candid reports of their activities, we can be confident that we have delegated our authority wisely.

Open and frank communication is a critical ingredient of effective leadership. To better know the ideas, wishes, needs, and conscience of those they serve, trusted servants must listen carefully to their fellowship. To give the N.A. groups the information they need to guide and support our services, N.A. leaders regularly distribute full, unequivocal reports. In communicating with those they serve, trusted servants demonstrate an open attitude, one that is inclusive, inviting, and clearly influenceable. Such openness and forthrightness may be uncomfortable, but is essential in maintaining the integrity of our services.

Finally, full and frequent communication is essential in the development of group conscience, the spiritual means by which we invite the influence of a loving God in making our collective decisions. To develop group conscience, communications must be honest and direct. Without the full picture, seen from all sides, our groups, service boards, and committees cannot develop an informed, intelligent group conscience. When we gather together to consider service issues, we openly share ideas and information with one another, frankly speaking our minds and hearts on the matter at hand. We listen closely to one another, considering carefully the information and insights we've heard; we consult our individual consciences on the matter; then, we make a decision. A conscience fed on ignorance is an ineffective conscience, incapable of providing reliable guidance. An effective conscience can develop only in an atmosphere of regular, open communication among all parties concerned.

The purpose of our services is to help our fellowship fulfill its primary purpose: to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. Honest, open, straightforward communication is essential to both the integrity and the effectiveness of the N.A. service structure. Unity, group responsibility and authority, delegation, leadership, accountability, group conscience, participation--all depend on good

communication among the various elements of the N.A. Fellowship. With regular two-way communication, our groups and our services are well positioned to uphold the ideals and fulfill the responsibilities described in our Twelve Concepts.

**9. Our service boards and committees have the responsibility to carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.**

It's easy to discuss things with those who agree with us; in English, that's called "preaching to the converted." But in recovery we've learned that our own best thinking may not necessarily offer us the best possible guidance. We have been taught that, before making significant decisions, we should check our judgment against the ideas of others. Our experience has shown us that the ideas of those who disagree with us are often the ones we need most to hear. The Ninth Concept puts this aspect of our recovery experience to work in the service environment. When making a decision, our fellowship's boards and committees should actively seek out all available viewpoints.

An effective group conscience is a fully-informed group conscience. The Ninth Concept is one tool we use to help insure that our group conscience is as well-informed as it can possibly be. In any discussion, it is tempting to ignore dissenting members, especially if the vast majority of a service board or committee's members think alike. Yet it is often the lone voice, offering new information or a unique perspective on things, that saves us from hasty or misinformed decisions. In Narcotics Anonymous, we are encouraged to respect that lone voice, to protect it, even to seek it out, for without it our service decisions would undoubtedly suffer.

Concept Nine also encourages us, individually, to frankly speak our minds in discussions of service issues, even when most other members think differently. No, this concept is not telling us to become perpetual nay-sayers, objecting to anything agreed to by the majority. It does say, however, that we are responsible to share our thoughts and our conscience with our fellow members, carefully explaining our position and listening with equal care to the positions of others. When we show the courage necessary to speak our mind, while also showing respect for one another, we can be confident that we act in the best interests of the N.A. Fellowship. By forcing thorough debate on important issues, the worst we can do is take a little of each others' time; at best, we protect the fellowship from the consequences of a hasty or misinformed decision.

When a service body is in the process of making a decision, the Ninth Concept can be exercised in a variety of ways. If you are a member of the service



board or committee, all you need do is raise your hand and speak. If the point you wish to make is complex, you may wish to put it in writing, so that other members of the board or committee can study it more carefully.

If you are not a member of the service body in question but, as an N.A. member, still have something to say about a service matter, there are a variety of avenues you can take to express your position. By sharing your views at your group's business meeting, you insure that your ideas will be included in the mix of group conscience that guides your GSR when he or she participates in service discussions. Many service boards or committees set aside a portion of their agenda for open forums, when you can speak your own mind on issues before the body. Fellowship newsletters and journals, from the local to the world level, often offer space where N.A. members can share their viewpoints on service matters at hand. Whether or not you are a member of a service body, there are a variety of ways in which you can personally exercise the Ninth Concept.

Our decision-making process is not perfect. Many service boards and committees acknowledge this, and the value of the minority's position, with every decision they make. Whenever a motion is approved by something less than unanimous consent, these service bodies often ask those who voted against the measure to state their reasons for doing so, either out loud or in writing. If the decision needs to be revised at a later date, such minority opinions may prove invaluable in helping chart a new service course.

Concept Nine encourages us to continue to consult group conscience, even after a decision has already been made. If discussions are raised about a question already decided, our service boards and committees are bound to hear those discussions. It may be that, based on such discussion, a service body will alter its earlier decision. However, if a past decision is questioned, discussion is well heard, and the decision still stands, the time comes for everyone to accept that decision and to cooperate wholeheartedly in its implementation. Half-hearted support of, or outright resistance to, such a decision runs contrary to our principles of surrender and acceptance. Once a decision has been made, reconsidered, and confirmed, we need to respect it, and go on about the business of serving our fellowship.

The expression of the individual conscience to the group is the foundation of group conscience. Without it, we block the guidance of the loving God Who is our Ultimate Authority. When a position supported by many of us is challenged by a few of us, our service boards and committees should always treat such input with great respect and careful consideration. The information and insights offered

by the few may save us from dangerous mistakes; they may even lead us to new, previously undreamt-of horizons of service, where we might fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose more effectively than ever. For the sake of our fellowship, and for the sake of our members yet to come, our service boards and committees must always carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.

**10. Any member of a service board or committee can petition that body for the redress of a personal grievance, without fear of reprisal.**

Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual society, with high ideals for how we treat each other. Our members, however, are only human, and we sometimes mistreat one another. The Tenth Concept is our spiritual society's promise that if one of our trusted servants is wronged in the service environment, the aggrieved trusted servant may ask that the wrong be made right.

A variety of circumstances may require application of the Tenth Concept. In one case we know of, a member was nominated for office on his area service committee. The member left the room, allowing the committee to discuss his qualifications. During that discussion, certain ASC members groundlessly slandered the candidate's personal reputation; as a result, the member was defeated. This man found out about the discussion of his personal life, and its effect on the election, a few days later. Feeling hurt and angry, he decided to talk with his sponsor, inventory his own part in the matter, and pray for guidance. After taking these steps, he felt confident that he was entitled to petition the ASC for redress. He wrote a letter stating that he believed he had been wronged by the ASC, asking for a new ballot. The following month, his letter was read and discussed during the committee's sharing session. After having a chance to examine their consciences, the ASC members admitted that what they'd done had been wrong and agreed to conduct the discredited election over again.

The Tenth Concept's right to appeal for redress of a personal grievance is designed, in part, to protect those who exercise their Ninth Concept responsibility to speak their mind in service discussions. Together, the Ninth and Tenth Concepts support an atmosphere in which our members feel free to express themselves frankly on matters at hand. This open atmosphere is essential in developing an effective group conscience. If, after having demonstrated the courage of their convictions, individuals become the subject of reprisals initiated by those who have disagreed with them, the Tenth Concept allows them to petition the appropriate service body for redress of their grievance. Thus, the respect of our service structure for the rights of the individual N.A. member is



577 guaranteed. In a fellowship such as ours, whose success is based upon mutual  
578 support and cooperation, that kind of respect for the individual is indispensable.

579 One such case involved a subcommittee member who exercised the  
580 responsibilities described in Concept Nine, speaking against a project proposed  
581 by the subcommittee chairperson. In the following months, the subcommittee  
582 chairperson stopped sending committee minutes and bulletins to the member,  
583 even neglecting to inform the member of the times and locations of future  
584 subcommittee meetings. The member contacted the subcommittee chairperson,  
585 asking that the problem be corrected. The chairperson refused. The  
586 subcommittee member decided to appeal to the area service committee for  
587 redress of a personal grievance against the chairperson.

588 Applying the Tenth Concept is not always appropriate, even when Concept  
589 Nine rights are cited. Let's say that a motion has been made at the World Service  
590 Conference. The motion has been thoroughly discussed, defeated,  
591 reconsidered, and defeated again. When a conference participant raises the  
592 motion a third time, citing the Ninth Concept, the WSC chairperson respectfully  
593 rules the motion out of order. The ruling is not made in such a way as to humiliate  
594 the member, nor does it deny the member any rights actually conferred by the  
595 Ninth Concept. The issue addressed by the motion has already been laid to rest,  
596 the chairperson says, and the time has come to move on to other business. After  
597 briefly reflecting on the matter, the WSC member agrees with the chair, despite  
598 the fact that the issue in question is one the member feels strongly about. The  
599 Ninth Concept has already been applied to its fullest, and no occasion has arisen  
600 to call for application of Concept Ten.

601 The Tenth Concept is our fellowship's guarantee of respect for the individual  
602 trusted servant. If you think you've been wronged in the service environment and  
603 wish to apply Concept Ten, talk to your sponsor about it, inventory your own  
604 involvement in the matter, and pray. If, upon reflection, you still believe you have  
605 been personally aggrieved and that you should petition for redress, write a letter  
606 explaining the situation to the service body involved, or share your problem in the  
607 body's sharing session. The service body then needs to address the matter and,  
608 if it agrees that you have been wronged, how to make amends. Hopefully, the  
609 Tenth Concept will be applied very rarely in N.A. service. Should the need arise,  
610 however, it is here, ready to put our spiritual fellowship's ideals into action.

**11. N.A. funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly.**

Every week, N.A. members in tens of thousands of meetings around the world contribute money to help our fellowship fulfill its primary purpose. It is incumbent upon every element of our service structure to use those funds to help our fellowship carry the N.A. recovery message as far as possible. To do that, our service bodies must manage those funds responsibly, accounting fully and accurately for its use to those who have provided it.

Money in Narcotics Anonymous should always be used to further our primary purpose. Money is used to pay the expenses involved in running N.A. recovery meetings, to inform the public about N.A., and to reach addicts who can't get to meetings. It is used to develop, produce, translate, and distribute our message in written form, and to bring our members together in a service community committed to the vision of spreading our message around the world to those in need. All of this is done in support of N.A.'s spiritual aim: to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

Service funds aren't easy to come by. To fulfill our primary purpose, we need every penny of the financial resources at our fellowship's disposal. Our groups, service boards, and committees must make prudent use of the money we give them, refusing to spend money frivolously or self-indulgently. With N.A.'s primary purpose in mind, our services will avoid wasting money, using the funds they've been given to carry the message as effectively as possible.

One way we apply Concept Eleven is by establishing clear spending priorities, and measuring each proposed expenditure against that priority list. Many groups, service boards, and committees have more projects on their priority lists than their budgets will allow them to complete. In such cases, only the highest priority projects can be funded.

In setting priorities, we may be tempted to look only at our own needs, tightly holding on to funds, spending money only on our own projects, and neglecting our role in providing needed funds to the next level of service. That kind of thinking is contrary to the Eleventh Concept. High on our list of priorities should be a commitment to further the goals of N.A. as a whole. Our service boards and committees need money to do this, and they are given that money by 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.



Accountability is another aspect of responsible N.A. financial management. When the members of Narcotics Anonymous provide groups, service boards, or committees with funds, our service structure is responsible to account for how those funds are used. Regular financial reports, open books, and periodic audits of N.A. accounts, as described in the various guides developed for N.A. treasurers, help our members be sure their contributions are being used well, and help our services remain financially accountable to those they serve. Treasurers' reports help us see how well our actual service spending matches up with the priorities we've established. Consistent financial records help us make realistic spending plans for future service activities. Regular financial reporting and auditing also help deter the theft of N.A. service funds; and if funds are stolen, they cannot go long unnoticed.

Direct group contributions to our service structure encourage responsible management of service funds, and help our services maintain their focus on N.A.'s primary purpose. It is our experience that, when we make a commitment to fund the work of our service boards and committees exclusively through group contributions, we find it easier to maintain a strong link between our groups and our other service units. Our groups tend to be more aware of the work being done on their behalf by our service boards and committees, and of their responsibility to provide those boards and committees with the necessary financial resources. Our service units, receiving financial support on a regular basis directly from the groups, tend to be more attentive of the groups' needs and wishes when making service decisions. Additionally, by freeing our service boards and committees from the need to engage in fundraising activities, we make it possible for those service units to devote their full energies to the fulfillment of N.A.'s primary purpose.

When N.A. members contribute service funds, they expect their money to be used carefully, and to be used for the sole purpose of furthering our primary purpose. By accepting those contributions, our groups, service boards, and committees make a commitment to use those funds to carry the N.A. message, and to manage them responsibly.

**12. In keeping with the spiritual nature of Narcotics Anonymous, our structure should always be one of service, never of government.**

Selfless service is an essentially spiritual endeavor. Our Twelfth Step says, in part, that "having had a spiritual awakening," we individually "tried to carry this message to addicts." Our collective service efforts arise from that same spiritual

683 foundation. Having experienced the results of this program in our own lives, we  
684 join together to carry the recovery message farther than we could individually.  
685 N.A. service is not about foisting our will or our ideas on others; rather, it is about  
686 humbly serving them, without expectation of reward.

687 This principle underlies all we do in our groups, service boards, and  
688 committees. The Twelfth Concept reminds us that we ourselves have  
689 experienced recovery only because others put this selfless principle into action  
690 before us, taking the time and the care to carry the N.A. message to us when we  
691 were still suffering from active addiction. In service, we discharge the spiritual  
692 debt we owe those who have shared their recovery with us, by carrying ours to  
693 others. Nothing could be further from the drive to rule or direct than this spirit of  
694 selfless service.

695 Our groups were created because we found that, alone, we could not "stop  
696 using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live." In the same way,  
697 our groups have joined together to create a service structure, a cooperative  
698 enterprise designed to help them carry the message further than they could carry  
699 it separately. The service structure has not been created as a way for some  
700 groups to force others to do their bidding. Rather, it has been developed to  
701 combine the strength of our groups to better fulfill necessary services which  
702 usually cannot be fulfilled well, if at all, by individual groups: developing and  
703 distributing materials sharing our message in print, providing information about  
704 N.A. to the general public, transmitting our message to addicts who cannot attend  
705 meetings, and supporting new groups and new N.A. communities. N.A. service is  
706 the cooperative effort of trusted servants taking their cues from the groups, not a  
707 rule enforced by an elite corps of governors.

708 The process of joining together to create the service structure is an expression  
709 of our groups' humility. Separately, they can do far, far less to fulfill our  
710 fellowship's primary purpose than they can do together. In the same way, the  
711 various elements of our service structure each play their own particular role in the  
712 broader Narcotics Anonymous service plan. All the elements depend on all the  
713 others for their effectiveness; when any one element attempts to act as an agency  
714 of government, rather than a vehicle for service, it strains the ties that bind us all  
715 together, threatening our fellowship's overall effectiveness in fulfilling its primary  
716 purpose. Humility is an essential attribute of nongoverning service in Narcotics  
717 Anonymous.

718 In order to serve well, each element of our service structure must make  
719 earnest efforts at effective communication. As groups, as trusted servants, as



720 service boards and committees, we must share fully with others, and listen  
721 carefully and respectfully to their words to us. Others may use language to divide  
722 the strength of their opponents, so that they may rule them; in N.A. service, we  
723 share with one another so that we may combine our strength, the better to fulfill  
724 our fellowship's primary purpose. To maintain our accountability to those we  
725 serve, we are bound to inform them in a complete, accurate, and concise fashion  
726 of our activities. The nongoverning nature of our service structure dictates that  
727 we seek others' advice in our own decisions, their consent in decisions affecting  
728 them, and their cooperation in decisions affecting us all. Open, honest, and  
729 straightforward communication nurtures the spirit of service in our fellowship, and  
730 poisons the impulse to govern.

731 The kind of authority that our groups have delegated to our boards and  
732 committees is the authority to serve, not to govern. Each element of our service  
733 structure, from the group to the world, has its own role to play; all, however, serve  
734 together as a team, striving toward a common goal, "that no addict seeking  
735 recovery need die without having the chance to find a new way of life." It is our  
736 sometimes hard-won experience that quality service, just like quality recovery, can  
737 only be accomplished in an atmosphere of mutual respect, mutual support, and  
738 mutual trust. Together, we recover, and together, we serve--this is the spiritual  
739 core of our program, the foundation of our fellowship. A structure based on that  
740 foundation could only be one of service, never of government.

