

God Has a Plan

I know this may sound simplistic, but I really believe God has all the stuff that's happened in the last twenty years, especially our devolution in the last ten, in a plan. I remember well when things started going off track thinking, "Gee, I better say something quick before this goes too far." And I DID say something, verbally and in writing. I was even on the WS Board of Trustees and it all fell on deaf ears. It was almost like my experience was only opinion and those who had tried nothing, and had nothing work for them, were listened to with knitted brows and like they knew what they were talking about. I got nervous, then I realized we had come so far - so far - that there had to be a backlash. And so, now we have some evidence about what we do and don't do in NA. Now, we have to wake up spiritually and resume our growth and continuance.

I think a lot of the policies forged in the 'dark ages' between 1990 and 2002 are going to be recinded when members understand just how 'exclusive' they are and some new 'inclusive' policies will be instituted. Just remember this: "Policies are only as good as the people applying them." If the people applying a good policy don't understand why a certain thing is being done a certain way, then the value of the policy is up to luck and happenstance. Usually, it will go badly. Like an uncaring functionary saying, "Look, man, I'm just doing my job." as the guillotine blade drops to chop of someone's head.

It takes a lot of study and learning to become competent at serving NA in a Tradition based manner. Group conscience is a sensitive matter and can easily be undone as well as done. Ask the question so as to get a predetermined answer, don't let the people voting understand all side of an issue, press for the vote while everyone is tired or in need of a break. Our entire Fellowship has been placed on hold by the processes and shenanigans of the 1990's. To say this was all done in the name of 'group conscience' is a sad commentary on just how out of touch with reality some members have become. No 'members' even have a clue of what has happened; only a select few and they don't dare publicize the changes because of the roars of outrage that will come just after understanding that members - according to the new structure - have no real say in NA anymore. Of course, this is not really so is it? But people on the inside think it is so because they created a paper tiger that empowers them to control all the money and all the copyrights on all the literature that they can retail to the general public, military, government, jails and hospitals at an enormous upcharge forever. The positions are held mainly by people who have served over many years in staff and elected positions. So, you have employees making the rules for themselves as well as for the NA Fellowship through its so-called representative body, the World Service Conference. We are all waiting for the Judge Judy moment, "What were you thinking?" to occur about the radical changes in our service structure. Oh, you didn't know?

Thank God, God has a plan!

Created on 01/14/2006 10:52 PM by RonStarR

Updated on 01/14/2006 10:59 PM by RonStarR

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NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS TRADITIONS HISTORY

**NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS
Memphis, Tennessee February 8, 1981**

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CHAPTER SIX - - The Twelve Traditions

The Twelve Traditions of NA

The 12 Traditions contain the brief 'cheat sheets' from the Colorado Region of Narcotic Anonymous to give the service committee a better understanding.

Lone Star Region Tradition Workbook

The NA Guide to the Twelve Traditions
LSRSC literature Committee
* NON CONFERENCE APPROVED *
Draft of Introduction minus the questions

Narcotics Anonymous Way of Life Why It Works: 12 Traditions

When our Traditions are violated, the special love that powers this Fellowship cannot flow. When we feel hatred or tension, a quick look to the Traditions can sometimes identify the cause. Imposing one's will on another in the grip of a powerful emotion is likely to be faulty in some important regards. Best to pray. Spiritual strength is usually accompanied by a sense of calm.

**For a further understanding of the Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous
Read your Basic Text & It Works How and Why
Don't use, no matter what and try to live clean**

Remember

**The 12 Steps help us work through our shit
The 12 Traditions helps us live with others in unity and keep the Fellowship alive
The 12 Concepts teach us how to be of service & give back what's freely given to us**

The moral of the story is... recovery is an inside job. Spirituality is all inclusive, even to those dastardly 13th steppers. No member I've met as of yet is themselves exempt from moral inadequacies. Judge not lest ye be judged. Teach by example rather than by direction. Quit playing the victim role, victims don't recover.

Therefore,

"With gratitude in our cleanliness, we dedicate our N.A. book to the loving service of our Higher Power that through the development of conscious contact with God, no addict seeking recovery need die without having had a chance to find a better way of life."

We remain trusted servants.

In gratitude and loving service,

WORLD LITERATURE CONFERENCE-III

WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE-LITERATURE COMMITTEE,

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS At Memphis, Tennessee February 8, 1981

INTRODUCTION

This book is the shared common and personal experience of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. We welcome you to read this text, trusting that you will choose to share with us the new life we have found. We have by no means found a "cure" for addiction. We offer only a proven plan for daily recovery.

In N.A., we follow a program adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous. In the last forty-five years, more than one million people have recovered in A.A., most of them just as hopelessly addicted to alcohol as we were to drugs. We are grateful to the A.A. fellowship for showing us the way to a new life.

The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, as adapted from A.A., are the basis of our recovery program. We have only broadened the perspective of addiction. We follow the same path with a single exception; our identification as addicts is all-inclusive in respect to any mood-changing, mind- altering substance.

"Alcoholism" did not cover the total spectrum as comprehensively as does addiction. We believe that we have been guided by a Greater Consciousness as a Fellowship, and are grateful for the Direction that has enabled us to build upon an already-proven program of recovery.

We have come to Narcotics Anonymous by various means and believe that as our common denominator is that we failed to come to terms with our addictions, however varied. Because of the degree and variety of addictions found within our Fellowship, we have approached the solution contained within this book in general terms. We pray that we have been searching and thorough, so that every addict who reads this volume will find the hope we have found.

Based on our collective experience, we believe that every addict, including the "potential" addict, suffers from an incurable disease of body, mind and spirit. We were in the grip of a hopeless dilemma. The solution of which is spiritual in nature. Therefore, this book will deal in great part with spiritual matters.

We are not a religious organization. our program is a set of spiritual principles through which we are recovering from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. Throughout the compiling of this work, the prevailing theme has been the conscious prayer and meditation:

"GOD, grant us knowledge that we may write according to Your Divine precepts; instill in us a sense of Your purpose, make us servants of Your will and grant us a bond of selflessness that this may truly be Your work, not ours, in order that no addict, anywhere, need die from the horrors of addiction."

Everything that occurs in the course of N.A. service must be motivated by the desire to more successfully carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. It was for this reason that we began this work. We must always remember that as individual members, groups, and service committees, we are not, and should never be, in competition with each other. We work separately and together to help the newcomer and for our common good. We have learned, painfully, that internal strife cripples our Fellowship; it prevents us from providing the services necessary for growth.

It is our hope that this book will help the suffering addict find the solution we have found. our purpose is to remain clean, just for today, and to carry the message of recovery..

Thank you,

WORLD LITERATURE CONFERENCE III

WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE - LITERATURE COMMITTEE, NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

Memphis, Tennessee February 8, 1981

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FORWARD

"The full fruit of a labor of love lives in the harvest, and that always comes in its right season..."

The material for this book was drawn from the personal experiences of recovering addicts within the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. The text is based on an outline derived from the pamphlet (our "white book"), "Narcotics Anonymous." The first eight chapters are based on the topic headings in the white book" and carry the same title. We have included a ninth chapter, 'Just for Today,' and a tenth chapter, 'More Will Be Revealed.' The remainder of the text was comprised of personal stories and appendices.

Following is a brief history of the book:

Narcotics Anonymous was formed in July 1953 with the first meeting held in Southern California. The Fellowship grew erratically, but quickly spread to various parts of the United States. From the beginning while membership was still very small and the need was seen for a "book on recovery" to help strengthen the Fellowship. The pamphlet, "Narcotics Anonymous," was published in 1962.

However, the Fellowship still had little structure and the 1960's were a period of struggle. Membership grew rapidly for a time, and then began to decline. The need for more specific direction was readily apparent. N.A. demonstrated its maturity in 1972 when a World Service Office was opened in Los Angeles. The W.S.O. has brought the needed unity and sense of purpose to the Fellowship. The opening of W.S.O. brought stability to the growth of the Fellowship.

Today, there are many thousand recovering addicts in hundreds of meetings all across the United States and in many foreign countries. Today, the World Service office truly serves a worldwide Fellowship. Narcotics Anonymous has long recognized the need for a complete text on addiction - a book about addicts, by addicts and for addicts, which would serve us much like the A.A. "Big Book" has served that Fellowship.

This effort was strengthened shortly after the formation of W.S.O. with the publication of The N.A. Tree, a pamphlet on service work. This pamphlet the original "service manual" of the Fellowship. It has been followed by subsequent and more comprehensive volumes, and now the N.A. Service manual. The manual outlined a service structure which included a World Service Conference. The W.S.C., in turn, included a Literature committee .

With the encouragement of W.S.O., several members of the Board of Trustees and the Conference, work began. As the cry for literature, particularly a comprehensive text, became more widespread, the W.S.C. Literature committee developed. In October, 1979, the first, World Literature Conference was held at Wichita, Kansas, followed by conferences at Lincoln, Nebraska and Memphis, Tennessee.

The W.S.C. Literature Committee, working in conference and as individuals, have collected hundreds of pages of material from members and groups throughout the Fellowship. This material has been laboriously catalogued, edited, rewritten, assembled, dismembered and reassembled. Dozens of area and regional representatives working with the Committee have dedicated weeks and thousands of man-hours to produce the work here presented. But more importantly, those members have conscientiously sought to insure a "group-conscious" text.

In keeping with the spirit of anonymity, we, the Literature Committee feel it appropriate to express our special gratitude and appreciation to the Fellowship as a whole, especially the many of you who contributed material for inclusion in the book. We feel that this book is a synthesis of the collective Group Conscience of the entire Fellowship and that every single idea submitted is included in the work, in some form or another.

This volume is intended as a textbook for every addict seeking recovery. As addicts, we know the pain of addiction, but we also know the joy of recovery we have found in the Fellowship and on the program of Narcotics Anonymous. We believe the time has come to share our recovery in written form with all who desire what we have found.

Appropriately, this book is devoted to informing every addict: JUST FOR TODAY, YOU NEVER HAVE TO USE AGAIN.

We come to this program from homes and apartments, offices and schools, treatment centers and jails, parks and gutters. We come from many different places, but they all share loneliness, pain, and fear. Somehow addiction draws us together in Narcotics Anonymous.

We came to this program for many different reasons. Those of us who stay, do so for the same reasons--to stop using and stay clean. After we've actually stopped, and the fog has cleared a bit, most of us take a look around to see what this program is all about. We start trying to do the things we see those around us doing. Eventually we come to the Twelve Steps and try to work them the best we can. The result is a degree of freedom that we never have known before. We find freedom from drugs and the obsession to use them; and in time a bit of freedom from that part of ourselves that has been destroyed.

We're taught that we can only keep what we have by giving it away. So we seek out and give our hand to other addicts who have problems like ours and want help. Usually one of the first things we try to do when we're working with a newcomer is to get them to a meeting. After all, that's what worked for us.

Why is this so? What is it about our meetings that's so special? Usually, about all we can say is that there is a feeling there, a feeling of strength and hope and love; an atmosphere of recovery. Our meetings are very special to most of us. They're a place where we feel safe; a place where we fit in. But what keeps it that way? One would think that any time people like us get together the results would be chaos. Groups of self-centered, self-willed, isolated individuals just can't meet together peacefully and safely; but we do. The reason that we can is that we have Twelve Traditions that help to keep our groups "safe" and free.

For most of us, understanding of these Traditions comes slowly over a period of time. We pick up a little information here and there as we talk to members and visit various groups. It usually isn't until we get involved with service that someone points out that "personal recovery depends on N.A. unity", and that unity depends on how well we follow our traditions.

Because we hear about "suggested steps" and of no must" so often, some of us make a mistake and assume that this applies to our groups the way it applies to the individual. The Twelve Traditions of N.A. are not suggested, and they are not negotiable. These are the rules that keep our fellowship alive and free.

By following these principles in our dealings with others in N.A. and society at large, we avoid many problems. That isn't to say that our Traditions eliminate all problems. We still have to face difficulties as they arise: communication problems, differences of opinion, internal controversies, problems with individuals, groups outside the fellowship.

However, when we apply these principles we avoid some of the pitfalls.

Many of our problems are much like those our predecessors had to face. Their hard won experience gave birth to the Traditions; and our own experiences have shown that these principles are just as valid today as they were yesterday. Our Traditions are what protect us from the internal and external forces which could destroy us. They are truly the ties that bind us together, but they don't work automatically. It is only through understanding and application that they have power.

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CHAPTER SIX
THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

We keep what we have only with vigilance and just as freedom for the individual comes from the Twelve Steps so freedom for the groups springs from our Traditions. As long as the ties that bind us at bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well.

- 1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.**
- 2. For our Group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our Group conscience, our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.**
- 3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.**
- 4. Each Group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other Groups, or N.A., as a whole.**
- 5. Each Group has but one primary purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.**
- 6. An N.A. Group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.**
- 7. Every N.A. Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.**
- 8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our Service Centers may employ special workers.**
- 9. N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.**
- 10. N.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.**
- 11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.**
- 12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.**

**The Twelve Traditions of NA
Colorado Region of Narcotic Anonymous
to give the service committee a better understanding.**

First Tradition Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA unity.

Our First Tradition concerns unity and our common welfare. One of the most important things about our new way of life is being a part of a group of addicts seeking recovery. Our survival is directly related to the survival of the group and the Fellowship. To maintain unity within NA, it is imperative that the group remain stable, or the entire Fellowship perishes and the individual dies.

Lone Star Region Tradition Workbook

The relationship described in the First Tradition is reciprocal. Groups work together in a spirit of cooperation to ensure the survival of Narcotics Anonymous; in turn, those groups receive strength and support from every other group and all our services. The strength of our mutual commitment to NA creates the unity that binds us together in spite of all that might divide us. The common welfare of NA depends on the continued growth and well being of the Fellowship in every corner of the world. Our shared commitment to recovery and to our common welfare gives us a personal stake in the unity of NA. In meetings, we find a new place to belong, new friends, and a hope for a better life. A feeling of care and concern grows between us and the group. We learn to treat others with kindness and respect and do what we can to support each other and our group.

Sometimes we comfort each other merely by being present; at other times, a phone call or letter to say hello can make a world of difference. Our relationships with other addicts are a source of strength in our personal recovery. We come to rely on meetings and on each other for that support. The unity we see in our meetings is an expression not only of our reliance on each other but our mutual reliance on spiritual principles and a Higher Power.

NA unity begins with our recognition of the therapeutic value of one addict helping another. We help each other in different ways. Sometimes we help each other one-on-one, as in sponsorship, or we may help each other by participating in the formation of new meetings to make NA accessible to more addicts. Many groups are formed when members of a more established group help to start another group. Sharing the responsibility enhances our common welfare and creates unity among NA members who work together. Groups flourish with the loving support of addicts helping addicts. We strengthen our unity by participating in each other's recovery.

Communication goes a long way toward building and enhancing our common welfare. With an attitude of open-mindedness, we seek to understand other perspectives. Reports may tell us a lot about what's happening in other groups or areas, but our common welfare depends on more than just information. True communication involves an effort on our part to "listen" as we read or hear reports, seeking a better understanding of the needs and problems of both our own group and other groups, wherever they may be. Encouraging each member to speak openly from the heart enhances our ability to work together. Regular reports, thorough discussion, and active listening lead us to the kind of understanding that helps us find creative solutions that benefit us all. Today's decisions may affect tomorrow's members. When we think of solutions to our current problems, it's not hard to consider the needs of our group, our area, our region, or even the worldwide Fellowship. But it's also important to remember the "unseen member" in our discussion—the member yet to come. When we work to ensure the vitality of NA, we're not working just for ourselves but for those yet to join us.

The unity that supports our common welfare is created not only by working together but also by playing together. The friendships we develop outside meetings strengthen NA unity. Fellowship activities provide opportunities for us to relax, socialize with each other, and have fun. Conventions, dinners, and holiday celebrations give us a chance to celebrate our recovery while practicing social skills. Picnics, dances, and sports days, for example, often allow our families to participate, too. We strengthen our sense of community when we share more than just meeting time. Stronger relationships develop, as we become more involved in each other's lives. The care and understanding born of these relationships are strong threads in the fabric of NA unity.

Applying spirituals principles

In the Twelve Steps of NA we learn to apply principles to better our lives. Moved by the miracle of personal recovery, we reach out to share that miracle with others. This is the essence of being of service in NA. In supporting our unity, we first apply principles to guide our own behavior. As groups, we use the same principles for guidance. That guidance creates a sense of unity that strengthens our ability to reach out to others, enhancing our common welfare. Some of the principles that seem particularly important to unity include surrender and acceptance, commitment, selflessness, love, and anonymity. As we practice these principles, we will find others who strengthen unity as well. Surrender and acceptance open the door to unity. As our trust in a Higher Power grows, it gets easier to let go of our personal desires and stop fighting for what we want. With an attitude of surrender, working together in a group becomes easier. Tradition One presents a picture of addicts working together worldwide to support each other's recovery. We try to remember this goal in all our actions, as individuals or as groups. If we find that our personal desires or the aims of our group conflict with that ideal, unity asks us to surrender our own desires and accept guidance that enhances the greater good of Narcotics Anonymous. Only by deciding to be part of that whole can we support the unity so essential to our personal survival.

Commitment is another essential ingredient in unity. Personal commitment to our shared sense of purpose is one of the ties that bind us together. When we know that we belong in NA, and when we make a commitment to stay, we become a part of the greater whole. Our sense of belonging is closely related to our degree of commitment to recovery in NA. As groups, the combined strength of that commitment is a powerful force in serving others. With that strong commitment, we are able to carry the message of hope that will support us all in our recovery. Commitment is a decision supported by our belief in NA as a way of life. Regular meeting attendance is one way in which we live out that belief. Greeting newcomers as they arrive or giving our telephone number to someone who needs help also reflects our decision. Sponsorship, sharing in meetings, setting up chairs before meetings—all these are ways in which we express our commitment. Each member finds a level of service that fits comfortably into a balanced program of recovery.

Selflessness is another indispensable element in unity. The principles we learn in the Steps help us let go of our selfishness and lovingly serve the needs of others. To keep our groups healthy, we place the needs of our group ahead of our own personal desires. The same principle applies to our affairs as a group. Setting aside what we may want as a group, we think about the needs of the Fellowship and seek ways to support our common good. Our ability to survive as a Fellowship and to reach others depends on our unity.

Love is a principle that is expressed in the practice of goodwill toward one another. We contribute to unity in our meetings by exercising loving care in the way we speak to and the way we treat one another. We try to share our experience, strength, and hope in a way, which demonstrates that recovery, is available in Narcotics Anonymous. An atmosphere of love and care in our meetings helps members feel comfortable and safe. The love we show each other attracts newcomers and strengthens us all, fueling our sense of unity and common welfare.

Anonymity, the spiritual foundation of our Traditions, supports NA unity as well. When we apply anonymity to the First Tradition, we overlook the differences that would separate us. In the context of unity, anonymity means that the message of recovery is for every addict who wants it. We learn to set aside our prejudices and focus on our common identity as addicts. Each of us has an equal right to and responsibility for the well-being of Narcotics Anonymous. Just as anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our Traditions, the unity spoken of in the First Tradition is the practical foundation on which we may build strong and successful groups. With unity as our practical foundation, we find that our relationship with one another is more important than any issue that may arise to divide us. No problem or disagreement is more significant than our need for each other's support. The fundamental importance of our common welfare strengthens our understanding of all the other Traditions. Many questions can be answered simply by determining how the action we contemplate will affect the unity of the Fellowship. Will it serve to divide us, or will it bring us closer together?

Are we practicing anonymity in our group?

Narcotics Anonymous Way of Life

Why It Works: 12 Traditions

TRADITION ONE

Common welfare is what we share in common through NA. Commonality of purpose and spirit gives us the positive lift and attitude that won't say "no" when an addict is asking for help. Being part of something is very important. Being accepted as we are and made to feel welcome as ourselves instead of in spite of ourselves is something the group owes to all addicts seeking recovery. The common welfare we are all striving for is the ability to stay clean just for today and this unites us all in our common good. We can be an example to others by applying the principles of the 12 steps in our personal lives and living in the solution to our problem.

Sometimes an atmosphere of dissention prevails in our groups over an atmosphere of recovery. While this sad truth cannot be denied, obviously it is not what produces our common welfare. It is just an instance of people being people instead of members showing gratitude. Unity, group purpose, is the idea of 'we feel' as opposed to 'I feel'; 'we want' as opposed to 'I want.' For many of us this subjugation of personal wants is frightening. Certainly, for those of us who have suffered greatly at the hands of others, this may be too much to ask; at least until working the Twelve Steps grants them the freedom to participate. Surrender doesn't require a loss of individuality. The results are found in the furthering of our group purpose and that is simply carrying our message that we do recover.

There are times when we may disagree with a group conscience decision and we may have to surrender to the majority. We can still feel unified with the whole as long as we remember what we have in common and don't let issues divide us. As long as the choice was made by a well-informed group, it is every member's duty to support the group's conscience. We may present our concerns and ask the chair to re-conduct the vote but in the end, group conscience must be a final answer. We cannot allow our will to interfere with the common welfare.

Individuals are strengthened by the answers they find in NA to their living problems. The support exchanged with other addicts in recovery supplies just what is needed, when it is needed if we have lowered our defenses, specifically admitted our need for help and allowed ourselves to become part of NA. Many of our answers seem to come 'right on schedule.'

Our common welfare depends on NA and group unity. So often when people let personalities and opinions get in the way we stray away from our primary purpose. Many say, "It hurts when I see people attend their home groups and have the commitment to fill trusted servant positions." It is so very important that the groups stick together and stay focused on our primary purpose. We cannot keep what we have unless we give it away. When a newcomer walks into a meeting, it is confusing enough to be or she as it is. It is of the utmost importance that the group maintain an atmosphere of recovery. We need to be committed to the program that saved our life and further helps us to live clean productive lives. It is most imperative that the newcomers see this. We all need to remember that we are all the same and common welfare should come first. We cannot carry the mess, but we can carry the message. No addict need suffer any longer and a newcomer should not have to be any more confused than they are at their first meeting.

Many times it will seem like all the members in the world stand on two or more clearly separate sides. If you're aware of something like this happening, you can serve by seeking out the third and fourth sides to the argument. WE are quick to forget that a lot of people have knowledge they never get to share. There are always more than two sides to a question and if internal tension and strife is too much for the member, he or she can find other members with common interests to work their Twelfth Step. We learn to look for the 'third side' to an argument that is usually composed of people who don't want to pick sides and have other goals and objectives.

The concept of group unity plays an important role in the 1st tradition. The value of strength in numbers is evident throughout NA. Support among addicts helps us to better understand that some individuality can be detrimental to our recovery. Although we may be destructive independently, we are able to gather strength from cooperation. Isolation for addicts leads to dissention, as we separate ourselves from our group, we are actually weakening the group and hurting ourselves at the same time. Each member of our fellowship has something to offer; as he/she separates, one less offering has been eliminated. Even this cannot destroy the group effort, but it does nothing to add strength. From strength in group unity, we gain momentum, building stronger foundation to lean on in times of need. For newcomers, this is important. Becoming a part of a group

effort brings addicts out of their shell, while at the same time, raising the possibility of adding positive support to the fellowship of NA.

Surrendering to our false belief of self-sufficiency, we begin to recognize that we need people. We need each other in order to grow. After a period, we see that "dueling egos" and disunity damages us emotionally and spiritually. Surrendering to the WE of group conscience enables us to become more unified. Unity not only assists the group to become more functional, it assists the member to grow. If personal recovery depends on NA unity, then NA unity must depend on personal recovery. This is why members feel, "I am hopeless every time my disease drives me into self-centeredness. I suffer alone in my own mind. The awareness of the need for my efforts to be based on the common welfare always brings me out of self and out of pain."

Surrendering me to NA is a process that underlies all my work in the steps and traditions.

"I can not count on anyone. I am alone. I must do it myself." This is what our disease tells us. WRONG! By daily practicing dependence, our trust, faith and hope grow within us and become a part of our personality. Then we can freely give these things to those who reach out to us. Addicts are plagued with communication disabilities. What we may think of as the 'good of all' may be true within certain bounds yet untrue in a larger context. In recovery, we constantly double check our thinking and update our inventories."

What we share is what others have gathered to help us meet our needs. It is not 'ours' in the possessive sense, only ours in the sense we can access it by remaining humble and respectful to those who came before us and interested and helpful to those who replace us as the most important people as we grow into being those who can help. Intriguing stories of how members pick up unexpected benefits without seeking them or even thinking of personal gain abound in our Fellowship. Other stories tell a different tale of wonder. If we slip back into selfishness and calculate our surrender so we don't lose touch with our old ways, we can stay sick a long time. Insanity in terms of the first tradition is thinking we own what we have been freely given. We are custodians with the special added attraction of being able to increase what we receive so that others can receive until they discover the strength to give.

Any organization exists to provide something important for its members. Without our people, we would have nothing to do. While we do all we can to keep the program truthful and attractive, we have to provide sufficient guidance to insure the spiritual integrity of our way of life. It is hard to remember that there are addicts hurting beside us and behind us as well as ahead of us. It is time we go slowly and take the time necessary to express our real caring and sharing. Sometimes prayer just gives us the power to slow down. Sometimes the Fellowship is sidetracked by rhetoric and misleading information. Our disease seems to inspire this sort of thing. Responding with counter accusations would only serve to further confuse matters. Going slow and trying to do God's will on a daily basis will always win out in the end. Short cuts and trickery will never get us what we want: A clean life, free from the obsessions and compulsions of active addiction in any form it may take. Being real and honest about this is how we find our way through the temptations and illusions of daily life.

As long as choices are made by a well-informed group, all is well. How often is this the case? Are we not often too biased towards doing things our way, to allow for contrary views? Many definitions of the word political are functional having to do with group processes. The definition that applies to dysfunction relates to partisan politics, where competition becomes more important than contribution to the general welfare. How do we insure communication does not break down between groups and other service entities? The answer is we do not, cannot, assure this without installing the machinery of government and that would destroy our spiritual unity forever. Instead, we do what we can to spread goodwill and sensibility among the members with whom we come in contact and stay clean ourselves.

WE must be courageous in presenting ideas that may appear to not be acceptable or popular. We might have the perception that clears up or unifies everyone else's thoughts. Different is not wrong. Different is just different. Acceptance of what our courage generates comes next.

If our strength is in our diversity, it is crucial to avoid any illusion of sameness. Addicts are and always will be enormously creative in their many approaches to getting what they really want. No one style of recovery is correct. We need our philosophers and our anti-intellectuals. We need our socially flamboyant members and our staid conservatives. Most importantly, we need you.

[1.10.04]

GREY COPY TRADITION TWO

For our Group purpose there is but one ultimate authority a loving God as He may express Himself in our Group conscience, our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.

In N.A. we have a great concern in protecting ourselves from ourselves. Our Second Tradition is another example of this. By nature we seem to be strong-willed, self-centered people, seeking self-gratification in the realms of money, power, and sex. An important part of our recovery is learning how to live with these drives; how to realign our misguided instincts, how to stop acting out our insanities, how to disarm our self-destruct mechanisms, and how to re-channel our energies toward constructive ends. In other words, we have to replace our "dying program" with a "living program". Early in our recovery we learned that we did a pretty poor job with our lives. One of our sayings is "Our best ideas got us here". This seems apt, as we look back and see how many times our schemes and plans got us into trouble despite their original intent. We were powerless over our addictions and could not manage our own lives. Now we find ourselves thrust together in N.A., mismanaged all, not one of us capable of making consistently good decisions. When we realized this had related to our new group oriented way of life we often experienced a sort of gut-level panicky feeling.

At this point our old timers usually come forward to reassure us. "Don't worry. God takes care of fools and addicts. This is a spiritual program and He won't let us screw it up" they say. They go on to explain that in N.A. we rely on a loving God as he expresses Himself in our Group conscience rather than on personal opinion or ego. In working the Steps we need to come to depend on a Power greater than ourselves. We continue this relationship and utilize it for our Group purposes. If we each turned our will and our lives over to His care and seek to do his will, he will express Himself on a group level. When a decision needs to be made for a group, each of the members should take the time to meditate on what is most beneficial to our common welfare. If we do this, then the results will truly be an expression of the spiritual concept of our Group.

We know that this is a fact for our Fellowship, but sometimes we are confused when it seems our decisions don't work out very well. We forget that we are not perfect, and that we are only experiencing spiritual progress. When personalities and self will creep into our efforts then the results suffer. We must be constantly on guard that our decisions are truly an expression of God's will. There is often a vast difference between Group conscience and Group opinion, powerful personalities, or popularity.

Some of our most painful growing pains have come as a result of decisions made in the name of "group conscience". Our experience has shown that there had been nothing spiritual about some of our decisions.

"We took a Group conscience and decided that..."Wait a minute! We don't take Group conscience, we take votes. One group decided that members must be graduates of a specific treatment program, another felt that only heroin addicts should attend, another accepted only Christians. Another decided that residents of a halfway house could attend if they promised not to talk. Another let others sit in on their group only if they would contribute to the collection. Another, decided to pay its officers wages.

One group promised that anyone who attended their meetings would be able to get a job at a local counseling center and so on and so on. We've made a lot of bad decisions and pawned them off as Group conscience. This worries many of us. How can we really tell if our decisions are really Group conscience or not, and how do we prevent painful mistakes?

There is one truth which helps guide us. True spiritual principles are never in conflict; they always complement each other. The true spiritual conscience of a group will never contradict any of our other spiritual principles. Whenever we are faced with a group decision, we first try to eliminate personalities, prejudices, and self-centeredness. Then we review our decisions to make sure they are not in violation of any of our Twelve Traditions. If we take another look at our decision and try to resolve it. This approach isn't foolproof, but it has helped to prevent problems many times.

The Second Tradition also concerns the nature of leadership in N.A. We have seen that we try to rest authority in the spiritual conscience of the group. In keeping with this, we make a special point of trying to prevent authoritarian leadership. We have learned that for our Fellowship leadership by example and by

selfless service works, and that direction and manipulation fails. The way we designate our trusted servants insures this. We choose not to have presidents, masters, chairmen or directors.

Instead we have secretaries, treasurers, and representatives. These titles in themselves imply service rather than control. Our experience shows that if a group becomes an extension of the personality of a leader or a certain member, then it loses its effectiveness. Newcomers don't stay, and members stop coming. The group must then change or die. This is sometimes a difficult and agonizing process. Those who stay grow through the experience; but what happens to those who leave? An atmosphere of recovery in our groups is one of our most precious assets; and we must guard it carefully lest we lose it to politics and personalities.

Those of us who have been involved in service for a long time or in getting a group started and keeping the doors open through the hard early days sometimes have a hard time letting go of the reins. Sometimes our egos get in the way, sometimes ungrounded fears get in the way, and sometimes the group gets in the way. Most of us come with a poor self-image and low self-worth. With time and some successes we begin to recover somewhat and develop healthier egos. We enjoy these feelings for they are healthy for us.

We like recognition and attention and we often deserve them. However this sometimes gets out of hand. We begin to pursue these things as ends in themselves and find ourselves in trouble. With more time and maturity we grow in humility and learn to deal with these new feelings in a more realistic and spiritual way. Another situation which often causes us problems is fear. We sometimes fear that there is no one else who can serve the group as well as we. We are afraid that if we turn over the responsibility to new members, something terrible is going to happen. We may even have tried to get others involved before without success. It doesn't matter whenever we are unwilling to take a chance to let the group grow on its own, or when we become afraid of change, we are playing God. Our friends may tell us to let go and work the Third Step, but sometimes we are deaf to their love.

In these cases it is ourselves who must go and grow. But again, what about those we lose in the process? Still another situation which causes leadership problems is when senior members are thrust into positions of power. Sometimes a group or part of a group will be afraid to let their leaders step down gracefully. The members time and time again draft the same leaders; demanding that they perform, demanding that they rule the roost. In these cases change is especially hard because it seems that only a crisis will do the job. Usually, the leader himself must refuse to serve.

This goes against the grain because we've been told never to refuse an N.A. request, and this has been a valuable part of our program. To refuse to lead because it's not what's best for the group requires a lot of maturity and humility.

Most of those involved with service sooner or later have to deal with these problems. At first they are unaware. They run on good feelings, the notoriety, and the attention. After a while, they may begin having mixed feelings. Part of them revels in the spotlight, while another part is very uncomfortable because they know they are just another member. This period is often followed by a period in which they deny their leadership and value to the group. Eventually and gratefully they find a degree of humility which allows them to accept themselves and their places in the Fellowship.

They accept that they are truly just a part of a greater whole, that they in themselves are not indispensable or dispensable. Along with this they also accept that they do have special and valuable experiences which can benefit the group. They become a resource for the group; seeking neither to control the group-not to set themselves apart. It is at this time that their long service truly contributes the most. They encourage us, inspire us, and teach us by example. Even though their services are less dramatic than when their group was struggling to survive, they provide a foundation of stability, strength, and experience upon which our Fellowship can grow.

**The Twelve Traditions of NA
Colorado Region of Narcotic Anonymous
to give the service committee a better understanding.**

Second Tradition For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

Our direction in service comes from a God of our understanding, whether we serve as individuals, as a group, or as a service board or committee. Whenever we come together, we seek the presence and guidance of this loving Higher Power. This direction then guides us through all our actions. [...] When we choose a member to serve us in some capacity, we exercise mutual trust.

Lone Star Region Tradition Workbook

In Narcotics Anonymous, we are concerned with protecting ourselves. Our Second Tradition is an example of this. By nature, we are strong-willed, self-centered people, who are thrust together in N.A. We are mismanagers and not always capable of consistently making good decisions.

In Narcotics Anonymous, we rely on a loving God as He expresses Himself in our group conscience, rather than on personal opinion or ego. By working the Steps, we learn to depend on a Power greater than ourselves and to use this Power for our group purpose. We must be constantly on guard that our decisions are truly an expression of God's will. There is often a vast difference between group conscience and group opinion, as dictated by powerful personalities or popularity. Some of our most painful growing experiences have come as a result of decisions made in the name of group conscience. True spiritual principles are never in conflict; they complement each other. The spiritual conscience of a group will never contradict any of our Traditions.

The Second Tradition concerns the nature of leadership in NA. We have learned that leadership by example and by selfless service works for our Fellowship. Direction and manipulation fail. We choose not to have presidents, matters, or directors. Instead we have secretaries, treasurers and representatives. These titles imply service rather than control. Our experience shows that if a group becomes an extension of the personality of a leader or member, it loses its effectiveness. An atmosphere of recovery in our groups is one of our most valued assets, and we must guard it carefully, lest we lose it to politics and personalities.

Those of us who have been involved in service or in getting a group started sometimes have a hard time letting go. Egos, unfounded pride, and self-will destroy a group if given authority. We must remember that positions have been placed in trust, that we are trusted servants, and that at no time do any of us govern. Narcotics Anonymous is a God-given program, and we can maintain our group in dignity only with group conscience and God's love.

Some will resist. However, many will become the role models for the newcomer. The self-seekers soon find that they are on the outside, causing dissension and eventually disaster for themselves. Many of them change; they learn that we can only be governed by a loving God as expressed in our group conscience.

To both lead and serve simultaneously requires a delicate balance. This balance is composed of many assets such as: being able to listen to the needs of the Fellowship, being able to actually hear its needs, and being able to fulfill those needs.

Personal service arises from the application of principles. Ideally, personal service is founded in a relationship with the same Higher Power that guides our personal recovery. This Higher Power also guides the various elements of our fellowship. Our direction in service comes from a God of our understanding, whether we serve as individuals, as a group, or as a service board or committee. Whenever we come together, we seek the presence and guidance of this loving Higher Power. This direction then guides us through all our actions.

Everybody has opinions on how to serve more effectively. When we each propose a different plan for any course of action, how do we choose among them? Who has the final say in our discussions? Our answer is that a loving God, the source of our unity, has the final say--the same Higher Power that guides our personal recovery.

If we are to find guidance from an ultimate authority, we need to find means of hearing that guidance together. The mechanism we use is group conscience. The success of the group conscience process depends on our willingness as individuals to seek guidance from a Higher Power on a personal level. We then bring that guidance into the group setting.

When we practice Steps and apply principles, we develop a conscience, an awareness of our behavior and its effects on others and ourselves. This conscience is a reflection of our relationship with a Higher Power. It reflects the expression we receive from the God of our understanding and our commitment to follow that guidance. Whenever we come together in our groups and apply these same principles, a collective conscience exists. Our relationship with a loving Higher Power, when consulted regularly, guides us in fulfilling our primary purpose while preserving our unity and common welfare.

Group conscience reflects a collective adherence to spiritual principles. The conscience of a group takes shape and is revealed when its members take the time to talk with each other about their personal needs, the needs of the group, and the needs of NA as a whole. Each member draws upon his or her relationship with a Higher power when sharing with the group. As members listen carefully to each other and consult their personal understanding of a loving God, something happens: Solutions appear that consider the needs of everyone concerned. In developing a group conscience, a clear mutual understanding or consensus arises. Based upon the understanding gained by sharing group conscience, a group may move on to a vote in order to make decisions.

Only when we listen for direction of our Higher Power are we able to hear it. The conscience of a group is most clearly expressed when every member is considered an equal. A Higher Power works through all of us, regardless of clean time or experience. Group conscience always exists, but we are not always willing or able to hear it or allow its expression. Hearing group conscience may take time and patience. A flexible approach invites a loving Higher Power into our group conscience process.

When we choose a member to serve us in some capacity, we exercise mutual trust. We trust the conscience that influenced our selection since it reflects our collective relationship with a loving higher Power. We extend that trust to the members we have selected to serve. We have faith that they will apply principles in their actions, seek and share the most complete information available, and work to further the group's well-being and our fellowship's common welfare. The relationship of trusted servants to the group is reciprocal: Members chosen to serve are asked to do so with dedication and fidelity, and those who've chosen them are responsible to support their servants.

When we are asked to serve, we understand that we are responsible to a loving Higher Power as expressed in the group conscience. We acknowledge this responsibility when we approach service with a selfless and loving attitude. The principles embodied in the Traditions apply to all of our actions. We can look to our individual conscience as well as the collective conscience for guidance in all we must do in fulfilling our responsibilities.

This connection with the group conscience is enhanced when, as trusted servants, we carry a continuous flow of information that is honest and open; it is further strengthened when we seek to serve, not to govern. We help form the conscience of our group or committee, through the direction of a Higher Power, by presenting a complete and unbiased stream of information. The ideas and direction of the group, then, are conveyed in our representation of that conscience.

Our trusted servants lead us best when they lead by example. Ideally, we choose them for the principles of recovery we see at work in their lives. We encourage our trusted servants to remain open to new ideas, to become knowledgeable about all aspects of service in NA, and to continue to seek personal recovery. All these attributes are essential to their ability to serve us well.

Applying spiritual principles

Some of the principles that seem to be important in Tradition Two include surrender, faith, humility, open-mindedness, integrity, and anonymity. We begin with surrender to our ultimate authority, the God of our understanding, with whom we have developed a personal relationship. In this case, we surrender to the direction of that Higher Power as it is revealed in our group conscience. We renew our commitment to the common welfare of NA when we place the needs of the fellowship ahead of our own desires.

Faith is our reliance on a loving Higher Power put into action. The application of this spiritual principle lets us surrender to the group conscience with hope instead of fear. It is a constant reminder that our direction comes from a Power greater than our own. We must practice courage in spite of our fears. Our faith is strengthened through the experience of seeing a loving Higher Power work in our fellowship.

Humility in practice is the honest assessment of our strengths and weaknesses. That kind of

assessment is a necessary principle in our willingness to surrender. Humility prepares us to set aside our personal wishes so that we can effectively serve our fellowship. We look to humility, first, to remind us that we aren't personally capable of guiding the affairs of Narcotics Anonymous. We are reminded of our source of strength: a loving Higher Power.

By practicing humility in our efforts to serve, we make room for open-mindedness. We remember that, just as we need the experience of other addicts to recover, so do we need their direction and ideas in order to serve. We learn to actively cultivate our listening skills, using our ears more than our mouths in conversation. When we are open-minded, we hear and accept solutions offered by others in the development of group conscience. Application of this principle teaches us to set aside our prejudices in order to work with others. By practicing open-mindedness, we nurture an attitude of goodwill toward others and become willing to serve with our common good in mind. Only with an open mind can we recognize the guidance of a loving Higher Power.

Integrity is the consistent application of spiritual principles, no matter what the circumstances. Leaders who demonstrate this quality inspire our trust. We serve best when we display an honest respect for the trust placed in us by others. Fidelity and devotion to that trust reflect the personal integrity of our servants. When we choose members to serve us, we often look for integrity as a sign that they are trustworthy.

The spiritual principle of anonymity reminds us that we are all equal in Narcotics Anonymous. No one member or group has a monopoly on knowledge of a Higher Power's will. We practice anonymity by offering our love, attention, and respect to everyone, regardless of our personal feelings toward any individual. Every member has a part in the development of group conscience. We are all equal in the expression of a conscious contact with a Higher Power of our understanding.

Tradition Two offers guidance for our relationship with others. A loving Higher Power is the source of direction for NA as a whole. This Higher Power is also the source of the principles that we apply when we serve. We can use these principles when we seek direction as individuals, groups, service boards, or committees.

Service is for those we serve. Our best talents in service are the ability to reach other addicts, to offer identification and welcome, to greet the addict walking in the door for the first time, and to help ensure that newcomers return again and again. Any one of us is capable of offering that service. With the guidance of a loving Higher Power, we become better able to help others.

Service to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous has its own rewards. When we practice spiritual principles in our daily lives, a stronger relationship with our Higher Power develops. Our relationship with our group and the fellowship grows stronger, too. Service in NA is a learning experience that allows us personal growth. We begin to look beyond our own interests, setting aside our self-centered view of life in order to better serve the whole. We benefit spiritually in return for our unselfish service.

Narcotics Anonymous Way of Life Why It Works: 12 Traditions TRADITION TWO

Moreland, Georgia Edit October 2001

Free members of a voluntary non-residential self-help organization like Narcotics Anonymous are ungovernable in any conventional sense. The techniques that may prove effective in government or business will quickly turn off a person who is only doing something because they feel it is right in their heart. When someone starts yelling, bossing or criticizing openly, the volunteer is totally free to drop their tools in place and walk away with a clear conscience. Many of our trusted servants forget this simple fact and get drawn into exploring their fantasies of what administrators and representatives do. If they believe with all their hearts that all politicians are crooked and that the roles we play in service are political due to the titles we use to describe them, they will eventually become crooked. This is a good belief to inventory and change as early in recovery and service as possible. What really happens is that while a few people are coming into the system and many people are already in the service structure, we have a growing number of members who are just watching, often with prior experience and meditating on how we can solve some of our problems of self-government. One thing we agree on is that NA processes should always be democratic in nature and that

members should be consulted on things that affect them.

Lest we become victims of our own incomplete learning experiences, we should try to focus on our primary purpose when we are talking about leadership and trusted servants. Our purpose of carrying our message to the still suffering addict is direct and to the point. If it is kept in mind, it will ground out some of our excesses to the point of actually being effective. Most of the stuff that concerns us in NA is very simple, rather like baking a cake. It is important to have certain ingredients and certain utensils on hand with a ready oven and some sort of timer before we begin. While these points are simple, they are not dispensable. Sometimes we get so caught up in how we are going to do something, or who is going to do it, that nothing gets done! Dope addicts are funny people. Many of us claim to hate authority figures. It is with some surprise that we find out that we actually are rather quick to give ourselves over to authority without thinking about it. In active addiction, our dealers were authorities along with various representatives of the organized world. We feel a need for freedom that we don't associate with illness or addiction. One explanation may be that we are unable to cope with every day reality and the ordinary demands of life may slide beyond our reach. Authorities are the ones we associate with the word "no."

In our service structure, we try to make some allowance for our members basic conflict between needing someone to tell us what to do and yet wanting to do things our own way, in our own time! Despite the tallness of this order, we have worked out what we call our service structure and certain procedures that seem to work for us most of the time. When there is difficulty, we all have the choice of staying and helping or backing off and letting non-participation simplify things for us. Our leaders are simply the members who can hear us and respond to our needs. We listen to some who have answers that stand up for the moment and only a few will stand against the test of time.

"I do not know where the courage comes from most of the time, but today I find that I am a leader in NA. It takes courage to lead. It feels great for me to be so passionately involved in something that regardless of consequences, I will stand up and speak about an unpopular or controversial position. At the other end, I am able to carry and speak pro to a group conscience decision that I disagree with personally as long as it doesn't force me to act against my basic principles or beliefs. I am able to get myself out of the way and become an instrument that carries a group's conscience in a way that engenders humility and selflessness in my personality."

If we feel we have to lie, we need to back up to our 1st Step. Dishonesty comes from a lack of contact with a loving Higher Power. What conflict exists between unity and group conscience? Some members have thought that group conscience has to be compromised to effect unity. Unity can become a double-edged sword if it requires deception or misrepresentation. Worldly concerns about money, property and prestige will always appear imperative, immediate and definite. Only by stepping past the illusions of 'us and them', 'money', and justified deceit, do we get to discover what's really important. In NA we do foolish things through habit or mental laziness. Inner calm helps us see through the haze of appearances to the heart of things. Our conscience can be our best guide. By using the conscious contact that works so well in the rest of our lives, our groups achieve a spiritual quality. When we abandon spiritual principles and fall back on ordinary law, kangaroo courts or mob mentality, we are no longer entitled to call ourselves spiritual.

While individuals have a tremendous freedom to follow the God of their understanding, certain spiritual terms stand on very common ground. We are patient, tolerant, humble, grateful and other things that reflect interior progress. If we find our minds telling us to go one way and our spirits urging us to give our attention to something else, we learn to pay attention. Only by giving our very best can we expect results beyond what simple thinking can give us. A sense of devotion to God's Will gives our groups the power that allows them to carry our message. Where that power fails, we go inward to renew our spiritual resources. Acts of desperation, justified wrongdoing and harsh treatment of individual members is never sanctioned in real Narcotics Anonymous. These things have only occurred where our members were inexperienced or unaware of what had been learned by those who have gone before. A loving God is our only Ultimate Authority and is expressed in the conscience of our groups.

We ask questions in participating in group conscience. We pin down presenters of important motions and try to get all the information we can. Wherever we can, we take time to talk over the item with our sponsors, group members, friends and pray for guidance. We may come up with additional questions. When all is said and done, we take a few breaths; make a decision and surrender.

For the first time in many of our lives, we have become willing to try something other than our own way. We have been inspired by the joy, happiness and freedom of members who have come before us. Along with this inspiration comes hope that we can also begin to recover. We have no official leaders, but all of us may lead

a newcomer to our way of life by the power of example and being available to lend a helping hand. When we allow God's will to be expressed through us, our own recovery becomes stronger.

We addicts can make anything hard. This Tradition serves to remind us that when it is all said and done, the final say must accord with our inner connection without higher power we call 'conscious contact.' This is our protection against the games of manipulation and control that we all slip into from time to time. Our perfection is in our desire for improvement with spiritual help and guidance. We never arrive at a point of perfection where further improvement makes us able to rest secure in our observations and opinions without concern for the feelings of our Fellow members.

One of the adaptations that is happening to you if you are an addict who has recently begun to live without using drugs is that your feelings are coming back. Some are pleasant and others unpleasant. We have an internal guidance system that works when we are clean. As we become more accustomed to being able to trust our instincts again, we use our feelings to add depth and dimension to what our eyes see and our ears hear. We begin to assemble what can only be called an inner knowledge or certainty about what is right and what is wrong. The Twelve Steps of recovery are in tune with this reality and that is why we have to spend so much time talking and listening among other recovering addicts. We can literally hear what rings true and what doesn't. Many times something we have been doing will first seem faulty when shared by another addict. As we examine these things more, we are encouraged to pick out the things that have no place in our new lives. As we grow, our inner knowledge comes out in many forms and one of these forms is the group conscience that we use to guide our groups.

Surrender to group conscience begins with anonymity. When we ask ourselves the question, "What is right?" instead of, "Who is right?" we begin to remove the personality of our groups. Many times groups who experience disunity through personality conflicts or through uninformed conscience begin to conform to the will of personality. It is very difficult for us to surrender to a loving God if we do not carry an informed conscience. We trust our servants in this capacity. When we gather as recovering addicts and pray for the knowledge of God's will, our conscience becomes directed by a loving God. We are all addicts and it may be difficult to keep money, property or prestige from diverting us from our primary purpose. Usually a member with insight to our disease will assist us in refocusing on our ultimate authority and the primary purpose we serve selflessly.

We depend on our loving God to carry us when uninformed consciences begin to disunite us. Gut feelings may not lead to real solutions that can replace the games of anger and manipulation. We practice holding fast to the basic principles and values we learned as new members. We continue with vigilance to stay honest, open-minded and willing to surrender to our loving God.

Often without meaning to, our trusted servants relax their learned roles as special servants carrying out a role not often found in the outside world. It is easy to drift into the mindset that allows us to think that the spiritual is unreal and that we have gotten 'so big' that we have to tighten up and do things the way they are done in business and government. The humor of this is lost entirely when our members begin to suffer from an enlarged view of themselves and their role.

We are not saints and it takes some courage for most of us to share spiritually. Expressions of a spiritual nature bear a special meaning and we will not share these things in hostile or intimidating circumstances unless we have the experience or support to do so. When adverse conditions prevail, all we have to do is wait and stay together.

To underscore that those who act on behalf of our groups play a special role in a special way, we call them 'trusted servants.' Obviously, not all our members expected to serve in this way are able to fulfill the group's expectations. Worse, some feel they must be more forceful than a mere servant could be. The nature of appearances versus deeper meanings makes it inevitable that conflicts will occur. Staying true to your spirit and close to those you serve will see you through. It is perfectly correct to resign if you cannot fulfill group conscience. Indeed, sometimes, this is the best way to remind a group that has fallen into feeling 'powerful' in the diseased sense.

The idea of group conscience is that where members are considering something that will affect them, they have a right to gather relevant facts and voice themselves before any action can be binding on them. This is particularly true since no action can be enforced against the will of our groups. There will be times when immature leadership or trusted servants required to act with insufficient information will make poor

decisions. Our disease doubles the likelihood of these problems. It is terrifically important that we develop our capacity for forgiveness and tolerance if we aspire to serve NA.

A member shared, "God was there but he was not involved in my life. Then I experienced tradition two and I knew God was in my life because he was in the group and I was in the group."

A group conscience is not a democracy, so it does not involve politics. To reach a group conscience, each individual must be open, honest and willing. Each must become aware, that is, informed about the facts and sensitive to the movement of the Spirit that is our Higher Power.

In a home group, decisions make themselves and directions unfold as, simultaneously, a few or several of us begin to do things in one way. An example is in saying the Serenity Prayer before our group conscience meeting: our group, to a person, will use the "we" version. This was not discussed, it was observed after the fact. Another example is that none of the Home Group members chose to "celebrate" their anniversary by calling on "special" members who have helped them in recovery or important family members during a meeting. While we celebrate our anniversary on or soon after our clean date, our anniversary meeting is little different from other meetings held throughout the year. We celebrate with fellowship after the meeting. Our group conscience dictates that we remember our primary purpose every day of the year.

Our servants are trusted, trustworthy and service-oriented. They serve our trust. Trusting them means that we ask questions because we are curious or interested, not because we are suspicious and critical. We cannot become informed simply by listening. Our servants are gently guided by other more experienced members, group conscience and principles. No one member will accept responsibility for decisions on behalf of the group. Each member accepts responsibility for the decisions made within group conscience and for the actions of our trusted servants. Trusted servants have to be responsible to the group. In part, to serve means to comply, to be of use, to benefit, to make ready, to wait on, to furnish or supply, to treat or act toward in a specified way.

We cannot afford to be apart from the whole of NA in any way, or we will be in danger of letting our disease get a foothold. We need to "identify in" at every turn. Because of this, the people who take on responsibilities cannot be merely servants, not can they be trusted governors. They must be trust servants. As gently and loving as we can, we tell them what we want done and they do it. They may advise us according to their experience or perspective, but the final choice belongs to the group. No individual tells our group what to do and no individual is left alone to make a choice for us. In part, to govern means to control, to direct, to influence, to determine, to punish and to restrain.

Our Higher Power is limitless in love, power and creativity. To subject the possibilities of our recovery to rigid rules and regulations would only serve to cut us short of the reality. In the nineteen seventies, there were only a few hundred NA meetings. In the early eighties, the Basic Text was published, and in many places, the first meetings were started. Since then, thousands of addicts have overcome the slavery of active addiction. To allow any one of us the authority to define or regulate our recovery seems an absurd notion in the face of the kind of cultural revolution our lives in recovery represent.

Never in the history of man have addicts seen what we live on a daily basis. Addicts were written off as hopeless derelicts and died painful, lonely, slow deaths. Today, we live, thrive, change, grow and prosper. In the past, addicts were considered dangerous and were not allowed to congregate. Weekly, our meetings gather to celebrate our newfound family in a spirit of love and support. In this perspective, it seems simple to trust the creative action of the Spirit to continue to guide us as a group. As our Higher Power guides us through the steps to a spiritual awakening, our Group Conscience guides our group towards growth, recovery and mutual prosperity. Together we do what we could not do alone.

Part of our experience in NA is to watch groups come and go in our area. New members are very creative and strong willed, and often see a need for a new meeting time or place. From our perspective, those meetings which were started with spiritual willingness have thrived. Those started in self-will have folded. The power of willingness and love is insurmountable. In our personal recovery, we have learned that once we surrender and become willing, the doing seems effortless. Often the biggest struggle is in becoming willing. And once we are willing, things seem to just "fall into place." With our groups, then, we need to become willing and God-centered. The rest will "fall in place" as our Higher Power takes care of the details we fail to even see. And God will easily solve problems we think are too big for us: a new member moves into the area highly qualified, experienced in performing the service we require; a coffee pot is donated...

How does Group Conscience benefit the individual member? When we share our ideas, problems or thoughts with others, we gain a different perspective. Sharing with addicts who care about our welfare allows them to care about us. When we go to a meeting, talk about something that is bothering us and listen to the experience of other members, we are taking a Group Conscience. As each NA member shares experience, strength and hope on that topic, a loving God speaks to us through the collective message. We often leave such a meeting with the answer to our problem, yet it was not just one person who told us what we needed to hear. Instead, the shared experience of everyone provides our best solutions.

The principle of Tradition Two tells us to treat others in a loving manner. That's how a loving God can speak through us. As one member puts it, "When I talk to others I do so as if I'm speaking to God and when I listen to them, I listen as though God were speaking through them. This is practicing the Second Tradition."

What about being a trusted servant? Tradition Two teaches the principle of selfless service. It is one thing to do good deeds for the purpose of gaining power or recognition, but that is not our goal. Performing humble service for the good of others brings spiritual rewards. When we strive to be of service to others in all that we do, our lives are enriched. We now have a noble purpose and we pursue it with vigor. By focusing on helping others, we are in fact helping ourselves. We are keeping the miracle of recovery alive by giving it away.

Tradition Two defines an ultimate authority for us. We no longer have to assume that awesome responsibility. Being "boss of the world" and "master of all we see" is not only impossible, it is dangerous for recovering addicts. It is a short journey from inflated, self-important thinking to relapse. Through an active 11th Step, we are reminded that we function better as our Higher Power's trusted servant than as a Higher Power.

[1.10.04]

GREY COPY TRADITION THREE

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

This Tradition is very important for both the individual and the group. It relates directly to many of the basic ideas of our program. Desire is the key word in this Tradition and desire is the basis of our recovery. In our story and in our experience of trying to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers, one painful fact of life has emerged again and again. An addict who does not want to stop using will not stop using. They can be analyzed, counseled, reasoned with, prayed over, threatened, beaten, locked up or whatever; but they won't stop using until they want to. The only thing we ask of our members is that they have this desire. Without it, they are doomed, but with it miracles have happened.

This is our only requirement, and rightfully so. Addiction does not discriminate, why should recovery? Our disease does not recognize race, religion, sex, age, occupation, economics, or any of the other lines people draw to separate themselves. "An addict is a man or woman whose life is controlled by drugs." The newcomer is the lifeblood of N.A. and when one comes to us seeking help we welcome them with open arms. We don't care who or what they are or even what they used. As long as they want to stop using there's a place for them in N.A., and this Tradition guarantees them that place. Every clean member of N.A. could have been rejected by some kind of membership requirement or another. Many of us would not be alive today if we hadn't found a program which accepted us when we wanted help. We originally came to this program for many reasons, but those of us who have stayed have done so for the same reason--the desire to stop using. Many of us didn't even know that addiction was a problem. Many of us could not visualize a life without drugs, let alone want it. Many of us had reached the point in our addiction where we felt there was no hope for us, we only wanted a little relief. It wasn't until after we came to N.A. that we found out that we had a disease and that recovery was possible for us.

Membership in N.A. isn't automatic when someone walks in the door; it isn't every automatic when the newcomer has a desire to stop using. The decision to become a part of our fellowship rests with the individual. Any addict who has a desire to stop using can become a member of N.A.

We are Narcotics Anonymous and our problem is addiction, other fellowships deal with other problems. Most newcomers are led to the fellowship which best suits their needs. Individuals come with problems that express themselves in various ways. They don't clearly fit into our fellowship. Many of these people become valuable and active members of several fellowships while others single out the fellowship with which they are the most comfortable. Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers; where they find recovery is not our basic concern. We know of members with a history of drug abuse who have found recovery in other fellowships. We support these members and rejoice in their recovery, and addict who has found freedom and recovery anywhere is a friend of ours.

Although we would welcome them in our groups, we do not seek them out or force them to join N.A. This would not be in keeping with our spiritual aims.

The twelve step fellowships do not compete. We are mutually supportive and cooperate for the common good. For us recovery is more important than membership. However, some newcomers seem to have trouble finding a fellowship or fellowships in which they fit. We encourage them to shop around, to attend various meetings and find out where they most fully identify. They might ask themselves: "Where do I hear about problems most like my problems? Where are there members who are living the kind of life I would like to live? and "Where am I most comfortable?" We have also met members who are uncertain about where they really belong. We suggest that they ask themselves three questions:

1.-What message do you carry? (What is the nature of your recovery and what have you recovered from?)

2.-Who are you trying to carry this message to?

3.-Where are you trying to carry this message?

We suggest that the answers to these three questions should not be in conflict; we cannot give away anything we haven't got. We cannot carry any message that is not our own.

The choice of membership rests with the individual. We feel the ideal state for our fellowship exists when an addict can openly and freely come to an N.A. meeting; wherever and whenever they choose and leave just as freely if they want to. We realize that there is nothing we can do to make an addict stop using. However, we have learned that recovery is a reality and that life without drugs is better than we ever imagined. We open our doors to addicts hoping that they can find what we have found; but knowing that only those who have a desire to stop using and want what we have to offer will join us in our new way of life.

The Twelve Traditions of NA Colorado Region of Narcotic Anonymous to give the service committee a better understanding.

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

The Third Tradition encourages freedom from judgment. It leads us on the path of service toward an attitude of helpfulness, acceptance, and unconditional love. [...] Addiction is a deadly disease. We know that addicts who don't find recovery can expect nothing better than jails, institutions, and death. Refusing admission to any addict, even one who comes merely out of curiosity may be a death sentence for that addict.

Lone Star Region Tradition Workbook

Desire is the key word; desire is the basis of our recovery. Narcotics Anonymous offers recovery to addicts around the world. We focus on the disease of addiction rather than any particular drug. Our message is broad enough to attract addicts from any social class or nationality. When new members come to meetings, our sole interest is in their desire for freedom from active addiction and how we can be of help.

The Third Tradition helps NA offer recovery to so many addicts by freeing us from having to make judgment about prospective members. It eliminates the need for membership committees or applications. We are not asked to make decisions about anyone's fitness for recovery. Since the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using, we as members have no reason to judge each other.

Desire is not a measurable commodity. It lives in the heart of each individual member. Because we can't judge the sole requirement for membership, we are encouraged to open wide the doors of our meetings to any addict who wishes to join. We are asked to extend to others the care and concern that helped each of us find a sense of belonging. The Third Tradition helps NA grow by encouraging us to welcome others unconditionally.

Membership is a personal decision reached by each individual. We can do a lot to allow addicts the freedom to make that decision and reaffirm their commitment to recovery. We can help them feel comfortable in our groups by greeting them at the door, sharing with them before or after the meeting, and exchanging telephone numbers. We try to make sure that any addict who attends our meeting is not turned away. To the extent that it's possible, we choose the most accessible location for our meetings. We choose a format that reflects an invitational tone to everyone regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion or lack of religion. Most of all, we encourage every addict to keep coming back.

The strength of any member's desire is not necessarily connected to any outside circumstance. What makes one addict stay clean while another returns to using? No one of us can judge whom will stay to recover and whom will return to active addiction. There are no guarantees based on types of drugs used or using history. We cannot predict a higher success rate for addicts of a certain age, or those who used for a certain number of years, or women over men, or any other external factor. Just as we are not capable of measuring another's desire to stay clean, neither are we equipped to decide who should join. We offer welcome instead of judgment.

We look for ways to help, we encourage each other not to judge. Our task is to fan the flame of desire, not dampen it. Any addict who walks into a meeting, even a using addict, displays a level of willingness that cannot be discounted. While maintaining an emphasis on the importance of total abstinence, still-using addicts are welcomed into our meetings with special encouragement to keep coming back. Many

recovering addicts do not have access to regular meetings because of incarceration, geography, physical disability, or employment. These addicts are members in every respect as long as they have the desire to stop using, and they are entitled to the same consideration and support as any other member.

Addicts attend their first meeting for many reasons. Our motives for coming to NA aren't particularly important. The desire to stop using may not be clearly realized; it may be no more than a subtle yearning for relief from pain. But that yearning often drives us to seek solutions we might otherwise never consider. Often the experience of hearing other addicts share about recovery will ignite the desire to stop using. Others come to a meeting, hear the message, and return to active addiction. Those who return to meetings after relapse often say their desire to stop using was born from the pain of relapse. We come to NA for many reasons, but we stay to recover when we find and keep the desire to stop using.

The group is not the jury of desire. We cannot measure or arbitrate willingness. Any addict's willingness to come to a meeting ought to be a sufficient indication of desire. It may take a while for an addict to find the desire that will keep her or him in Narcotics Anonymous. No addict should be denied an opportunity to stay long enough to develop that desire. We can nurture that desire with loving acceptance.

The wording of the Third Tradition reflects the broad focus of our First Step. It's written simply enough to include addicts of all countries and cultures, no matter what drugs they used. Before finding recovery in NA, many addicts don't think that alcohol is a problem. Others abuse prescription medication, thinking that "legal" drugs are okay. Because of the wording of this Tradition, we are able to attract and welcome addicts who might think they didn't use the "right" drugs to qualify for membership in NA. Each addict should be allowed to decide if NA is the answer for him or herself. We cannot make the decision for others.

Many of us know when we walk into our first meeting that we're addicts. It's not something we have to decide; it's a fact of life. Membership, however, means more than just being an addict; it means making a decision. If we identify with what we hear in NA and relate with the people we meet, we will want what NA offers. So long as we have a desire to stop using, we are free to make the decision to join Narcotics Anonymous. Then, once we've made that decision, we need to follow it with a commitment to the principles of NA. With that commitment, we set ourselves squarely on the road of recovery.

Applying spiritual principles

The Third Tradition encourages freedom from judgment. It leads us on the path of service toward an attitude of helpfulness, acceptance, and unconditional love. As we've seen in the previous Traditions, our path of service arises from the application of principles. Some of the principles that support this Tradition include tolerance, compassion, anonymity, and humility. Tolerance reminds us that judgment is not our task. The disease of addiction does not exclude anyone. NA, likewise, cannot exclude any addict who desires to stop using. We learn to be tolerant of addicts from different backgrounds than ours, remembering that we are not better than any other addict in a meeting.

Addiction is a deadly disease. We know that addicts who don't find recovery can expect nothing better than jails, institutions, and death. Refusing admission to any addict, even one who comes merely out of curiosity, may be a death sentence for that addict. We learn to practice tolerance of addicts who don't look like us, think like us, or share like us. We teach by example. Pressuring new members to talk or act like we do may send them back to the streets. It certainly denies them the right to recover and learn in their own way.

Compassion lends kindness to all our efforts in service to others. With compassion as the foundation of our actions, we learn to support members through any difficulties they may experience. All too often, we are quick to judge the quality of another's recovery or willingness. Tradition Three asks us to set aside our self-righteousness. Because the only requirement for membership is a quality we cannot measure, the right to judge another's desire is denied us. Our attitude ought to be one of loving acceptance toward all addicts, regardless of any other problems they may experience. Generous application of compassion is more therapeutic to the suffering addict than a free application of judgment.

Humility reminds us that we are not God; we cannot predict another's readiness to hear the message. We try to remember our own fear and confusion in our first meeting. We need each other's help and encouragement, not criticism or rejection. Our awareness of our own shortcomings, exercised in humility, helps us remember this. The self-acceptance that often accompanies humility makes us reluctant to judge others harshly.

Anonymity is the principle that supports the openness of our groups and our freedom to welcome everyone as equals. NA has no classes of membership and no second-class members. The common denominator in NA is the disease of addiction. We are all equally subject to its devastation. We share an equal right to recovery.

The practice of anonymity ensures the integrity of Tradition Three. In the spirit of anonymity, we remember that no individual member or group is more important than the message we carry. The single requirement for membership helps ensure that no addict need die without having a chance to recover. We celebrate our equality and the freedom we share by welcoming any addict who has the desire to stop using.

Tradition Three spells freedom for the members of NA. It sets the sole requirement for membership in the heart of each individual member. We don't have to decide for anyone else. We don't have to expend time and energy on deciding who should stay or who we should help. Instead, we are free to extend loving assistance to anyone who walks into a meeting desiring freedom from addiction.

Narcotics Anonymous Way of Life Why It Works: 12 Traditions TRADITION THREE

Moreland, Georgia Edit October 2001

A member shares, "It is very important that the newcomer know that the only requirement for NA membership is the desire to stop using. I have heard it said that it must be an honest desire or a sincere desire, but I know that is not true. You only have to have a desire to stop using - any kind of desire. When I came to my first meeting, I had no idea what was going on. I knew I was not very honest at that time. If I was told I needed to have an honest desire to stop using I would have never come back to another meeting. It took me three months to finally get clean. I guess my desire to stay clean was greater than my desire to use."

Desire and willingness are the two most important prerequisites to recovery. In order to recover, an addict must have the desire to stop using and in order to stay clean; an addict must have the willingness to follow suggestions so that they will continue to recover.

Pain doesn't make us members. This is why it is important for us to share our pain, so others can respond to us and give us the beginnings of membership. If this sharing doesn't make our desire for recovery clear to others, we can hurt a long time in helpless confusion. We can even blame others for not treating us with the respect and affection we think our agony buys for us. We may see recovery as a contest of pain. The person who hurts the most does not get the most help: it is the person who lets the group know they are open to help by asking for it. Our own personal acquaintance with desiring recovery initiates our recovery. Before this, we were only re-experiencing our past hurts and injuries. Desire implies a future and a change.

Using refers to using drugs in one form or another and starts with an individual member's drug of choice. The more we learn about the addicts we find in the meetings, the more we can discover similarities to what we have gone through and still experience daily. When we find we have enough in common with addicts in Narcotics Anonymous, we have shifted our identification from lonely scared addict in a world where we cannot recover, into a world where being an addict first means we cannot use drugs and live successfully and further that we can regain our health and a degree of good sense.

There is no "wrong" reason for coming to NA. Many of us came to escape jail or other institutions. We may or may not have found a desire to stop using because of this. Those who have are free to begin a new way of life. Those who do not have the desire return to their old way of life. We have learned through personal experience that no one can make an addict stop using other than himself. Being ready to stop using is a personal decision and NA must not try to force our way of life on anyone regardless of how apparent it is to us that the individual should join us. However, we can pray for that person and be ready and willing to help if that person decides to ask for help. The benefits of membership cannot be bought, sold or given to someone without the desire. It can threaten their life or make them insanely jealous to have contact with a clean addict before they are willing to surrender. We can make ourselves available and stay in touch only if they have this desire.

Membership is an important part of our personal recovery. We feel comfortable with and part of the group. Along with membership, certain responsibilities come in to play. We must provide an atmosphere of

recovery to anyone seeking it. Membership should not be taken lightly; it is a privilege. To serve is not a chore. We have found growth and freedom from membership and should freely pass these things to others.

When we finally make the decision to stop using, we must take certain action in order to begin the recovery process. We must make a commitment to attend meetings regularly, to get a sponsor and work the Steps and Traditions. As we continue to recover, other actions must be taken in order to insure ourselves against complacency. These include carrying the message to the addict who still suffers as well as a commitment to service. It is only through these types of positive actions can we attain spiritual growth.

Membership in NA is something that is often taken for granted because the program works so quickly. In our disease, we may fail to value the peace and comfort that is coming our way. Life always has its little surprises around the corner. In recovery, these surprises are usually pretty good! As with many other groups, with membership comes certain obligations. We cannot just assume that meetings will automatically be there for us when we need them. We must get involved, attend business meetings and make a commitment to service. We must give back what was so freely given to us if we are to continue to recover as individuals and as a fellowship.

The desire to stop using is our only requirement. This does not refer to chemicals, people, food, sex, etc. Using refers to the way our addictive personality manifests itself in our daily lives. We live to use and use to live. We do not separate ways or means of usage nor do we focus on our use. We focus on freedom from active addiction. This freedom begins with putting down the most obvious. Chemicals allowed us to recognize and identify our disease. As we begin to recover, we may begin to see other ways we actively use. Identifying rather than comparing helps keep us focused on our desire. We must carry a clear message of Narcotics Anonymous recovery to enable newcomers to see what we have to offer and how we can help. When we cloud our message, we become inconsistent and this may confuse the newcomer. Membership is open for those with the desire. This does not mean that we do not carry our message to plant seeds with those addicts with potential desires. As long as the still suffering know about NA, we have carried out our primary purpose. We may not be able to keep a using addict clean, but we can give a struggling member a choice and a healthy environment for growth.

Willingness is an action word. This program is for people who want it, not for people who need it. We have to reach a point of total surrender before the willingness comes. The breakdown of our personal world is part of what helps us get clean. It helps us remember what the last one did for us. We thank God for this tradition because if it was not there - we would not be here. The desire to stop using is the only requirement for membership. It does not matter how much or how little, just that you want to do something about using. In order to have the necessary desire for recovery, we had to reach a point of desperation. On a deeper level, we began to actively seek a new way of life.

Our recovering friend continues, "Although I have been abstinent for years and attend NA meetings on a regular basis, I am 'not' automatically a member of NA. A lot of the time I have no desire to stop using. At these times, even though I am clean, I do not consider myself a member because membership provides action. I can 'desire' all I want, but, if I do not act to make that desire a reality, it means very little to me. This is a 'grow or go' program. It works if you work it. When I am sitting in limbo, not using, but also not taking an active part in my recovery, I am not a member. Membership implies participation!"

"The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using." This is a passage in our literature that I have heard many times at the beginning of NA meetings. I have considered this an important issue facing our fellowship in the future as more and more people desire to stop using. I remember the first NA meeting that I attended. I was asked to leave because I would not say that I was an addict. In as much pain, anguish and despair as I was in at that first NA meeting, I was asked to leave and attend an open meeting. I cannot hear these words now and not shiver. Today I am an addict in recovery and I think back to that first meeting where the bondage of denial kept me from saying I was an addict. Today I know that I can only call myself an addict and I can only judge my own desire to stop using. So, when I see a new face in our meetings, I say to myself these very same words. As our fellowship grows, new controversies arise such as singleness to purpose or one disease, one program. I do not apply myself to these controversies. For no addict seeking recovery whether in denial or acceptance should be denied recovery the way I was at my first NA meeting."

This apparently negative experience may have triggered her desire.

[5.1.2002]

GREY COPY TRADITION FOUR

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

The autonomy of our groups is one of our most precious possessions. This sounds great but what does it mean? What is it to be autonomous? Webster's defines autonomous as "having the right or power of self government", "undertaken or carried on without outside control", "existing or capable of existing independently", "responding, reacting or developing independently of the whole". Autonomy is all these things to us and more.

Our groups are truly self-governing and are not subject to outside control. Each group can exist on its own if it must. Each group has had to grow on its own and stand on its own two feet. One might ask: Is this really true, are we truly autonomous, what about our service committees, our offices, our activities, our hotlines, and all the other things that go on in N.A.? The answer, of course, is that these things are not N.A. They are services that we can utilize to help us in our recovery and to further the primary purpose of our groups. Narcotics Anonymous is a Fellowship of men and women, addicts, meeting together in groups, and using a given set of spiritual principles to find freedom from addiction and a new way to live. All else is not N.A. Those other things we mentioned are the result of members caring enough to reach out and offer their help and experience so that our road may be easier. Whether or not we choose to utilize these services for the benefit of a group is up to us, they are not thrust down our throats. Some have taken offense to this, they say that when they started out they were told they had to register their group. This may be true, but many groups exist that have never registered. We ask groups to register because we can't recognize them unless we know that they exist. Once a group registers they are sent a starter kit. This contains many suggestions and is one of the ways we share our experience to help the group.

Whether or not they take our suggestion is their decision. In this starter kit it says that we must abide by the Twelve Traditions in order to call ourselves Narcotics Anonymous. This is also true, but these Traditions are part of the set of spiritual principles that are N.A. Without the Traditions, N.A. does not exist. It really is up to the group, in the end they must choose for themselves. They are autonomous. But we said that for N.A. autonomy was more than this, and it is. For us in Narcotics Anonymous autonomy is also creative freedom. It gives our groups the freedom to act on their own to establish their atmosphere of recovery, to serve their members, and to fulfill their primary purpose. It is this aspect of autonomy that makes it one of our most precious principles. It is for this reason that we guard our autonomy so carefully.

We are autonomous; and from what we have said it would seem that we, in our groups, can do whatever we decide to do, regardless of what anybody says. Well, yes and no. Each group does have complete freedom except when their actions become a threat to other groups and the rest of N.A. This is the other half of Tradition Four and the way we use our autonomy is just as important as autonomy itself. Like group conscience, autonomy can be a two-edged sword. In the past group autonomy has been used to justify the violation of other Traditions. This should never be allowed to happen because as we have said spiritual principles are never in conflict with other spiritual principles. If a conflict or contradiction does exist that means that somewhere along the line we have somehow slipped away from the true principles.

When we use our autonomy for the good of our group we must be careful that our actions do not hurt other groups or N.A. as a whole. Again we are given a simple rule of thumb. If we check to make sure that our actions are clearly within the bounds of our Traditions, if we don't represent anyone but ourselves, if we don't dictate to other groups or force anything upon them, and if we take the time to consider the consequences of our actions ahead of time, then all will be well.

The Twelve Traditions of NA Colorado Region of Narcotic Anonymous to give the service committee a better understanding.

Fourth Tradition Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole.

Each group does have complete freedom, except when their actions affect other groups or NA as a whole. If we check to make sure that our actions are clearly within the bounds of our traditions; if we do not dictate to other groups, or force anything upon them; and if we consider the consequences of our action ahead of time, then all will be well.

Lone Star Region Tradition Workbook

Through working the Steps, we learn that with freedom comes responsibility. In recovery, we become responsible for ourselves. As we accept that responsibility, we see how Tradition Four encourages us to act responsibly as groups and as a Fellowship. NA groups are vehicles for the message of recovery. In the strength of the personal commitment group members make to one another, a group character forms. As this group character grows and evolves, the group finds ways in which it can do what no other group in town may be doing. The members of each group design a blueprint for meetings that reflect that particular group's personality.

Group autonomy gives groups the creative freedom to find individual ways to carry the message. NA is made up of a vastly diverse assortment of addicts joined together by the strength of their mutual commitment to recovery. We speak many different languages and live in different cultures; one type of meeting will not appeal to every addict who comes to Narcotics Anonymous. In order to reach every addict who may need our help and to support the recovery of every member, groups have the freedom to vary their format and other meeting characteristics. Each group has the freedom to pursue our primary purpose in the manner it feels will work best.

Every group has a niche to fill both in the Fellowship as a whole and in the local NA community. As a Fellowship, our ability to reach still-using addicts is tied to our willingness to offer meetings that are accessible and attractive to those addicts. With the creative freedom offered by autonomy, we are encouraged to seek the particular role that meets the needs of both the NA community and our own group. We are free to make each group the very best it can be. The vitality of Narcotics Anonymous is enhanced by each group's willingness to find its niche and fill it.

Creative freedom challenges the groups to be strong and responsible. Members may support many meetings with their attendance, but most make a commitment to support one group in particular. Members grow in their personal recovery when they take responsibility for their lives. In the same way groups grow and become stronger when their members take collective responsibility for maintaining their meetings. Groups reflect the responsibility and commitment of their members.

One of the most common ways in which groups express their autonomy is in the choice of meeting format. Most NA communities will offer a number of different types of meetings, from speaker meetings to Step studies to topic discussion or any other format or combination of formats that meets the needs of local members. Some meetings will be open to the public, while others will be for addicts only. Larger communities may offer several different types of meetings each night. Some addicts will hear the message of recovery better in one type of meeting, while others prefer another format. An NA community that offers a variety of meetings is more likely to reach a broad cross-section of addicts. In a spirit of cooperation, we try to respect the autonomy of other groups by allowing them the freedom to carry the message in whatever manner seems best to them.

In the spirit of autonomy, many groups hold meetings that appeal to members with similar needs. The freedom from judgment expressed in the Third Tradition is aimed at helping any addict anywhere feel comfortable in NA. No matter how a group structures its meetings, all NA groups are encouraged to keep their focus, recovery from the disease of addiction. As long as a group observes the Twelve Traditions and espouses the Twelve Steps of NA in its meetings, it may consider them Narcotics Anonymous meetings.

Sometimes it's hard to know what affects NA as a whole. The Fourth Tradition offers a way to balance the freedom of autonomy with our responsibility to preserve NA unity. We are challenged in Tradition Four to apply autonomy in ways that will enhance the growth and vitality of NA. Autonomy encourages groups to become strong and lively but also reminds them that they are a vital part of a greater whole: the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. We consider our common welfare when we make decisions in our groups.

Since most groups are not directly connected with each other, we might think that whatever happens in our meetings has no effect on anyone else. When we consider whom our group affects, we have to look at other groups, the addict yet to come, the newcomer, and the neighborhood in which we hold our meetings. We have an effect on other groups or NA as a whole if we're not recognizable as an NA meeting. It helps to remember what we needed to hear when we were new: hope for recovery from drug addiction. Addicts first coming to NA often look closely for differences, hoping that somehow they won't fit in. It's not difficult to alienate an addict. It's important to think about the message we send to newcomers in our meetings.

Thoughtful consideration of our primary purpose may help ensure that meetings will be available for those addicts yet to come.

It's also important to consider how we're viewed by society. When NA meetings first began in many places, it was illegal for addicts to meet under any circumstances. Even where meetings are legal, the public often views groups of addicts with alarm. Until NA has established a good public reputation, it may be difficult for addicts to find meeting places. If our behavior as NA members is still destructive and selfish, we will once again have difficulty meeting openly. We help protect our reputation as a Fellowship when we use our meeting facilities with respect, keeping them clean and in good repair. We should take care to act like good neighbors, conducting ourselves respectfully. Even something as simple as the name a group chooses may reflect on NA as a whole. If the public reputation of Narcotics Anonymous is somehow impaired, addicts may die.

Autonomy does not relieve groups of their obligation to observe and apply the spiritual principles embodied in the Traditions. Careful consideration of the group's observation of the Fourth Tradition often takes the form of a group inventory, helping members gauge their success at carrying the message and reaching addicts in their neighborhood. At the same time, groups can examine their part in contributing to the unity of NA as a whole. The Fourth Tradition guides us away from self-centeredness by giving us the freedom to act responsibly as groups.

Applying spiritual principles

The Fourth Tradition helps groups achieve a balance between independence and responsibility. This mirrors the freedom of the individual recovering member and the responsibility, which supports that freedom. Together with open-mindedness, unity, and anonymity, these principles help protect NA as a whole when applied in our group affairs.

While autonomy gives us certain freedoms, it also implies responsibility for our actions and for the continued well being of NA. As groups, we exercise our responsibility to the Fellowship by taking inventory of our behavior and how we hold our meetings. Our group exercises its autonomy in a responsible way when it takes care to consider the common welfare of the Fellowship as a whole before it acts.

Open-mindedness is essential if we are to use autonomy to help NA grow. With an open-minded attitude, we are more receptive to new ways of reaching addicts. We learn to find and fill our niche in the NA community. We encourage each member of the group to contribute thoughts and ideals. Our attitude of open-mindedness helps us remember that each group is part of something bigger than ourselves and prompts us to look at still more new ideas. Our diversity can enrich us only when we are open to its richness.

Remembering our part in the greater whole, we consider unity when we think about applying the Fourth Tradition. Any decision that we make as an autonomous group ought to be founded first in our common welfare.

Love is the principle that guides us to see NA as a greater whole. This impacts our responsibility as autonomous groups. Our group's autonomous decisions, based on our love for NA, will serve to strengthen our efforts to serve others. Love encourages us to reach out to other members and other groups, finding ways to cooperate with them in carrying the message of recovery.

Anonymity applied to the Fourth Tradition reminds us that each group has an equal place in the Fellowship of NA. Larger groups are not more important than smaller groups; older groups are not "better" than newer groups. While all groups have the freedom to apply principles in whatever ways seem best to them, those same principles make each group an equal partner in recovery. Each group bears an equal responsibility in the work and in the reputation of NA.

Autonomy in NA gives groups the freedom to act on their own to establish an atmosphere of recovery, serve their members, and fulfill our primary purpose. The responsibility that balances our autonomy reflects the principles expressed in the first three Traditions. Preserving the unity of the NA Fellowship comes first. Next, we seek direction from a loving Higher Power. Then, we hold meetings that welcome everyone with a desire to stop using.

Healthy, vital groups are essential to the growth of Narcotics Anonymous. Groups provide a place where we can offer our basic service: one addict reaching out to another with the message of recovery. Without our autonomous groups, we would be unable to fulfill our primary purpose.

Narcotics Anonymous Way of Life
Why It Works: 12 Traditions
TRADITION FOUR
Moreland, Georgia Edit October 2001

The flexibility that is inherent in the autonomy we speak of in this Tradition is very important. It allows for innumerable variations in format, service opportunities, etc. so that every addict can feel comfortable in finding a home group. The important thing is that the NA message and the atmosphere of recovery be provided.

One of the privileges of having a home group is assisting with the decisions that concern the group. We are able to use our creative energy to serve. For example, we can choose our formats, our literature and our trusted servants. We are part of, depended on, and valued members. The Fourth Tradition ensures that we respect our fellowship as a whole, in order to keep a clear message of recovery. We choose our formats any way we want them, keeping in language conducive to recovery in the NA fellowship. Sharing celebrations of recovery in the NA fellowship being concise not to affiliate. We can choose our trusted servants and we can even write how we want our trusted servants to carry our conscience. We can print our own literature, respecting our seventh tradition while keeping in mind our literature is approved and we should not change the wording or context. We are able to form our groups with our newly found freedom. We become one of the constants in the newcomer's eyes. We surrender to group conscience and the principle of the Fourth Tradition in unity with NA as a whole.

Each group is self-governing and periodically chooses members to become trusted servants. It is the responsibility of a group to carry the message of recovery to the still suffering addict. It is the responsibility of a group member to support, not only physically, but also spiritually and emotionally. If we were instruments of God's will, and God is present in our group conscience, then why should we not support our group not only by placing money in the basket, but by getting involved in the affairs of the group.

Personal preference must never be allowed to interfere with group conscience or what is good for the group as a whole. We must examine our personal preferences to see where they are coming from. Usually it is a matter of ego and therefore must be put aside. While we have a right to our feelings and our expression of those feelings, it is one of the great principles that we do not impose our will on others, depriving them of their say in the matter of their lives. Integrity is a matter of doing the right thing and standing up for the Traditions of NA regardless of personal preferences. Integrity is something that we cannot allow to be compromised.

Tradition four tells me that each group has some mobility within their own group as long as no Traditions are broken. Certain groups and members wish to conduct meetings with different formats. As long as our primary purpose is not compromised, this is fine. With this in mind, each group should have their GSR attend Area Service so that the group is kept well informed as to what is happening within the next level of service. There are a great variety of meetings within the fellowship: Open discussion, speaker discussion, candlelight meetings, etc. This gives us the option in many areas to choose a different type of meeting on any given night. However, no matter where we go to an NA meeting, the message is always the same. Most of us, as addicts, need this type of stability in our lives.

[5.1.2002]

GREY COPY TRADITION FIVE

Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

"You mean to say that our primary purpose is to carry the message? I thought we were here to clean up? I thought our primary purpose was to recover from drug addiction?" For the individual this is certainly true, our members are here to find freedom from addiction, and a new way of life. However, groups aren't addicted and don't recover. All our groups can do is plant the seed for recovery and bring addicts together so that the magic of empathy, honesty, caring, sharing, and service can do its thing. The purpose of this Tradition is to insure that this atmosphere of recovery is maintained. This can only be achieved by keeping our groups newcomer and service oriented. The fact that we require each and every group to focus on carrying the message provides consistency. An addict can count on us if they want help. Unity of action and unity of purpose make possible what seemed impossible for us--recovery.

The Twelfth Step of our personal program also says that we should carry the message to the addict who still suffers. This is no coincidence. Working with others is one of our most powerful tools. "The therapeutic value of one addict helping another is unparalleled." For the newcomer this is how they find out about N.A. and how they stay clean; and for the members this reaffirms and clarifies what they have learned. The group is the most perfect vehicle we have for carrying the message to the addict who still suffers. When a member carries the message, he is somewhat bound by his interpretation and personality. The problem with literature is language; the feelings, the intensity, and the strengths are sometimes lost. In our groups, with all personalities, the message is a recurring theme; an underlying reality.

What would happen if our groups had other primary purposes? We feel our message would be diluted and then lost. If we concentrated on making money many might get rich. If we were a social club we'd find many friends and lovers. If we specialized in education we'd end up with many smart addicts. If our specialty was medical help many would get healthy. If our group purpose was anything other than carrying the message, many would die and few would find recovery.

What is our message? We hear this question answered many ways. In our groups we share our experience, strength and hope and this is our message that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs; lose the desire to use again; and find a new way to live. Their message is hope and the promise of freedom. When it's all said and done, our primary group purpose can only be to carry this message to the addict who still suffers because this is all we have to give.

The Twelve Traditions of NA Colorado Region of Narcotic Anonymous to give the service committee a better understanding.

Fifth Tradition Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

What is our message? The message is that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. Our message is hope and the promise of freedom. When all is said and done, our primary purpose can only be to carry the message to the addict who still suffers because that is all we have to give.

Lone Star Region Tradition Workbook

Our primary purpose is at the heart of our service. With guidance from a loving Higher Power and a clear focus on this purpose, NA groups become a channel for the healing power of recovery. Narcotics Anonymous exists to help addicts find freedom from active addiction. If we were to espouse other ideas or pursue other goals, our focus would be blurred and our energies diminished. The Fifth Tradition asks us to practice integrity by keeping our purpose foremost.

What is the message that we are asked to carry? Groups carry the message of NA: hope and freedom

from active addiction. This message may be voiced in many ways. Sometimes we simply share that if we won't use any drugs, we won't get loaded. Other members share that they have found satisfying, productive lives in recovery. Sometimes the message we share is that, even though life may be painful, we can stay clean. The spiritual awakening we experience when we work the Steps is also our message. When addicts experience the message of recovery, we find healing from our suffering. No matter what the cause, we can live drug-free and establish new lives. That is our message: that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live.

The groups' focus on carrying the message is so important to the survival of NA that it is called our primary purpose. That means it is the most important thing we do. Nothing ought to take precedence over it. This is the most basic guideline by which groups may examine their motives and their actions.

There are many ways in which groups can further our primary purpose. Generally speaking, group members start by creating an atmosphere of recovery in their meetings. This includes extending a welcome to every addict who attends. Stable meetings that start on time carry a message of recovery. Effective meeting formats keep the primary focus and encourage members to participate in a way that expresses recovery. We lead by example, sharing experience instead of advice. Group members help further our purpose when they take personal responsibility for keeping the meeting recovery oriented. All of our actions convey a message, and Tradition Five reminds us to make it a message of recovery.

Many distracting influences can divert us from our primary purpose. But each time our focus is diverted from our primary purpose, the addict seeking recovery loses out. Other influences can distort our group's focus on its primary purpose. From the money members contribute, our groups pay rent on their meeting space, buy literature and supplies, conduct activities, and support NA services. All of these can either help further our primary purpose or distract us from our focus. Some groups seek to outdo others with luxurious meeting spaces, extravagant refreshments, huge supplies of literature, and elaborate activities. When we do this, our focus is distracted away from our primary purpose and onto money, property, and prestige. We should try to establish a reputation for carrying the message—nothing more, nothing less. Money, literature, and meeting space are tools we can use to help us carry the message; however, they should serve us, not rule us.

The group can provide many services to carry the message. Our primary service is the NA meeting, where addicts share their recovery directly with one another. Additional services like Phonelines, Public Information work, and Hospitals & Institution panels also help carry the message. In rural areas and newer NA communities, groups are sometimes the only source of such services. However, most groups find they cannot maintain their focus on their recovery meetings and also carry out other services. For this reason, groups usually assign responsibility for such services to their area committees. That way, groups reserve their time and energy for carrying the message directly to the addict who still suffers.

Because carrying the message is so important, many groups take inventory periodically to help ensure that our primary purpose is still in focus. The Twelve Traditions may be used as an outline for a group inventory. Some groups use a specific set of inventory questions, such as:

Considering the needs of the larger NA community may lead to other changes. For instance, if there are no Step meetings in one town, a group may consider having meetings that focus on the Steps. There are many ways to carry the message and meet the needs of both the group and the NA community.

Tradition Five focuses the group's priority on carrying the message. Members can do many things to further our primary purpose. When members come together as a group to undertake the task of carrying the message, they offer an attractive picture of recovery in action.

Many meetings are structured to carry the message to our newest members. These new members often need more encouragement to stay, more answers to their questions, more of our love and care. But the newest members are not the only addicts who need the message of recovery. The still-suffering addict with whom we share our hope may be any one of us, regardless of clean time. Tradition Five is not limited to helping newcomers. The message of recovery is for all of us.

Applying spiritual principles

The Fifth Tradition complements the Twelfth Step; it asks groups to carry the message to addicts. As individuals, we are asked in the Steps to apply principles in all our affairs; this is also important in our

actions as groups.

Some of the principles we have applied to help us observe the Fifth Tradition include integrity, responsibility, unity, and anonymity. Integrity, or fidelity to the spiritual principles embodied in the Twelve Traditions, is demonstrated when groups carry the NA message of recovery. Many of our members have much to offer on a variety of subjects, but our Fellowship has its own special message: freedom from active addiction through practice of NA's Twelve Steps and the support of the Fellowship of recovering addicts. Groups demonstrate this when they offer vigorous, conscious support for addicts seeking to work the NA program. When groups conscientiously cultivate this kind of integrity, their meetings further our primary purpose.

Tradition Five gives our groups a great responsibility: to maintain our Fellowship's primary purpose. Each group is responsible to become as effective a vehicle for carrying the NA message as it can be. Allowing our groups to lose sight of our primary purpose may deprive an addict of a chance to hear our message of hope. Each member is responsible to help the group keep our primary purpose in focus.

Unity is one of our greatest strengths in carrying the message. Unity of purpose keeps our focus on carrying the message. As groups, we work together to ensure not only our own personal recovery but also the recovery of every NA member. The evidence of many addicts staying clean and seeking our common good is very persuasive. We don't recover alone.

In anonymity, our personal differences are insignificant compared to our primary purpose. When we come together as a group, our first task is to carry the message; all else ought to be set aside. Groups can practice the Fifth Tradition by reminding their members that the recovery message, not individual personalities, is primary in Narcotics Anonymous.

Narcotic Anonymous is a Fellowship with meetings around the world. Our primary purpose is a common thread that unites us. Tradition Five defines the focus of Narcotics Anonymous. This focus also helps to ensure our survival as a Fellowship. The Fifth Tradition asks us to serve other addicts by carrying the message that recovery is possible in Narcotics Anonymous. This concentrated focus protects the integrity of our fellowship.

Narcotics Anonymous Way of Life

Why It Works: 12 Traditions

TRADITION FIVE

In a group that is preoccupied with personal problems, the spirit may die back. The suffering we talk about in our meetings is the feeling of absolute hopelessness. Our new members are nervous over even allowing ourselves to seek help. Recovery seems so impossible that whatever help is available and whatever lengths we go to get it, we fear we will still come up short and be no better off. Like a lot of the lies that we fall prey to, we are the ones in the greatest danger. We get energy from helping others. Our new man or woman may with luck and grace stagger onward to a real meeting where caring and sharing are in evidence. We are the ones stuck with our silly games and our depleting supply of spiritual energy, aggressively taking matters once again into our own weary hands.

When we allow ourselves to be used as conduits of the love that originally attracted us to recovery, we are on safe ground. When we forget our role as caretakers and instruments of a loving God, it can seem like we have a lot at stake personally. We don't tend to recall that the supreme, all powerful, all loving creator of the universe is that one that is really protecting us. Going with God, we cannot lose. When we go back to actively listening not only to what is being said but what is not being said, we can, with prayer, begin to carry our message again. We are reminded where we come from and how much we wanted recovery in the beginning. We forget the pain of withdrawal the same way women forget the pain of childbirth. To stay clean, we help others who both remind us of our pain and help us hear the solutions we now have to share.

Complexity is not the key to doing better. Simplicity and surrender offer us a better platform on which to rebuild. This particularly applies to helping others get the help they need at our meetings. We care, we share, we know it works for us. We pass on what worked for us out of what we heard other share with us and our own experience. The message is not what we say. Anyone can "talk the talk." We carry the message by living in the solution to best of our ability. We welcome the addict to our group and we try to live, through our

caring and sharing, the message of hope. I am being accepted until I can accept myself. I am being loved until I can love myself. The message that you are carrying to me is, "We love you. You are not alone. We will help you. You can recover."

When we carry the message of recovery, we plant seeds, encourage growth and strengthen foundations. While we are carrying the message, addicts still suffering will continue to die in active addiction. Our group's focus is to carry the message, not the addict, not the addict's significant other, not the addict's children -- just the simple message of Narcotics Anonymous recovery. This message gets fragmented and clouded by ego and advice. It is necessary to maintain the spirit of unity in our message of recovery. None of us alone own the rights of Narcotics Anonymous and none of our ideas or opinions are the "best." We are individuals who come together to share the common bond of recovery. Our personal surrender speaks for itself when the group atmosphere is that of recovery, hope and strength. We can only keep what we have by giving it away.

Our primary purpose is not respected when we become involved with outside issues or begin to compromise our spiritual principles. Newcomers keep us alive. They prevent our stagnation. We need to be nurtured and loved. Without surrendering to our 5th Tradition, we lose our purpose and die.

An addict shares, "The primary purpose of each group is to carry the message, not the mess. For me this tradition deals with the solutions of recovery that are continually facing each group and in turn each group member. We are not here to give consultation of financial, marriage or any other affairs. This tradition for me deals with the solution to the small wars of life that my disease escalates into major conflicts. I do not attend meetings to hear about what I am doing wrong, how I continue to do it wrong and how I am going to do it wrong again. I go to meetings to hear the message of recovery so that hopefully I will learn to do it, maybe not all that correctly, but in an appropriate manner next time. For me, this is what recovery is about. It is about striving for solutions instead of pondering on problems. This Tradition is written so that a newcomer who walks into the rooms hears about the solutions instead of the many other outside issues around today.

The primary purpose of NA is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers and this is what each of us must do if we are to continue to recover both as individuals and as a group. If we do not carry the NA message to the still suffering addicts, then we will lose our ability to attract new members. Without new members, NA will wither and die. Without NA, none of us has any chance to recover. It is said, time and again, that the newcomer is the lifeblood of NA; therefore it is no coincidence that one of the main themes through our literature states, "We can not keep what we have unless we give it away." To me this means that in order to stay clean, each of us as members of NA are obligated to do everything we can individually and, as a group, to see that the NA message reaches as many sick and suffering addicts as possible through group meetings, H&I, PI, or literature distribution. We are bound by the 5th tradition to get involved.

[5.1.2002]

GREY COPY TRADITION SIX

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

Our Fifth Tradition defines our primary purpose and our Sixth Tradition tells us some of the things we must do to preserve and protect this spiritual aim. This Tradition tells us that we ought never endorse, finance or lend the N.A. name to any outside enterprise. And then we are warned exactly what can happen if we ignore this advice. This Tradition is the basis for our policy of non-affiliation and is extremely important to the continuation and growth of N.A. Unfortunately, this Tradition has also been a point of controversy within our Fellowship.

Let's take a closer look at what this Tradition really says. First thing a group ought never to endorse. To endorse is to sanction, approve, or recommend. Endorsements can either be direct or implied. We see direct endorsements everyday in T.V. commercials. Direct endorsements can also be in writing and often appear in proposals and promotional sales material. A direct endorsement is often used to try and persuade someone to do something. An implied endorsement is one that is not stated. Although we don't usually recognize it as such, implied endorsements occur in our stories. We say, "The big kids used it and if they used it, it had to be good." The next thing we ought never do is finance. This is more obvious; to finance means to supply funds or to help support financially. The third thing warned against is lending the N.A. name. This means letting someone use the name, Narcotics Anonymous, for something that is not Narcotics Anonymous. It also means letting an outsider mention or utilize our name for their own purposes. Several times other programs have tried to use Narcotics Anonymous as part of their "services offered" to help justify a funding proposal. Had we allowed this, we would have been letting them use our name.

These are the "ought never's" in the Sixth Tradition. This tradition also tells us "who". A related facility is any other facility or place that involves N.A. members. It might be a halfway house, a detox center, a counseling center, a clubhouse, or anyone of a number of such places. Often times, people are easily confused by what is N.A. and what are the related facilities. Recovery houses which have been started or staffed by N.A. members have to take special care that the differentiation is clear. Perhaps the most confusion exists when it involves a clubhouse situation. Newcomers and even older members often identify the clubhouse with N.A. and N.A. with the clubhouse. We should make a special effort to let these people know that there is a difference. The second "who" outside enterprises. An outside enterprise is any agency, any business venture, any religion, any society, any organization, any unrelated activity, or any fellowship. Most of these are pretty straight forward, except for other fellowships. Most of us would not confuse N.A. with something like a specific religious fellowship, but when it comes to other twelve-step fellowships, we sometimes have problems. Let's face it; Narcotics Anonymous is not Alcoholics Anonymous, Overeaters' Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Emotional Health Anonymous, Smokers Anonymous, Parents Anonymous or any other anonymous. Narcotics Anonymous is a separate and distinct fellowship in its own right. Our problem is addiction, the other twelve-step fellowships specialize in other problems, and our relationship with them is one of "cooperation not affiliation". The use of the literature of another fellowship in our meetings constitutes an implied endorsement of an outside enterprise.

The Sixth Tradition goes on to warn-us what may happen if we do what we ought never do: "...lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose". If you say this quickly it almost sounds like "money, power and sex;" our old enemies. If you say it real quickly, it might sound like "people, places and things;" our old resentments and fantasies. Even if you don't say it quickly, they have much in common. They often become obsessions and shut us off from our spiritual aim. They are the sort of things we get involved with and run with until we are consumed.

For the individual, this type of abuse can be devastating, but for the group, even the slightest touch can be disastrous. When we as a group waver from our primary purpose, addicts die who might have found recovery. The Sixth Tradition has been one of those just sort of read and let it go at that. It's hard to understand. But when we really take a look, when we really try to understand, it's simplicity amazes us. We can see the danger of endorsement, financial support and letting others use our name; we can see how easily things can lead to abuse of money, property and prestige; and we can for see the results of this abuse and the heartache it can bring.

**The Twelve Traditions of NA
Colorado Region of Narcotic Anonymous
to give the service committee a better understanding.**

Sixth Tradition An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

Within the limits established by Tradition Six, we have tremendous freedom to carry the message of recovery and help other addicts. We have clear boundaries set by our identity as Narcotics Anonymous. When we take care to observe those boundaries, our outside relationships enhance our ability to carry the message to the addict who still suffers rather than diverting us from our primary purpose.

Lone Star Region Tradition Workbook

Our primary purpose is at the heart of our service. With guidance from a loving Higher Power and a clear focus on this purpose, NA groups become a channel for the healing power of recovery. Narcotics Anonymous exists to help addicts find freedom from active addiction. If we were to espouse other ideas or pursue other goals, our focus would be blurred and our energies diminished. The Fifth Tradition asks us to practice integrity by keeping our purpose foremost.

What is the message that we are asked to carry? Groups carry the message of NA: hope and freedom from active addiction. This message may be voiced in many ways. Sometimes we simply share that if we won't use any drugs, we won't get loaded. Other members share that they have found satisfying, productive lives in recovery. Sometimes the message we share is that, even though life may be painful, we can stay clean. The spiritual awakening we experience when we work the Steps is also our message. When addicts experience the message of recovery, we find healing from our suffering. No matter what the cause, we can live drug-free and establish new lives. That is our message: that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live.

The groups' focus on carrying the message is so important to the survival of NA that it is called our primary purpose. That means it is the most important thing we do. Nothing ought to take precedence over it. This is the most basic guideline by which groups may examine their motives and their actions.

There are many ways in which groups can further our primary purpose. Generally speaking, group members start by creating an atmosphere of recovery in their meetings. This includes extending a welcome to every addict who attends. Stable meetings that start on time carry a message of recovery. Effective meeting formats keep the primary focus and encourage members to participate in a way that expresses recovery. We lead by example, sharing experience instead of advice. Group members help further our purpose when they take personal responsibility for keeping the meeting recovery oriented. All of our actions convey a message, and Tradition Five reminds us to make it a message of recovery.

Many distracting influences can divert us from our primary purpose. But each time our focus is diverted from our primary purpose, the addict seeking recovery loses out. Other influences can distort our group's focus on its primary purpose. From the money members contribute, our groups pay rent on their meeting space, buy literature and supplies, conduct activities, and support NA services. All of these can either help further our primary purpose or distract us from our focus. Some groups seek to outdo others with luxurious meeting spaces, extravagant refreshments, huge supplies of literature, and elaborate activities. When we do this, our focus is distracted away from our primary purpose and onto money, property, and prestige. We should try to establish a reputation for carrying the message—nothing more, nothing less. Money, literature, and meeting space are tools we can use to help us carry the message; however, they should serve us, not rule us.

The group can provide many services to carry the message. Our primary service is the NA meeting, where addicts share their recovery directly with one another. Additional services like Phonelines, Public Information work, and Hospitals & Institution panels also help carry the message. In rural areas and newer NA communities, groups are sometimes the only source of such services. However, most groups find they cannot maintain their focus on their recovery meetings and also carry out other services. For this reason, groups usually assign responsibility for such services to their area committees. That way, groups reserve their

time and energy for carrying the message directly to the addict who still suffers.

Because carrying the message is so important, many groups take inventory periodically to help ensure that our primary purpose is still in focus. The Twelve Traditions may be used as an outline for a group inventory. Some groups use a specific set of inventory questions, such as:

- **How well are we carrying the message of recovery?**
- **What addicts are not being reached by our group?**
- **How can we make our meetings more accessible?**
- **What can we do to make all members feel more welcome?**
- **Has the atmosphere of recovery diminished?**
- **Would a change in our meeting format strengthen that atmosphere?**

Considering the needs of the larger NA community may lead to other changes. For instance, if there are no Step meetings in one town, a group may consider having meetings that focus on the Steps. There are many ways to carry the message and meet the needs of both the group and the NA community.

Tradition Five focuses the group's priority on carrying the message. Members can do many things to further our primary purpose. When members come together as a group to undertake the task of carrying the message, they offer an attractive picture of recovery in action.

Many meetings are structured to carry the message to our newest members. These new members often need more encouragement to stay, more answers to their questions, more of our love and care. But the newest members are not the only addicts who need the message of recovery. The still-suffering addict with whom we share our hope may be any one of us, regardless of clean time. Tradition Five is not limited to helping newcomers. The message of recovery is for all of us.

Applying spiritual principles

The Fifth Tradition complements the Twelfth Step; it asks groups to carry the message to addicts. As individuals, we are asked in the Steps to apply principles in all our affairs; this is also important in our actions as groups.

Some of the principles we have applied to help us observe the Fifth Tradition include integrity, responsibility, unity, and anonymity. Integrity, or fidelity to the spiritual principles embodied in the Twelve Traditions, is demonstrated when groups carry the NA message of recovery. Many of our members have much to offer on a variety of subjects, but our Fellowship has its own special message: freedom from active addiction through practice of NA's Twelve Steps and the support of the Fellowship of recovering addicts. Groups demonstrate this when they offer vigorous, conscious support for addicts seeking to work the NA program. When groups conscientiously cultivate this kind of integrity, their meetings further our primary purpose.

Tradition Five gives our groups a great responsibility: to maintain our Fellowship's primary purpose. Each group is responsible to become as effective a vehicle for carrying the NA message as it can be. Allowing our groups to lose sight of our primary purpose may deprive an addict of a chance to hear our message of hope. Each member is responsible to help the group keep our primary purpose in focus.

Unity is one of our greatest strengths in carrying the message. Unity of purpose keeps our focus on carrying the message. As groups, we work together to ensure not only our own personal recovery but also the recovery of every NA member. The evidence of many addicts staying clean and seeking our common good is very persuasive. We don't recover alone.

In anonymity, our personal differences are insignificant compared to our primary purpose. When we come together as a group, our first task is to carry the message; all else ought to be set aside. Groups can practice the Fifth Tradition by reminding their members that the recovery message, not individual personalities, is primary in Narcotics Anonymous.

Narcotic Anonymous is a Fellowship with meetings around the world. Our primary purpose is a common thread that unites us. Tradition Five defines the focus of Narcotics Anonymous. This focus also helps to ensure our survival as a Fellowship. The Fifth Tradition asks us to serve other addicts by carrying the message that recovery is possible in Narcotics Anonymous. This concentrated focus protects the integrity of our fellowship.

Narcotics Anonymous Way of Life
Why It Works: 12 Traditions
TRADITION SIX
Moreland, Georgia Edit October 2001

Our principles help us avoid certain problems by giving us guidance where we may not see the possibility of error. We addicts are so good at getting caught up in our undertakings; we can glide right past the barriers normal folk would be able to see. The reason we don't allow conflict of interest to enter into the picture is because we can justify anything. We can put the making of money beyond the feelings and emotional needs of our Fellowship to be involved and feel the weight of responsibility that keeps us spiritually fit as a fellowship. Without this reality, we would weaken into flabby complacency. Our responses would wane into ineffectuality.

The insidious nature of our disease makes us abnormally susceptible to distraction. We can slip out of a prearranged direction of effort into a justified detour with the best of excuses. Diversion from our primary purpose is similar to what we as members go through in our daily fight for recovery. We all know about drifting into concerns, worries and preoccupations that threaten our recovery. This leaves no time for meetings, Twelve Step work or interactive recovery with other addicts. Our desire keeps us focused on recovery.

It is hard to move in two directions at once. A spiritual fellowship sets spiritual goals. If we were to set worldly goals, we would quickly become worldly and the spiritual would seem inconsequential and impractical. Anyone who has been around the Fellowship will sooner or later come up against a situation that throws apparent competence into direct conflict with spiritual reality. We learn to choose the spiritual as the eternal, lasting reality over the transient apparent reality that looks so good to begin with and caves in under pressure.

The insidious nature of our disease makes us very vulnerable to the disasters that can occur when we stray from the Sixth Tradition. We are addicts and therefore suffer from low self-esteem and have fragile egos to being with. Therefore, we are easily corrupted by the temptations of property and prestige and can soon forget about the danger of placing personalities before principles. The insidious disease of addiction allows us to rationalize all sorts of behavior, such as endorsements of outside enterprises. Since some of these enterprises will help us reach the still suffering addict, they are sometimes considered in line with the 12th step of carrying the NA message to the still suffer addict. But this is a trap. If people were rescued by a military group, part of the rescue is letting them return to their homes and not in a prison camp. Doctors can help identify other problems we may have. One doctor has spoken, "Addicts do not necessarily have any other primary illness requiring treatment of any sort." We don't take drugs just because doctors tell us to do so. It is our life at stake and many doctors are not informed about addiction. Be careful! Our inherent self-centeredness can make us easy prey for the notoriety that comes with doing endorsements. This is why the 6th tradition was written and is so very important. It protects us and NA as a whole from ourselves.

After finding recovery and practicing a spiritual way of life, we begin to search out fellow addicts who are like us. It is a sense of trust that is allowed to transform us into productive members of society. The world would be loving and caring if the population was made up solely of recovering addicts. There would be more honesty and compassion in making, but unfortunately, that is not reality. Recovery is about dealing with reality. Many would prey on the spiritual principles that addicts develop after working the Steps. This is not to have a cynical view of humanity, but a simple fact. For instance, people would not remember the positives NA might have had with outside enterprises. These accounts would be insignificant to a non-addict, but a negative account of an affiliation with an outside enterprise would destroy years of the kind of credibility we strive to achieve. Much of society still thinks of addiction as a moral delinquency instead of a moral disease.

The clear, pure message of NA is an anecdote to addiction. The disease tries to dilute this message. When a

group endorses another 12 Step fellowship or treatment center, it is giving praise to the disease. It is saying that NA alone cannot work, that we must also go somewhere else. It keeps many addicts from making that final commitment to work the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of NA. This can be deadly to some suffering addicts. NA is the only program of recovery that works for us. If we are curious or have an opportunity, we can take our program with us into any area of life or learning.

The disease of addiction is progressive. As our recovery progresses, so does our dormant disease. When we compromise our Sixth Tradition "one time," we lose our integrity as a Fellowship. When we become involved with selling our name, we must begin to pay the price for selling our souls. We are all capable of living in our active disease. We must not allow money, property or prestige to enable us to take the focus off our primary purpose. Service work is a privilege and an honor. We must not allow ourselves to become involved in service work for profit. It may be more desirable to collect money than to sit up with a newcomer, but when the newcomers are ignored, we die. Nothing is NA except NA. We carry our message, not force our opinion. We surrender to our purpose knowing that we respect our Fellowship and that we respect ourselves. Compromises extract a toll from our lives we might not be willing to pay if we could see how much - and how often - we are charged for little or no gain.

[5.1.2002]

GREY COPY TRADITION SEVEN

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

Being self-supporting is an important part of our new way of life. For the individual, this is usually quite a change. In our addictions, we were dependent on people, places and things. We looked to them to support us and to supply the things we found lacking in ourselves. As recovering addicts, we find that we are still dependent, but our dependence has shifted from the things around us to a loving God and the inner strength we get in our relationship with Him. We who were unable to function as human beings now find anything is possible for us. Those dreams we gave up long ago can now become realities with God's help. Addicts as a group have been and still are, millstones around society's neck. In N.A., our groups of addicts not only try to stand on their own two feet, but demand the right to do so.

Money has always been a problem for us. We could never find enough to support ourselves our habits and our self-gratification. We worked, stole, conned, begged and sold ourselves; there was never enough money to fill the emptiness inside. In our recovery, money is often still a problem; we stopped trying to support our habits; we got to work and often find unexpected success. We clean up the wreckage of our past and things seem to be going our way for a change. However, financial security can still seem to run like water through our fingers. We've got a lot of growing up to do and this takes time. Common sense and responsibility are things most of us usually have to learn from scratch. Learning how to live can hurt a lot, but for most of us it's a great adventure.

N.A. needs money to run the group; there is rent to pay, supplies to buy and literature to pay for. We pass the hat to cover these expenses and whatever is left over goes to support our services and to further our primary purpose. Unfortunately, there's usually pitifully little left over after a group pays its way. Sometimes members who can afford it kick a little extra in to help. Sometimes a few get together and put on some activity to help raise funds. These efforts help a lot and without them, much that we have been given to do would have had to be left undone. N.A. remains a shoe-string operation, and even though it's sometimes frustrating, we really wouldn't have it any other way; we know the price would be too high to bear.

Our poverty enables us to be much closer to our Fellowship. We all have to pull together, and in pulling together we learn that we really are a part of something greater than ourselves. Our policy concerning money is clearly stated: We decline outside contributions, our Fellowship is completely self-supporting. We accept no funding, no endowments, no loans, no gifts, and no handouts because we know that there's no such thing as a free ride. Everything has its price, regardless of intent. Whether the price is money, promises, concessions, special recognition, endorsement, favors or anything else; it's just too high for us. Even if those who would help us could guarantee no strings, we still would not. accept their aid. The price would still be too high.

Nor will we charge for our services for to do so would distract from our spiritual purpose. We cannot even afford to let our members contribute more than their fair share. Because for us the price is paid within our groups: disunity, controversy, insanity and death. We will not put our freedom on the line again; not for "an easier, softer way", not for anything; never again!

The Twelve Traditions of NA Colorado Region of Narcotic Anonymous to give the service committee a better understanding.

Seventh Tradition Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

By encouraging our group to pay its own way, the Seventh Tradition gives our group the freedom to share its recovery as it sees fit, not obligated to outside contributors. Further, it gives our group the freedom that comes from inner strength, the strength that develops through applying spiritual principles.

Lone Star Region Tradition Workbook

The Seventh Tradition adds further clarity to our group's dealings with the public. Tradition Six cautioned us against funding other organizations, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose. Tradition Seven encourages us to decline funding from other organizations for the same reason: to maintain our group's focus on its primary purpose. By paying our own expenses, we remain free to carry our own message.

We encourage every NA group to be fully self-supporting. We also recognize that many meetings don't start that way. Some meetings are started by one or two NA members who want to help carry the message to other addicts. Frequently, such members pay rent and buy literature for these meetings out of their pockets. Sometimes they're given help by established NA groups or by the nearest Area Committee. Either way, it may take some time before a new meeting is able to stand on its own feet.

Other meetings – for instance, many in institutions – are started by nonmember professionals who've become acquainted with the Narcotics Anonymous program. Wanting to provide their clients with access to what NA has to offer, these professionals set a time, find a room, buy some literature, give a group booklet to the addicts who've gathered, and help them start a meeting. After some exposure to the principles underlying the NA program, these recovering addicts begin taking responsibility for their meetings themselves.

How a meeting is begun is not nearly so important as how it grows. Our experience is that, once a meeting is established, it gathers momentum. The meeting begins attracting a group of addicts who attend on a fairly consistent basis. These addicts share their experiences with one another and help each other better understand NA's principles of recovery. At this point, the meeting has become more than just an event; an NA group evolved from the meeting, complete with members committed to supporting one another. The group as a whole is ready to take full responsibility for its obligations.

Many of us think of the Seventh Tradition as the money tradition. While we have come to associate this tradition of self-support with the funds we contribute, the spirit of the Seventh Tradition goes much farther than that. Whatever a group needs to fulfill its primary purpose should be provided by the group itself.

The question then is, what does a group need? First and foremost, it needs a message to carry-and that, it already has.. In the course of its evolution, the group has attracted members who've proven to one another that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. Without that message, the group has no reason to exist; with it, an NA group needs little more. Beyond that, the needs of the group are simple. Groups need to rent meeting places where their members can gather and where newcomers can find them. Most groups find it important to buy NA literature, which they make available at their meetings. The expenses associated with these things may be substantial, yet most groups can meet such expenses by passing the hat.

After paying their basic expenses, most groups contribute to the NA Service Boards and Committees that serve them. Phonelines, Meeting lists, NA literature, H&I panels, and Public Information presentations all benefit the group. That's why service contributions are just as surely a part of a group's self-support obligation as the rent for its meeting room. Like the groups, NA Service Boards and Committees decline contributions from sources outside the Fellowship. Unlike the groups, however, our service boards and committees are not themselves fully self-supporting. They have been created to help the groups fulfill their primary purpose more effectively, and they depend on group contributions for the money they need to do their work.

To fulfill its purpose, the group also needs some things that don't cost a penny. A group needs someone to open its meeting room, set up the chairs, and prepare the literature table. In some groups, a member offers to prepare refreshments, helping establish a hospitable environment for the newcomer. Most importantly, a group needs the consistent commitment of its members to show up and take part in its meetings. Upon that commitment rests the group's stability; without it, no group can survive long. Just as our group's survival depends on its members, so does the survival of our service boards and committees. It's through our members support that our recovery message is carried.

As simple as a group's needs are, a group's decision to become fully self supporting does not usually require the commitment of extensive amounts of its member's money, time, or other resources. If a

group is having problems sustaining itself, it may want to ask itself some questions during a group inventory:

When a group's sense of its needs have become unreasonable, the simplicity of the Fifth Tradition can help deflate those needs to their proper size.

First, the group will want to consider its identity as a part of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. Recovery in NA is very different in a number of ways from our using. When we were using, many of us took whatever we could from whomever we could as often as we could. Our group's decision to become fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions, reflects the new way our members are living in recovery. Rather than taking what we want or need from others, we are paying our own way.

The group will also want to examine its identity as a group. When we were using, most of us looked out for ourselves and ourselves alone, not giving any thought for one another's welfare. An NA recovery group, on the other hand, is founded on its members' commitment to one another. Many of us have tried to find a way of making it on our own, but without success. We've found we need one another to survive and to grow. The NA group is both the expression and fulfillment of that need we have for one another's support. An NA group reinforces the solidarity of its members and the foundation of their continued recovery by declining outside contributions.

"Alright," we say, "our group has made a commitment to become self-supporting. But what if the money we collect from passing the hat still isn't sufficient to meet our needs? What if we sold some T-shirts or jewelry to raise some cash or held a dinner and asked for a donation at the door? Perhaps the energy our members put into such activities could be turned into money we need to pay our bills."

On the face of it, there doesn't seem to be any contradiction between the Seventh Tradition and these kinds of money-raising activities. Before engaging in such activities, however, the group might want to ask itself why it wants these funds?

We might also ask ourselves whether such activities, intended to raise money to help our group carry the message, might end up diverting us from carrying the message. Money-raising activities usually take a good bit of time to manage, time that might be better spent in fulfilling our primary purpose more directly. If fundraising activities are successful, bringing in more money than the group needs to meet its obligations, controversy over control of that money may well arise, distracting the group from its primary purpose. A group may also want to consider whether the atmosphere created by selling goods and services at its meetings might detract from the free, open atmosphere so conducive to recovery.

By and large, our groups have found that the simplest, straightest path to full self-support is through the voluntary contributions of their own members. For this reason, we discourage groups from engaging in fundraising activities. If a group is unable to provide for its own needs from the contributions of its members, perhaps group members will want to consider increasing their contributions.

In the same breath as we speak of this, however, we need also recall our fellowship's Third Tradition, which affirms that the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. Our membership, whether we are speaking of membership in NA as a whole or group membership, does not depend on the amount of money we give; indeed, we aren't required to give any amount at all in order to consider ourselves NA members.

If our group has carefully examined its expenses, trimmed them to match only what it needs to fulfill its primary purpose, and still doesn't bring in enough money to pay its own way, the group's members will be left with some questions only they can answer for themselves, individually:

At the same time as we consider our levels of personal contributions to the group, we should remember that Tradition Seven speaks of the group as being self-supporting, not of one or two well-off group members paying all the group's expenses or doing all its work. We each do well in giving our part toward the group's self-support obligations without making the group overly dependent on our individual contributions.

In the end, our individual decisions and group commitments are entirely up to us because we are the ones who have to live with them. However, certain lines from our White Booklet, written in reference to the Twelve Steps, seem to apply equally to the observance of the Seventh Tradition—indeed, to all the traditions: "If you want what we have to offer, and are willing to make the effort to get it... these are the principles that made our recovery possible." If we want what the group has to offer us individually, and if our group wants

to reap the benefits associated with self-support, we will practice the principles that make those things possible.

Applying spiritual principles

Our Twelve Traditions describe those specific things that have been found to help our groups remain strong, lively, and free. Underlying the specifics of our traditions, however, are dozens of spiritual principles, any one of which could be applied to almost any the Twelve Traditions. This broad field of principles is the ground upon which the traditions have grown. The more we cultivate this ground, the stronger our understanding and application of each of the traditions themselves will be. Some of the principles that will strengthen our understanding and application of the Seventh Tradition are **gratitude, responsibility, faith, integrity, anonymity, and freedom.**

The gratitude we speak of in regard to Tradition Seven is like the collective sense of direction the Second Tradition talks about; it is the gratitude of the NA group. When NA members gather to share their recovery, they generate a sense of gratitude among themselves. They are grateful the group exists and want it to continue to be there for them and for the members yet to come. The gratitude of the group speaks, in part, through the group's collective commitment to support itself.

The group's decision to become fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions, reflects the group's sense of responsibility for itself. In recovery, we discard the illusion that the rest of the world is responsible to take care of us; rather, we take due pride in caring for ourselves. Individually, we demonstrate our newfound maturity by accepting the weight of our own burdens; collectively, we demonstrate our maturity by accepting responsibility for our group, neither seeking nor accepting outside contributions.

The burden of responsibility, however, may seem unbearable without an appreciation for the simplicity of the group's needs. The commitment to become self-supporting is not a commitment to raise vast sums of money to fulfill sweeping programs. Rather, the group determines it will muster the few basic resources it needs to fulfill its simple primary purpose: to carry the message to the still-suffering addict. The ideal of simplicity, when applied to Tradition Seven, helps our groups avoid the heated conflicts that often arise over the control of great resources. Problems of money, property, and prestige need not divert our groups from their primary purpose when simplicity of that purpose and of our needs is kept squarely in focus.

Simplicity walks hand and hand with our faith in a Higher Power. So long as we take our direction from that Power, our needs are met. The decision to decline outside contributions by meeting the group's needs from the group's own resources is based firmly in faith. So long as our group remains devoted to fulfilling its primary purpose, its needs are met.

As members of an NA group, we have made a commitment to support one another in our recovery. Our group's commitment to become fully self-supporting reflects the group's integrity and faithfulness to its fundamental identity. We support each other in recovery and, together, we fulfill our collective responsibilities as members of a self-supporting group.

The anonymity we exercise in accepting our group responsibilities reflects our integrity. The anonymity of the Seventh Tradition means more than just contributing anonymously, without thought of recognition, though of course it does involve that. Anonymity in the context of Tradition Seven also means that all the contributions of a group's members are important. Money put in the basket, time put into setting up the meeting room, energy put into making newcomers welcome—all are part of the responsibility of the group, and all are equally important contributions to the self-supporting NA program.

Our anonymity, our integrity, our faith, our sense of simplicity, our acceptance of responsibility, our gratitude-together, all these things spell freedom. By encouraging our group to pay its own way, the Seventh Tradition gives our group freedom to share its recovery as it sees fit, not obligated to outside contributors. Further, it gives our group the freedom that comes from inner strength, the strength that develops through applying spiritual principles. By making the decision to become fully self-supporting, our NA group assures that it will always have the resources it needs to survive and continue fulfilling its primary purpose.

Narcotics Anonymous Way of Life
Why It Works: 12 Traditions
TRADITION SEVEN
Moreland, Georgia Edit October 2001

Our program is grounded in spiritual principles. To drift away from the honest caring and sharing of our tremendous growth period is to betray the spirit of NA. After all, it is the promise of freedom from active addiction that attracted addicts to our program in the first place. The vast number of incoming members assures us that our members who know about recovery and principled living will be outnumbered. It takes principles and courage to interact with the newcomers and help them keep pace with the demands placed upon them. Yeah, we know this is a big job and we run a severe risk of developing teams of followers, but we just have to pray and do the best we can. Our need from prayer and meditation is greater when we have the support of a great number of people - because they may, on occasion, be wrong! Listening to the inner voice may be our only chance. This doesn't mean we act against the majority, we just bring our higher power into the picture. If our inner voice says something worth hearing, it should be interesting to others.

To let our focus drift into fundraising and excessive markup of our literature and justify it in the name of helping others fools no one. We are not a business. We are a spiritual Fellowship. In those instances where we must collect or disburse funds, we have to minimize the cost to the Fellowship.

Our service bodies are nothing more than holding companies for what we have given. It is hard in some of the committees to remember that while the illusion of power can come with a title, service positions are nothing except opportunities to help those who may otherwise die or suffer needlessly. It is easy to see ourselves as more than we are because of this. Nevertheless, we surrender and pray for a loving God to help us remember our contribution to what we have been given only allows us to increase ourselves by more giving. This is how we fill the hole in the gut.

The Seventh Tradition speaks about being fully self-supporting. In this Tradition, fully means completely. We decline all outside contributions. If we compromise this principle, we open the doors to outside influences. Many places would like to give us free meeting rooms. We insist on paying rent. This helps to insure our autonomous groups. We also refuse donations of money, materials and services from outside our Fellowship. We send back the money with a note of thanks and a polite explanation. We cannot afford to be obligated or to even feel obligated. Our sense of obligation may effect our actions and decisions as groups.

We also need to look at the less obvious effects of this Tradition on NA as a whole. If our service boards and committees become dependent on sales of NA materials to outside enterprises for income, how does this affect our motivations and the development of NA materials? Our Fifth and Sixth Traditions become interrelated here. Our primary group purpose comes first. These are issues we have faced in the past and continue to face today.

In our addiction, we were never able to be self-supporting. We were always dependent on others. That is why it is so important for us to be self-supporting in our recovery. By being completely self-supporting we owe nothing to anyone other than our group and the fellowship, no one can say you owe me. We begin to stand on our own two feet and we take pride in our independence.

We just experience the concept of responsibility through our group. Our group teaches us that we need to take care of our own. We refuse money or anything else from outside of NA. Our members donate at the group level. The group, in respect to the fund flow and their autonomy has the choice to donate to the area, or to provide services to the addict who suffers. If a group decides to follow the fund flow, they may donate their excess money to the area. If they choose to surrender to the fifth tradition, they may make books free to newcomers or various other things to carry a message. Addicts can choose to donate in their home group or in many groups. Many addicts get confused and believe the seventh tradition applies to service boards or committees. Service boards or committees are not NA thus the seventh tradition does not apply. Donating in a committee does not carry our message, it funds the service board. The service board is not a business and is not self-supporting. Groups are self-supporting and money after bills goes to support the service effort. We may on occasion throw a fund-raiser to meet additional needs if they occur. Service boards and committees carry our group conscience with money from the groups. As we begin to respect our seventh tradition and begin to make healthy decisions in our lives and be self-supporting members of society.

As addicts, we have always been dependent on others - either our families, spouses or social agencies. We have never felt secure enough in ourselves to stand on our own two feet. Dependency has become a way of

life. In order to begin to recover we must break that chain and a way to begin is by contributing our fair share to our NA group. In doing this, we become responsible for our own recovery.

Much of recovery has to do with awakening to the interrelationships that were invisible to us in active addiction or early recovery. We demand respect when someone intrudes on us yet express amazement when others accuse us of intruding on them. The Seventh Tradition helps us maintain some separation from other groups and purposes to preserve our focus on recovery. In gratitude, we seek strength and guidance to carry on in the Spirit of NA in many ways. Direct contact with addicts who are learning to live clean places special demands on us to keep faith with the confidence and trust they place in us. This requires distance and separation from groups and the purposes those organizations would have. We dare not alter our identification as addicts recovering in Narcotics Anonymous. Other purposes would creep in and while most would seem to have little impact, they would accumulate until we were applying for funds and preoccupied with the concerns of bureaucracy rather than meeting the service needs of groups..

Getting our support from our members gives us a solid base in recovery. We have no other goals to take into account or people whose aims we must satisfy. Our sincerity protects us when things could go wrong. An addict shares, "Giving of 'myself' is a new concept in my life. In the past, I would always try to buy your attention, friendship, etc. The self support that this tradition talks about has a lot more to do with home group members giving of themselves in service than it has to do with the money we put in the basket. The commitment of sharing 'myself,' 'my being' with you is one of the most effective antidotes to self-centeredness and egocentricity that I have found.

"I have had confused feelings when it comes to giving. Am I giving enough? I would spend much more than this if I were using. Should I make up the difference when I think the basket is short? After all this fellowship has given me so much and I contribute so little. The amount must be an individual decision. Contribution through service and monetary means are necessary for our fellowship to survive. Once I decided on an amount and made a commitment to it I try to donate it regularly not just here and there. Part of the change for me is consistency and willingness to stay consistent."

It would be easy for us to accept free rent from centers that would like to promote themselves as having our services available to their clients. We must not allow this so as not to become dependent upon them for meeting halls and to allow them to possibly bend our message to better suit their needs. They would commit our services to their clients and that would be a lie. We in NA respect the treatment community and want the respect from them needed for us to function. Our spiritual integrity is at stake here.

[5.10.02]

GREY COPY TRADITION EIGHT

Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our Service Centers may employ special workers.

Some have described N.A. as a fellowship made up of the failures from other programs. To a great extent this is true; many of our members have unsuccessfully sought recovery in many other programs, in many other ways. "Jail did not help us at all. Medicine, religion and psychiatry seemed to have no answers for us that we could use." We ourselves have said, "Give us the ones you can't do anything with; give us your hardest cases. We'll welcome them with open arms." Somehow N.A. works when other programs and methods have failed. What is it about us that makes this so? We don't have any secret or special methods. We don't have any cure-all remedies. We don't really have many of the things that others offer addicts. What is it about N.A. that makes us the most widespread and successful program for addicts in the world? Perhaps it's something simple. Perhaps it's because we don't have these things, that it is possible for us to succeed where others have failed. What do we have? We have our steps; we have mobility; we understand and care; and we are motivated; we have each other.

The basis of our program is the Twelve Steps. We got these Steps from Alcoholics Anonymous, who thought enough of them to give them freely. A.A. got the Steps from various sources. The Steps are based on spiritual principles that have been known and followed for centuries. Most religious or spiritual orders utilize these same principles in some way. These principles are certainly not unique to us, but they are spiritual principles and that makes them special. Spiritual principles are basic truths that do not change with time or place; they simply work in all cases.

This program has been called a "hip pocket program". We don't require any equipment or special facilities. It doesn't take special training to make this program work. We carry this program with us wherever we go. We carry our message to the addict wherever he is and whenever he's ready.

This program fits every addict because the addict learns to apply our Steps to his life in his own way. Our ability to reach addicts anytime, anywhere has certainly been a great advantage for us. Perhaps our greatest asset is empathy, our ability to understand and identify with the newcomer. We know what it's really like to kick the habit; we've been there. We know what it's like to face life without drugs, each of us has had to do this. We know the prices of addiction; we've all had to pay them. We can't look down on the addict who comes to us; we've all been newcomers. We can't con each other; we've played all the games. We understand the addict and addiction perhaps better than anyone else can, after all, this is the life we lived. We care for and love the addict as if he were ourselves, because the addict really is ourself.

Our motivation is simple; this program was given freely to us by addicts who cared. We only do the same. We have learned that "we can only keep what we have by giving it away". We know that recovery is a matter of life and death for the newcomer and for ourselves. These are the things we are and how our program works. They are a reality for us. We have our Steps; we have mobility; we really understand and care; and we are motivated by survival. All these things are a contradiction to traditional recovery approaches and to professionalism. The professional has no place in our Fellowship; our very nature prohibits this.

Professionalism as such is not the problem. We recognize and admire the professional and his sphere. Many of our members in the endeavors outside the Fellowship have become professionals in their own right. It's just that there's no place for professionalism in N.A.; for our purpose we have learned the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is truly without parallel.

Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. We do the best we can and sometimes we need a little help. Volunteer work is the backbone of our service, but volunteers work only to the best of their abilities, only at their convenience. Some of our services require skills or abilities we are unable to supply as volunteers.

Most of us do not have the training necessary or the extra time required to fulfill these functions. Our Eighth Tradition also recognizes this and tells us that we may employ special workers in our service centers. Without their help, we might be unable to respond to many of those who reach out to us for help.

**The Twelve Traditions of NA
Colorado Region of Narcotic Anonymous
to give the service committee a better understanding.**

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

In this tradition we say that we have no professionals. By this, we mean we have no staff psychiatrists, doctors, lawyers, or counselors. Our program works by one addict helping another. If we employ professionals in NA groups, we would destroy our unity. We are simply addicts of equal status freely helping one another.

Lone Star Region Tradition Workbook

Narcotics Anonymous offers a distinctly non-professional approach to the disease of addiction. We have no hospitals, no treatment centers, no outpatient clinics, none of the facilities associated with a professional enterprise. We do not diagnose anyone's condition or track the progress of our patients—in fact, we have no patients, only members. Our groups do not provide professional therapeutic, medical, legal, or psychiatric services. We are simply a Fellowship of recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean.

In discussing the Sixth Tradition, we considered the sufficiency of our message. Narcotics Anonymous groups need not rely on outside enterprises in order to effectively offer recovery from addiction. In the same way, Tradition Eight reminds us that our members need no professional credentials to be effective in carrying the NA message. The heart of the NA way of recovery from addiction is one addict helping another. We have no certified NA counselors; our varied experience in recovery from drug addiction is all the credentials we need. The firsthand exposure each of us has in recovery from addiction is more than sufficient to qualify us to carry the message to other addicts.

This is not to say that a member of Narcotics Anonymous should never take a job as a professional therapist of one sort or another. It is only to say that, at an NA meeting, a member's vocation is irrelevant. The therapeutic value in the message we share with one another lies in our personal experience in recovery, not in our credentials, our training, or our professional status.

We don't sell recovery; we share it freely with others in a spirit of love and gratitude. However, Narcotics Anonymous groups, service boards and committees may require professional help in fulfilling their responsibilities. Tradition Eight makes a distinction between "selling our recovery" and paying people to help us do our service work. If one of our committees requires professional assistance in a service task, it's alright, for example, to contract the help of a lawyer or an accountant. If we need to employ someone to help us on a regular basis, a "special worker" we may give them a paycheck in return for the services they provide us. Special workers who are also NA members are not selling their recovery. They are simply providing professional service support we would otherwise have to hire non-addicts to provide.

Applying spiritual principles

Tradition Eight is one of the simplest and most straightforward of the Twelve Traditions. Likewise, the principles underlying the Eighth Tradition are eminently practical ones: humility, prudence, anonymity, and integrity.

An NA group exercises humility when it does not pretend to be anything more or less than it is. We do not claim to be professionals or experts in anything. We are not physicians, or therapists; we are recovering addicts. All we offer is our collective practical experience in getting clean and learning to live clean. The value of our program comes from the identification and trust that exist between one addict and another.

We further exercise humility when we recognize that sometimes we need professionals to help us fulfill our services. We place great emphasis on the therapeutic value of one addict helping another, sometimes to the extent that we are reluctant to hire professional assistance when we need it. But some NA services require too much time or expertise for our members to fulfill on a strictly volunteer basis. We

mustn't allow our pride to prevent our Fellowship from hiring the help it needs to support its services.

Neither should we hire special workers for jobs we can do for ourselves. We must exercise prudence in employing professional assistance for our services. Most NA service responsibilities do not require special expertise or large consistent commitments of time. Our members are perfectly capable of fulfilling such responsibilities on a volunteer basis. By exercising prudence, we can distinguish between those we can fulfill voluntarily.

Tradition Eight reminds our groups of the value of anonymity. Professionals are people with certain specialized skills, often recognized by the credentials given them by a certifying panel. An NA group has no such recognized experts. All group members are experts in their own recovery, fully qualified to share that recovery with another addict.

Finally, Tradition Eight supports the integrity of the NA group by helping it preserve what is most important about its fundamental identity. What is Narcotics Anonymous, after all, but a Fellowship of addicts freely sharing with one another the simple message of their own experience? Tradition Eight is a firm and permanent commitment on the part of each NA group to steadfastly maintain the feature of our program that is, indeed, of foremost value. By agreeing that Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, we reaffirm our belief that the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel! This is the heart of our program; so long as that heart beats strongly, our Fellowship and our recovery shall remain vital.

Narcotics Anonymous Way of Life

Why It Works: 12 Traditions

TRADITION EIGHT

Moreland, Georgia Edit October 2001

Keeping our services non-professional helps us prevent conflicts between paid and unpaid workers. Without clearly understanding the conflicts we build into our service effort if we allow our special workers to control portions of our group conscience process, we will unwittingly subject our fellowship to misleading and unreliable information. Our ability to think clearly, discuss fully and collect enough general information to make an informed decision through spiritual deliberation can be defeated. A spiritual person does not put a bag over their head.

The Eighth Tradition as it applies to our groups very simple. Our groups are non-professional, PERIOD. Ideally, service in our groups should result from the spiritual awakening our Steps bring us. Our Text says, "Proper service is doing the right thing for the right reason." Personal motivation is a factor in why we have an Eighth Tradition.

Applying this tradition to our service boards and committees has been more difficult. We agree that special workers being used to answer phones, maintain correspondence, do clerical work, print, warehouse and ship literature is within the terms of the Eighth Tradition and must be paid for our Seventh Tradition to be working, but what about editing and writing literature? Doing Public Information, Hospital and Institution work, etc? Should paid workers travel and assist in the development of NA in other areas? These are questions that have arisen in regard to the Eighth Tradition. We need to look at the concept of "special workers" in light of our Steps and Traditions. While we may employ people to do day to day tasks in our service centers, 12th Step work or "carrying the message" should result from our gratitude and spiritual awakening, not from desire for personal gain. Our motivations are important. We only keep what we have by giving it away. The strength of our message is as much in the giver as the message itself. It is spiritual and this tradition helps us to divide the spiritual from the material. The Eighth Tradition can keep us from sacrificing our spiritual principles for the sake of material efficiency.

Keeping the NA groups non-professional allows all members to recover as equals. Many addicts have become fed up with dealing with professionals and are drawn to NA simply because it is a strictly non-professional organization where addicts recover on an equal basis. There is no one person better than another.

It is one addict helping another. Many of us are intimidated by or are resentful of professionals and are unwilling to deal with them. They do not want to feel as if they are being told what to do. In NA, no one can tell anyone else what to do. We deal in suggestions only. It is up to the individual addict whether they take it or leave any specific suggestions. Too many addicts equate professionals with authority figures. In NA

groups there must be no figures of authority. If there is one thing more than anything else that may drive newcomers away, it is the thought of dealing with authority.

Special workers are employed by NA service centers to provide a service. Service centers are directly responsible to NA but they are not NA. Therefore, our special workers should not be members of NA. When this occurs, a conflict of interest may put a member in a compromising position. We respect our members and we would not want to add further difficulty to anyone's personal program. Our service centers employ people to answer phones, file, fill orders and other tasks to enable our centers to be more efficient. We need to keep in mind that these people, not being NA members, should not be volunteers. NA members are free to volunteer possibly as part of their Seventh Tradition. Also, being non NA members, we need to define the special workers role as specifically working in our service centers, not writing or editing literature, not doing PI work and not becoming involved in carrying a message to institutions. These are responsibilities of NA members who are willing to serve the fellowship. When we hire professionals outside of NA to become involved with our literature, our public information or H&I work, we are cheating ourselves out of carrying the message. This creates problems with the possibility of service work for hire that we will never condone. Things like this damage the integrity of NA as a whole.

We trust that group conscience will direct us, rather than any individual member with a good voice. We must trust in this group conscience while each share our experience, strength and hope, and let our higher power's will be done. It is important for each individual to be honest when sharing their feelings in order for the group conscience to be accurate.

Care must be taken to keep our spiritual integrity by maintaining a close focus on recovery and carrying our message. Many other activities that might have some bearing on the goals of NA and be in some way related to our message fall outside the perimeter of our competence. We are good at getting clean, staying clean and helping others directly and through some group efforts at putting members in position to directly carry our message while maintaining anonymity. Beyond this, we do not go. Other people will own and run hospitals. Others will run the governments and administer and enforce its laws. Others will conduct the media and do the many things possible in a complex society of individuals like ours.

As a spiritual fellowship, we maintain our proper position so that our time and attention is available to do what no one else can: help addicts seeking recovery. In this way, we keep faith with those who helped us and make way for those who will in their turn help others. If those who helped us had been distracted, many of us would not have made it. If we are distracted, we will not notice those who die at our doorstep. Addicts seem to have an innate fear and hatred of conflicts of interest. We probably carry this to unfair extremes. It is for the protection of our new people that we hold ourselves so far back from even giving the appearance of exploiting our members need for help by overcharging for our events, our literature or anything else pertaining to recovery. NA is not in the publishing business. We grant limited rights to our world service components to retail our literature under control of the Fellowship to insure our purposes never become exploitative.

Responsibility calls for us to remind our special workers that NA is run by a Loving God as expressed in group conscience. This means the bills are paid on time. If our unity is strong and our members are focused on recovery, they can usually provide additional help and support if needed. We are careful to keep other goals out of the picture. Being sensitive to members needs and attentive to their instruction is more than simply keeping faith with spiritual law; it is also the law of the land.

Committee officers frequently forget that their terms don't last forever and that recovery is the more important thing. Substitutes for recovery are always sought by addicts in recovery and we always try to cover this up through denial because we think we are the only ones. Go ahead, have a good laugh. You've earned it - or you will someday.

[5.10.02]

GREY COPY TRADITION NINE

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

This Tradition defines the way we run our Fellowship. A lot of confusion has occurred because of misinterpretations of our Ninth Tradition. Our members are addicts who have the desire to stop using, who want what we have to offer, and who have chosen to join us. Our meetings are a gathering of members' for the purpose of staying clean. Our principles are the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions.

Another point of confusion is the term organized, which has several meanings. Our Steps and Traditions are uniform and set in a specific order. They are numbered; they are not random and unstructured. Certainly they are organized, but this is not the organization of our Ninth Tradition. For the purpose of this Tradition, organized means having an administrative structure, and this implies management and control. On this basis, the meaning of Tradition Nine is clear. N.A. should never be run by bureaucracy or management nor controlled by individuals within an administrative structure. If we were to allow this, N.A. would surely lose the best it has to offer and choke to death on our insanities.

Even without this Tradition, organization such as this would be in opposition to our spiritual principles. A loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience would find no place within an administrative structure. How could a trusted servant manage and control? Service and management are contradictory. Government implies control, but our leaders do not govern. How could autonomy exist in an administrative structure?

Specialization and professionalism are the basis of any management scheme. Any administrative structure, by its very nature, eliminated the possibility of autonomy. An organized N.A. is a contradiction in terms and any attempt to force organization on us would destroy us.

The Ninth Tradition goes on to define the nature of these things that we can do, outside N.A., to help N.A. It says that we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve. This is the basis of our service structure, but keep in mind that although these entities are created to serve our Fellowship they are not, in fact, a part of Narcotics Anonymous. Our service structure consists of our groups and their business sense: our area service committees, regional service committees, World Service Conference, World Service Board of Trustees, and World Service Office. Each of these is directly responsible through the service structure, to the members of N.A. and to be loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.

The Twelve Traditions of NA Colorado Region of Narcotic Anonymous to give the service committee a better understanding.

Ninth Tradition NA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

NA groups join together, combining their resources to create service boards and committees that will help them better fulfill their primary purpose. Those boards and committees are not called to govern NA; they are called, rather, to faithfully execute the trust given them by the groups they serve.

Lone Star Region Tradition Workbook

In our White Booklet, we read that "NA is a nonprofit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean." This is NA, as such—a simple fellowship using a nonprofessional, addict-to-addict approach to the disease of addiction. We are a fellowship, not a lobbying organization or a medical service or a chain of treatment facilities. We are non-professional. We have no rules, no fees, no governing bodies, and only one

membership requirement: a desire to stop using. Our primary purpose is, quite simply, to carry the message. These are some of the traditional standards by which our groups may guide themselves, and our ultimate guiding authority is a Higher Power as it finds expression in the conscience of our members. Our groups work as well as they do because they keep it simple, least anything get in the way of carrying our message as simply and directly as possible, one addict to another.

Yet for all its emphasis on keeping things simple, Tradition Nine is not an excuse for dis-organized service work; instead, it recognizes that our fellowship does require a certain degree of organization to fulfill its primary purpose. Rather than recommend that NA groups themselves become organized, the Ninth Tradition suggests that groups organize separate boards and committees to serve their needs. Just as we are nonprofessional but may hire professionals to help us, so we are not organized but may organize boards and committees to serve us. This arrangement ensures that NA, as such, maintains its uncluttered, direct approach to recovery while assuring our ability to fulfill service tasks requiring a certain amount of organization.

Okay, so we may create service boards or committees. Now we must ask ourselves, why would we want to create such things? What are the needs these boards and committees would fulfill? To answer this question, let's look at how an NA group evolves, as we did when considering the Seventh Tradition.

In the beginning, an area's first NA group only needs to gather its members together so they can help one another stay clean and carry their message to other addicts. As the group grows, it begins taking care of a variety of business related to its meetings, trying to ensure that the message is carried as effectively as possible. To maintain the focus of its recovery meetings, the group usually conducts its business meeting separately, keeping NA, as such, as simple as possible.

As the group grows even larger, it often sprouts new groups. To maintain some of the unity and camaraderie that existed when there was only one group in the area, these groups elect representatives who meet periodically. These representatives share information with one another about how their individual groups are doing and help one another find solutions to problems one group or another may be having. From time to time, they may even organize a joint recovery meeting or social activity, gathering the entire NA community together.

Sooner or later, the groups realize the potential they have in this committee of representatives. Through this committee, the groups can combine their guidance and resources so that each of them can function more effectively and all, together, can carry the message farther. The groups may ask their committee to buy bulk supplies of literature, making it easier for each group to procure NA books and pamphlets. The groups might ask their committee to compile a directory for distribution at meetings throughout the area, making it easier for addicts to find out where NA meetings are being held. The groups may ask that public information, hospitals and institutions, and Phone line programs are set up, letting still-suffering addicts who might not hear of NA by word of mouth know of the fellowship's existence and increasing general awareness of Narcotics Anonymous. The point is, the development of these services is based squarely on the groups' needs. We create these boards and committees to serve us in fulfilling those needs.

As our groups grow, so does our needs from our area grow.

Explain.

First, the groups define their needs; then, they create the boards and committees which will serve them. Once created, how do we assure that our service boards and committees will remain directly responsible to those they serve? We do this, first and foremost, through consistent communication. Through their representatives, groups communicate with the boards and committees serving them. The groups provide regular information about their condition and their activities. They communicate their concerns, their needs, their ideas, and their wishes. This information helps our boards and committees better understand and serve the needs of the groups.

Communication is a two-way street. Groups share information and guidance with the boards and committees serving them. Then these boards and committees report back to the groups to which they are responsible, describing their operation, discussions, and plans. Responsible service boards and committees consult the groups in matters directly affecting them and seek direction from the groups in matters not already covered by existing policy. By maintaining regular two-way communication between NA groups and the boards and committees serving them, we create an atmosphere of responsibility that serve our fellowship and its primary purpose well.

Applying spiritual principles

Because the Ninth Tradition empowers the group to establish a service structure-not a simple thing-many of us think of Tradition Nine as being very complex. In reality, the spiritual principles underlying this tradition are very simple. The Ninth Tradition focuses, first, not on the relationship between groups and service committees but on NA, as such. We are a fellowship of recovering addicts who help one another stay

clean, nothing more.

Whenever possible, organized service work should be kept distinct from the groups so that they can remain free to simply and directly fulfill our primary purpose, addict to addict. The boards and committees we do organize, we organize on the basis of need only, using the simplest guidelines possible. We organize them solely to serve us, not to establish a complex governing bureaucracy. The Ninth Tradition is far from complicated; in fact, it speaks throughout of simplicity.

In the same way, Tradition Nine speaks of anonymity. When the Ninth Tradition exhorts NA, as such, never to become organized, it is telling us that we ought not create a governing hierarchy, a top-down bureaucracy dictating to our groups and members. As we noted in the Second Tradition, our leaders are not governors but servants taking their directions from the collective conscience of those they serve. Our primary purpose, not the personalities of our trusted servants, is what defines NA, as such. To reinforce the anonymity of tradition Nine, our groups, service boards, and committees practice various systems of rotating leadership so that no one personality ever dominates.

Another principle implicit in the Ninth Tradition is the principle of humility. Each group on its own is somewhat limited in its ability to fulfill its primary purpose; it has only so many members, so much time, and so many dollars to use in carrying the message by itself. However, when a number of groups combine their resources by joining together to form a service board or committee, they enhance their ability to fulfill their primary purpose. Together, they become able to do what they could not do alone.

The principle of humility also applies to the boards and committees spoken of in our Ninth Tradition. These service boards and committees are established to serve only, not to govern. They are directly responsible to the groups and are always subject to the explicit direction of the groups. Although our service boards and committees may do much more to help our groups fulfill their primary purpose, it is in the groups where NA, as such, come to focus, not in the boards and committees that they serve.

Prudence is one of the guiding principles behind the Ninth Tradition relationship between the groups and the boards and committees that serve them. Groups are responsible to consider their needs carefully, planning prudently before they create boards and committees. There is nothing that will complicate the simplicity of NA, as such, more than a needlessly elaborate array of committees, boards, and subcommittees.

The group's responsibility does not end with the establishment of a board or committee to fulfill their service needs; in fact, that is only the beginning. As long as the committee remains active, the groups should maintain familiarity with its affairs. The groups should also provide continuing guidance to the committee. Our boards and committees cannot be held accountable to the groups they serve unless the groups play a responsible role in their service relationship.

Finally, the Ninth Tradition speaks of fidelity. Narcotics anonymous groups join together, combining their resources to create service boards and committees that will help them better fulfill their primary purpose. Those boards and committees are not called to govern Narcotics Anonymous; they are called, rather, to faithfully execute the trust given them by the groups they serve. With a minimum of organization, our service boards and committees perform task on behalf of the groups, helping our groups remain free to do what they do best, simply and directly. Our fidelity to the Ninth Tradition assures that the simple, spontaneous atmosphere of recovery shared one addict to another in the NA group is never organized, legislated, or regulated out of existence.

Narcotics Anonymous Way of Life Why It Works: 12 Traditions TRADITION NINE

No committee should be allowed to govern the Fellowship. In selfless service, members may choose to become involved with committees or service boards. But since they are not NA, opinion and manipulation has no place, just group conscience as explained in our second tradition. Members may trust specific members to carry their collective conscience but this does not make this member a leader, governor or an organizer. It simply makes that person a trusted servant. No one has the power of authority to make decisions for NA. NA as a whole makes decisions for NA as a whole.

Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual program and we put our spiritual purposes first. It is important that we don't get so caught up in the business side of our group directed functions. Those boards and committees we create are admonished to maintain direct responsibility to the general membership: those we serve. Our sanctioned events and service efforts are done by trusted servants. All are addicts seeking recovery at times and all are members who act as resources to those who suffer at other times. Surely, we will all fall short at

times. But if enough of us are mindful of Tradition Nine, we can offset any harm done. The basic problem seems to be when we use the business aspect of an event or effort to put down our members. Abridging our policy of openness and service is not conducive to good feelings about service and trust of our trusted servants. If our servants can't trust us, who are we to trust them?

Special words require our attention. It can be a mistake to assume we know why these terms are special. This can prevent our going that one extra step that could lead to much more useful knowledge. Organizations are functional systems and they work to preserve these functions. An organization has some beliefs in common, and the means to enforce adherence to its rules and goals. Businesses are organized from the inside out. NA is organized from the outside in. Our group conscience processes blend ideas and suggestions from many sources so that we include a maximum number of viewpoints and people. We don't submit well to authority figures. We can surrender as part of our programs and our service yet it is entirely voluntary. If we are not given trust and respect, we know something has gone wrong.

In NA, we deal exclusively with the disease of addiction. NA "as such" referred to in this Tradition applies to our meetings where recovery is shared. This may include two members sharing on the phone in the middle of the night, a regular meeting or a convention meeting. All else is "not" NA. NA is not a business where business practices can take precedence over spiritual values. Many times, business has been used as an excuse to be secretive, manipulative and deceptive. Through the years, this has been a matter of some debate. It will always be a matter of debate because we will always have people moving from a rational, worldly viewpoint to a spiritual. It takes some time to realize that the worldly takes care of day-to-day functions but the spiritual takes care of every moment. All our luck and good feeling depends on the spirit. Ideally, there should be no conflict but it takes time and experience to learn to live the NA way without conflict. New people or people in new situations will always need our love and understanding if they fall into some trap or area where they can't see what to do clearly. We all need patience and tolerance.

The fellowship creates its service boards and committees. This is important to understand because in the course of things it may seem to us that our service efforts 'create' the Fellowship. It is one way and not the other. This keeps our committees and boards service oriented. It helps them to not get so caught up in what they are doing that they forget their allegiance to the Fellowship and begin to govern. We create them and they are our creations. They didn't create us, our desire for recovery did. We are not their creatures. Direct responsibility does not have to concern us with what other service boards and committees think. If we serve well those who benefit from our efforts and generally support others working to do the same, all will be well. Addicts make poor legislators, however we may hate to admit this fact. We are frequently tied into our own viewpoint so totally, that others exist only in our peripheral vision. Keeping our service simple and just doing our job takes a lot of surrender and sincerity on our part.

Structurally, this Tradition is a warning to keep faith with the members of NA at large. It is the nature of bureaucracies that much can be made of little. Interactive service boards can pat each other on the back and drift away from being directly responsible without ever noticing it. Like a bullfrog in a pan of water on the stove, they can boil to death without noticing the water getting hotter. They surely think all the feels warm is good for them. All service positions require knowledge of the Steps and Traditions. This is because we need to have surrender, faith, morals, and the ability to say we're sorry if we're going to function well with other addicts in service.

What is trusted service? Trusted service may be commitments that we may take on unconditionally on a group, area or regional level. These commitments may vary, but one thing does not change: The unselfish desire to give back what was so freely given to you. For many of us, this act of unconditional love may take the form of something simple on a group level. That something that allows us to show our gratitude and feel a part of the greater whole. As our understanding of the principle of NA becomes more apparent and our spirituality increases, we may get involved in the committees that are directly responsible to its members. Not all addicts in recovery choose to get involved in trusted service. Many are content with what they seem to have. Others complain of principles being violated or personalities in conflict. For us, trusted service implies action.

It can be so easy to sit back and complain about how poorly another member may be fulfilling their commitment. It can take the focus off ourselves. Why not get involved and either take on a commitment or help with others. No one commitment is more important than another. If service were a management system or a corporate effort, this might not be as true as it is with us. Service is part of our general giving or a part of our twelfth step. In either case, it is important for us to give and to keep faith within the Fellowship's trust.

Performing our task well or poorly is almost another matter. If we're clumsy or awkward, someone will notice and find a way to help us, if we are sincere.

One purpose of our Ninth Tradition is to separate and distinguish NA as such from our service boards and committees. 'NA as such' is groups of addicts holding meetings for the purpose of recovery from the disease of addiction. Their primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. Service boards and committees are created by these groups and are not NA as such. They have many other purposes and may become besieged with rivalry or competitiveness. This is an important distinction as many members confuse our service structure with NA. Our structure does not speak for NA but should allow NA to speak through it. Our boards and committees should not lead NA as such, but should be led as outlined in our second tradition. Separating our service structure and NA is vital to our spiritual growth. When we blur the distinction, service disputes and controversies enter into our recovery meetings and affect our personal recovery. No member should be isolated or feel isolated from the fellowship because of service issues. This tradition talks about direct responsibility. It is up to NA groups to insist on this. Although our structure is separate from NA as such, we expect it to work within the principles established by our Steps and Traditions.

Somehow, over the years, our service boards and committees changed direction. They changed from being "not a part of Narcotics Anonymous" to being "solely to serve the fellowship." This cheats the newcomer members from the concept of the Ninth Tradition. This may not be a direct change but indirectly an implication of service boards or committees being NA can confuse people and bring conflict upon ourselves. Service boards or committees serve the Fellowship not direct the Fellowship.

We can trust NA service boards and committees where they are guided by a loving God in their choices. Individuals may become obsessed and view dissenting members as the enemy, but surely, our combined love and determined effort for the common good will prevail. It is not the job of our service boards and committees to provide things we don't need. We don't need people to tell us what to think or approve what information becomes available to us. Responsiveness is the hallmark of genuine service. When members ask questions, they really want to know. Responding to their needs allows them to get past problems others have successfully faced. They go on to break new recovery ground for NA.

[5.10.02]

GREY COPY TRADITION TEN

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

In order to achieve our spiritual aim, Narcotics Anonymous must be known and respected. Nowhere is this more obvious than in our history. N.A. was founded in 1953. For twenty years our Fellowship remained small and obscure. In the 1970's, society realized that addiction had become a worldwide condition and began to look for answers. Along with this came a change in the way people conceived the addict. This change allowed addicts to seek help more openly. N.A. groups sprang up in many places where we were never tolerated before. Recovering addicts paved the way for more groups and more recoveries. Today, N.A. is a worldwide Fellowship; we are known and respected everywhere.

If an addict has never heard of us, he cannot seek us out. If those who work with addicts are unaware of our existence, they cannot refer them to us. One of the most important things we can do to help in our primary purpose is to let people know who, what and where we are. If we do this, and if our reputation is good, we will surely grow. We were led to addicts so we could give to them what others gave us.

Our recovery speaks for itself. Our Traditions protect us. Our Tenth Tradition specifically helps protect our reputation. This Tradition says that N.A. has no opinion on outside issues. We don't take sides. We don't endorse any causes. We don't have any recommendations. N.A., as a fellowship, does not participate in the politics of society. To do so would be to invite controversy; it would jeopardize our reputation. Those who agree with our opinions might commend us for taking a stand, but some would always disagree. This would effect the way they see us.

With a price this high, is it any wonder that we choose not to take sides in society's problems? For our own survival we have no opinion on outside issues; we keep ourselves apart so that we will never forget why we are here, and so that others will not mistake our purpose.

The Twelve Traditions of NA Colorado Region of Narcotic Anonymous to give the service committee a better understanding.

Tenth Tradition Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the NA name ought Never be drawn into public controversy.

There are a great number of addiction-related issues that others might expect a worldwide society of recovering drug addicts to take positions on. [...] Our answer, according to Tradition Ten, is that our groups and our fellowship take no position, pro or con, on any issues except the NA program itself. [...] For our own survival, we have no opinion on outside issues.

Lone Star Region Tradition Workbook

Narcotics Anonymous is a society of recovering addicts who help one another stay clean by applying certain simple spiritual principles. Our primary purpose, as groups and as a fellowship, is to offer that same help to any addict seeking recovery. Aside from that, NA has no opinions whatsoever. By refusing to take sides on other issues, we avoid becoming embroiled in public controversies that could distract us from our primary purpose. This is the message of our Tenth Tradition.

To most of us, it probably seems obvious that Narcotics Anonymous, as a fellowship, has no opinion on the pressing world issues of our day. Most of these issues have little to do with either addiction or recovery. But there are a great number of addiction related issues that others might expect a worldwide society of recovering drug addicts to take positions on. "What is NA's opinion," we are sometimes asked, "on the addiction treatment industry, other twelve step fellowships, the legalization of drugs, addiction related illnesses, and all the rest?" Our answer, according to Tradition Ten, is that our groups and our fellowship take no position, pro or con, on any issues except the NA program itself. We maintain neutrality on such issues so that we can maintain our focus on what we do best: sharing recovery from one addict to another.

However, even in explaining our own program in public, we may find ourselves treading on controversial ground. NA's views on total abstinence, on the possibility of recovering in society without long-term institutionalization, on the disease concept of addiction, even our broad views on spirituality are not met with universal acceptance. Others who deal with addiction and recovery may view these matters very differently than we do. We cannot deny those aspects of our program that others take exception to. We can, however, take care to explain our program in such a way as not to invite controversy deliberately. "We do not suggest that anyone adopt our views, nor do we oppose those with different views," we can explain. "We simply want you to know what the Narcotics Anonymous program is like." So long as we focus, as groups and as a fellowship, on our recovery experience rather than our opinions of why or how NA works, we will stay as far as possible from public controversy.

Tradition Ten restricts NA, as a fellowship, from stating opinions on outside issues. However, it places no such restriction on the individual member. In Narcotics Anonymous, we believe strongly in personal freedom. Addicts who have a desire to stop using can become members of NA simply by expressing that desire. We have no dues or fees, no pledges to sign, no promises to make to anyone, ever. Through a spiritual program, we encourage our members to develop their own understanding of a Higher Power. Even our leaders are but trusted servants, with no power to tell individual members what to do, think, or say. NA members are encouraged to think for themselves, to develop their own opinions, and to express those opinions as they see fit.

The only caution Tradition Ten offers individual NA members is that, when speaking publicly, we think through what we're going to say before we say it. In certain situations, anything an NA member says will be taken as NA's opinion, even when the situation itself has nothing to do with Narcotics Anonymous and the member clearly states that the views expressed are strictly personal. It is not our fault if others misinterpret what we say as individuals; this does not, make the complications arising from such misinterpretations any less serious for NA. We may be able to avoid such complications before they arise simply by thinking carefully before we speak in public.

But what about speaking in a recovery gathering? Does the Tenth Tradition tell us that, as individual recovering addicts, we must not talk in NA meetings about the challenges we face? No, it does not. While a particular problem may be an outside issue, its effect on our recovery is not; everything affecting a recovering addict's life is material for sharing. If a problem we are having impacts our ability to stay clean and grow spiritually, it's not an outside issue.

Many things can put us off balance and challenge our recovery. We often discuss such challenges with one another at our meetings, seeking to ease our personal burdens by sharing them with our fellow NA members. We ask others to share how they have applied the principles of the program in similar circumstances, recovering their balance and strengthening their recovery. We need no one's permission to talk about such things in our meetings.

But, for all that, we all know that controversial personal opinions can distract our meetings from their primary purpose. If everything is recovery material, yet we want to help our meetings retain their focus on recovery, how do we decide what to share?

So long as we keep our common welfare and our primary purpose in focus, we will avoid the kind of controversy that distracts us from recovery.

Applying spiritual principles

Foremost among the principles our groups and our fellowship apply in practicing Tradition Ten is the principle of unity. For all the diversity of individual opinion among our members, Narcotics Anonymous itself is united in having no opinion on any issues apart from its own program. As a fellowship, we agree to take positions only on those ideals that have drawn us together, our principles of recovery, not on the many personal opinions that might divide us.

The Tenth Tradition is an exercise in responsibility. As groups and as a fellowship, we are responsible to carry our message to the still-suffering addict. We are responsible to provide an atmosphere in which recovering addicts can share freely with one another. To do these things effectively, we must stay as free of the distractions of public controversy as possible. We absolutely can avoid any controversies, which might arise from groups or the fellowship taking positions on issues entirely outside the scope of our program.

Individual NA members responsibly exercise the Tenth Tradition by personally guarding NA's neutrality whenever and whatever they speak. Publicly, we differentiate between our personal opinions and those of NA, avoiding the expression of any personal opinions at all in circumstances where the difference might not be recognized. In meetings, NA members make it clear that what we share is our own experience, not the position of Narcotics Anonymous, providing as little opportunity as possible for misinterpretation. The way we speak as NA members often affects how others view NA; therefore, as responsible members, we speak carefully, guarding the neutrality that is so important to the welfare of us all.

To fulfill Tradition Ten, our groups, service boards, and committees must exercise prudence in their public contacts. Elements of our fellowship are constantly in touch with others in society. Groups maintain contacts with their meeting facilities and those in their neighborhood; H&I subcommittee, with facility administrators; Public Information workers, with health professionals, charitable organizations, government agencies, and media. In all our contacts with society, we must take care not to express any opinions on issues outside the scope of our program. Such prudence will protect our credibility in the public eye on the only issue that truly concerns Narcotics Anonymous: our program of recovery from addiction.

By practicing the Tenth Tradition, we demonstrate our belief in the value of anonymity. All of us have our opinions. But when we speak as groups and as a fellowship, we do not take positions on the opinions of individuals. What we have to share with the public is our fellowship's message, not our personal opinion.

Tradition Ten is supremely practical. The only issue upon which our fellowship is willing to publicly stake its reputation is the NA program itself. Underlying the practicality of the Tenth Tradition, however, can be found a fundamental spiritual principle, that of humility. Narcotics Anonymous does not claim to have the answer to every trouble in the world. We do not even claim that we necessarily have the only answer to addiction. When we share in public, as groups or as a fellowship, we share only our message. We talk about what we do, neither supporting nor opposing what anyone else does. We are what we are, and that's all that we are: a society of recovering drug addicts sharing their recovery with one another and offering the same to the addict who still suffers. We speak simply about our program, knowing that our effectiveness will attract more goodwill than any amount of promotion. Our program has worked for us and is available for others interested in recovery. If we can be of service, we stand ready to help.

Narcotics Anonymous Way of Life
Why It Works: 12 Traditions
TRADITION TEN
Moreland, Georgia Edit October 2001

One addict shared what many feel, "I am grateful that NA isn't involved with the politics and other issues of society. NA is a spiritual way of life and I feel this would be severely compromised if we let our opinions or non-recovery issues effect the groups in any way."

In order for us to recover, it is imperative that we be able to "focus" on recovery alone. The disease is always trying to defocus us so that we cannot concentrate all our energies on recovery. We suffer from a disease of spiritual deficiency and in order to achieve integrity the atmosphere of non-duality must be maintained in our groups.

Having an opinion is having an opinion. It doesn't matter if we fight for what is "socially acceptable" or unacceptable. Any type of opinion, used in conjunction with the words Narcotics Anonymous creates public controversy. In this case, it does not matter who is right. It does not matter what is right. What matters is that it is none of NA's business. It is difficult for addicts not to share our opinions. We must respect this Tradition and do this in our own NA family in a way that does not become available outside of NA. We do not encourage our members to wear NA shirts at political rallies, public or commercial events or occasions involving the press or media.

This would indirectly make a statement. We need to encourage respect for our fellowship. Sometimes a member in a tee shirt or with a sticker on his car is the only thing society sees. If we allow

ourselves to express an opinion while carrying an NA logo, this endangers NA as a whole. Perhaps only a little bit, but that little bit can make a big difference. Already our combined goodwill, ability to keep Fellowship commitments is helping us carry our message into areas where we just weren't welcome that long ago. Sometimes it is hard to see the benefits of doing the right thing, but as we come to ourselves, we begin to see patterns forming in our lives to take the place of ego, pain motivation, suspicion, greed and all the other self-limiting strategies addiction had rooted in our lives. You can't get a job at the bank if you steal money. We must surrender to this Tradition in our personal lives for the benefit of the integrity of NA as a whole.

The Tenth Tradition is vital for our growth and spiritual well-being as a fellowship. We cannot afford to be categorized or labeled by taking positions on outside issues. Public positions may attract some, but they would invariably alienate others. By remaining neutral on outside issues within the larger society, we are accessible to the broadest base of addicts. We do it this way so that no addict seeking recovery need ever die. As lofty and distant as that goal may seem at times, we can have it if we are willing to pay the price, don't back off and don't get side tracked.

The Tenth Tradition warns us about public controversy. Public controversy is to be avoided because it always damages us as a Fellowship. When someone out in the world thinks of NA, we want them to think of caring addicts who live clean. They don't really need to know our politics, our income level, our associations, and most important, our opinions on everything.

Year after year, we have to let new members working in the sensitive areas of Public Information know they are not to use their last names with the press as NA members, not to address outside issues and not to respond to a reporter outside our area of responsibility. By being responsible, we make it possible for others to find out about NA, get to our meetings and achieve freedom from active addiction. Internal controversies have been with us from the beginning of our fellowship and are not necessarily negative. NA has often grown and matured through controversy. The Tenth Tradition distinctly applies to outside issues and public controversy outside NA. It is not meant to be used as a means to avoid involvement in our fellowship. Many problems will not go away until members are willing to make a stand.

This Tradition refers to "outside issues." Recently, many members have wanted us to take medical and socio-political positions on issues of racial prejudice, tobacco smoking and treatment for addiction. We must be careful. Stating opinions on these issues in the name of NA can be dangerous. The safest generalizations can be harmful. Are we doctors, lawyers and experts? If we are in our own right, let it be kept apart from our membership! It is so easy for an addict to be gulled into making rash statements on the air or to the press. We just have to repeat the warnings until they are heard. And, most importantly, members have to be trained and instructed in these matters by us; there is no one else to do it. When we don't do our job, we insure failure and confusion for Fellowship events and projects. When we have taken our turn at running things, it is all too easy to back off and let others rush in and take over. If they fail, is it their fault if we didn't set it up with a strategy to pass on what we had learned before turning the effort over to them? Think about it. Pray about it. It is your Fellowship.

What about "inside issues?" These are expressed as our experience, strength and hope on recovery, in our group conscience literature process. Our opinions on service and Traditions are expressed the same way. The word "conscience" is more accurate than the word "opinion" to describe this because it includes the spiritual component.

[5.10.02]

GREY COPY TRADITION ELEVEN

Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.

This Tradition also deals with our relationship to those outside the Fellowship. It tells us how we should relate to the addict who still suffers, and it tells us how to conduct our effort at the public level. This has meaning for dealing with both potential members and the general public. We have learned the value of teaching by example rather than direction. This has worked for us and we utilize this principle when we work with other addicts. Our message is most obvious in our lives. In this sense we are the message. When working with a newcomer, we try to tell them where we came from and what has happened to us. If they can identify with us and if they want what we have to offer them, they may join us. This is attraction. We never promise anything other than a chance to stop using if they want to. This is all we really have to offer and to make any other promise would be to distract from our primary purpose.

We should never misrepresent what we offer even if by doing so we might be able to get a few more addicts to attend our meetings. It is easy to make promises. We can tell an addict that we offer all kinds of things other than recovery. Addicts would flock to our doors; they would come for a free meal, or housing, or money, or a job, or a lover, or any kind of free ride. But how many would have a desire to stop using, and how many would leave as soon as they found out we wouldn't keep our promise? How many would never come back? How many would die without ever having a chance to find recovery? Promotion is representing ourselves as something we are not.

In order to accomplish something we want, we don't use promotion to encourage addicts to come to us and we don't use promotions to make ourselves more acceptable. Our successes speak for themselves.

Our Eleventh Tradition also tells us we need also maintain anonymity at the level of press, radio and films. Most of us interpret this to mean that we don't give our names or show our faces publicly as members of N.A.

What would happen if a member publicly declared that he was a member of Narcotics Anonymous and let everyone know the wonderful things that N.A. can do for addicts, and later he was found dead of an overdose? What would people who had heard his declaration and also knew about his death think about the value of N.A.?

Personal anonymity is really much more. It is a point of freedom, and personal recovery. No member of N.A. should ever place themselves in a position where they have to make a statement for N.A. as a whole. No one member is N.A. and no one member can speak for us. We have no elite class nor special members. Each of us has our story, and our own recovery. Individually, we are powerless but as a Fellowship we can achieve great things.

The Twelve Traditions of NA Colorado Region of Narcotic Anonymous to give the service committee a better understanding.

Eleventh Tradition Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need Always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.

The existence of a public relations "policy" implies the importance of a public relations "program" in carrying out our fellowship's primary purpose. [...] As NA groups, service boards, and committees, we deliberately and energetically cultivate good public relations, not as an incidental result of our normal activity but as a way to better carry our message to addicts. [...] Public anonymity helps keep the focus of our public relations on the NA message, not the PI workers involved.

Lone Star Region Tradition Workbook

The Eleventh Tradition is the cornerstone of NA's public relations policy. But Tradition Eleven is only one of six traditions that address various aspects of our relations with the public. The Third and Fifth Traditions talk about the primary purpose and ultimate target of our public relation efforts. Tradition Six and Seven describe the nature of our relations with other organizations, and the Tenth Tradition details our policy concerning public pronouncement on issues outside the scope of our recovery program. Clearly, our traditions are just as concerned with our public relations as they are with our internal relations.

Most NA groups have some sort of contact with the public in their everyday affairs. But the public relations spoken of in the Eleventh Tradition are more deliberate than our group's routine encounters with those outside the fellowship. The existence of a public relations "policy" implies the importance of a public relations "program" in carrying out our fellowship's primary purpose. Public information work, done properly, is not promoted; rather, it seeks to make NA attractive to those who might need us. As NA groups, service boards, and committees, we deliberately and energetically cultivate good public relations, not as an incidental result of our normal activity but as a way to better carry our message to addicts. Narcotics Anonymous is not a secret society; Tradition Eleven speaks to personal anonymity, not fellowship anonymity. The better known we are by the public, the more likely it is that addicts seeking recovery-or their friends, relatives, co-workers will think of us and know where to find us when they decide to seek help. One way to take part in NA's public relations program is to become involved in the local Public Information Subcommittee.

The Eleventh Tradition tells us that, when we engage in public relations activity, we speak simply and directly of what Narcotics Anonymous is and what we do. We are not to make exaggerated claims about NA. Our public relations efforts should be as inviting and non-promotional as our program itself, saying to addicts and society at large, and "If you want that we have to offer, this is what we are and how we work if we can be of service, please let us know."

Some organizations use celebrity members as public spokespersons, hoping to enhance the organization's credibility by tying it to the celebrity's status. This may be fine for other organizations. But Tradition Eleven tells us in no uncertain terms that, in NA's public relations efforts, we must never do this-not with celebrity members, not with any member. If our fellowship used a celebrity member in a public announcement about NA and the celebrity later relapsed or otherwise suffered a loss of prestige, what good would that do to our fellowship's credibility? The same could apply to any individual member put in the public spotlight on NA's behalf. The credibility of NA's message can be greatly affected by NA's messengers. In the public eye-including press, radio, film, and all other media-we need always maintain personal anonymity.

The same applies to other kinds of public information work. Public anonymity helps keep the focus of our public relations on the NA message, not the PI workers involved. We never do PI work alone because as a team-even a pair-better displays NA as a fellowship to the public, while individuals tend to draw attention to themselves. Teams also tend to keep the personalities of their members in check, the better to ensure that NA and not the individual addict is what we present to the public. The true statement that "an addict alone is in bad company" applies to our public relations efforts just as well as to our personal recovery.

In most circumstances, though, personal anonymity is a purely personal decision. However closely we may have guarded the secret of our addiction, most of those close to us probably knew we were in trouble when we were using. Today it may be helpful to tell them about our recovery and our membership in Narcotics Anonymous.

Other circumstances may also warrant the disclosure of our NA membership. When a friend tells us about the struggles another person is having with addiction, we may want to let that friend know about Narcotics Anonymous and what it has done for us. When a co-worker has a drug problem, we may want to share our experience with that person. None of us will want to indiscriminately trumpet all the gory details of our addiction to everyone in town, nor will we disclose our NA membership to everyone we meet. When we think we may be helpful to someone, it may be appropriate to share a bit of our story and the recovery we've found in Narcotics Anonymous.

All our members play a part in our public relations, whether or not they're involved in public information work. When individual addicts demonstrate recovery at work in their lives, they become our

strongest attraction, a living testament of NA's effectiveness. Seeing us now, those who know what we once were like will spread the word to those they meet that NA works. The further that message is carried, the more likely it is that addicts seeking recovery will be attracted to the warm, loving support of our fellowship.

By the same token, we must remember that, wherever we go, we always represent NA to some degree. If we are seen acting poorly while we prominently display an NA logo on our T-shirt, we carry a distinctly unattractive message about our fellowship to the public. What we say and what we do reflects on our NA recovery and the NA Fellowship. As responsible NA members, we want that reflection to be a source of attraction rather than a source of embarrassment.

Applying spiritual principles

Tradition Eleven is an expression of our faith in the effectiveness of our program. As a fellowship, our primary purpose is to carry the recovery message to the still-suffering addict. To fulfill that primary purpose, we do not need a promotional public relations policy. To gain public goodwill and attract addicts to our meetings, all we need to do is clearly and simply describe the Narcotics Anonymous program. We need neither fanfare, overblown claims, nor celebrity endorsements to build our public relations. We have faith that the effectiveness of our fellowship, once made known, will speak for itself.

The principle of service, critical to the application of our Eleventh Tradition, is not a passive principle. To be of maximum service to the still-suffering addict, we must energetically seek to carry our message throughout our cities, towns, and villages. Our public relations policy is based on attraction, to be sure, not promotion. But to attract the still-suffering addict to our program, we must take vigorous steps to make our program widely known. The better and broader our public relations, the better we will be able to serve.

Each of us has our own life, our own words, and our own story, all adding dimension and color to the message of our fellowship. But the message we carry to society is not the message of how great we are as individuals. The primary purpose of our public relations efforts is to tell the story of Narcotics Anonymous and what our program offers to the still-suffering addict. Our practice of public anonymity is built on the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Narcotics Anonymous Way of Life Why It Works: 12 Traditions TRADITION ELEVEN Moreland, Georgia Edit October 2001

Spiritual integrity is the heart of this Tradition. In NA, we deal with energy and avoid areas of powerlessness. One of the major ways we stay within bounds is not to try to claim responsibility for other people, what they do or what they think. Standing out, alone and on our own, is necessary for us to carry out our Fifth Tradition and carry our message. When people think of NA, hopefully they will think of recovering addicts who help one another. Any departure from this focus hurts our ability to carry our message. While we applaud and enjoy our personal attributes, we set aside our personal preferences in favor of group purpose and this Tradition enjoins us to keep this spirit alive.

We addicts at almost any point along life's way, have some things to learn. Staying on the subject is hard if not impossible for many of us, especially in early recovery. Service workers who specialize in Public Information services, study guidelines developed by members within the Fellowship to pass along what has been learned about creating and maintaining a public presence without violating our Traditions. Please refer to these guides to get what is most current and helpful at present.

To keep our program attractive, we avoid promotional images and postures that would suggest we were other than what we are: A program of recovering addicts who help one another to get help themselves. This is attractive to addicts seeking recovery who would be turned off by professional approaches or treatment programs that may not have worked in the past. While we find many of our members are better able to benefit from treatment due to the radical change recovery makes in a person, we have members who have gotten clean and stayed clean on NA alone.

Promotion would be out of place for a program of recovery based on spiritual principles. Promotion implies

the need to add value to a product or proposition especially where there may otherwise be no real value. We try to be sensitive to prospective members who may still be in pain from having been promised help by some other organization or program and felt let down. We are what we are and we are grateful. Our recovery should speak for itself among addicts in pain from active addiction. Until an addict is awakened by their very own custom designed 'pain', they are notoriously unlikely to respond to any offer of help. So, promotion would not only not work, it would make real addicts think we were somehow insincere pretenders and therefore avoid us when they become serious about recovery.

The greatest treasure of all recovering persons is being able to live free of the labels of active addiction. We may break our own anonymity privately for any reason, yet we do not grant the right to do this to any other person, even if they have reason to think it will be OK with us. In this world, we never know when our good-naturedness will cost someone their job or result in other problems that would not occur without our interference.

Initial attraction to our fellowship happens in many ways. But the continued attraction that keeps us coming back may often stem from our honesty living the spiritual principles of our program in our daily lives. That is what continues to attract the still suffering addict to us: The fact we live in the spiritual solution and our willingness to share ourselves unconditionally.

[5.10.02]

GREY COPY TRADITION TWELVE

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

The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous are even more inter-related than our Steps. They compliment each other and are bound together by the principle of anonymity. We've heard "Principles before personalities" so often it has become a cliché like "Take it Easy" or "First Things First". But what does it mean? What is the principle of anonymity?

Anonymity is the whole basis of the program; it is truly the foundation. In order to survive, we must set aside the differences we live by and become a part of a greater whole. The awakening of anonymity in each of us occurs when we finally give up trying to manage our lives and begin to depend on a power greater than ourselves.

Let us examine anonymity. It is the spiritual foundation of our Traditions. The First Tradition talks about common welfare and N.A. unity. The placing of common welfare before personal welfare in the group setting is a direct application of anonymity. The "I wants, I wills and I shoulds" are replaced by "we" oriented thinking for the common good; the result is unity.

Unity is the direct result of the application of the principle of anonymity within the group and the fellowship.

The Second Tradition talks about having but one ultimate authority. No single person (no personality) has authority. This is vested in a loving God to whom we have turned over our will and lives. The anonymity of the servant should be typical of our leaders. They themselves are not important; it is only the service which counts.

The Third Tradition is a statement of anonymity. We do not define our members. We only insist that they have a desire to stop using. Nothing else should matter. This desire is the one crucial must of our program. We must either come with it or develop it before this program will work for us.

Anonymity makes possible the autonomy of our Fourth Tradition. Without the principle of anonymity, each group would set itself up as some thing different from the rest--something special. Our groups would begin competing with each other for members and for recognition. The resulting loss of unity would eventually destroy N.A.

Our Fifth Tradition says that each group has but one primary purpose. This unity of purpose is the tie that binds our groups together. Our groups are not truly different; each has the same spiritual aim and orientation. This anonymity, and the anonymity of the groups, make it possible for an addict to depend on us for help.

Tradition Six tells us that we ought never finance, endorse or lend the N.A. name to any facility or outside enterprise. To violate this rule would be to lose our anonymity. With anonymity gone, personalities would take over and problems of money, property and prestige would surely divert us from our primary purpose.

Our Seventh Tradition guarantees each member the right and privilege to share in the financial support of Narcotics Anonymous. Each of us is given the equal opportunity to help anonymously. We uniformly reject outside contributions regardless of their source. We also do not allow a member to contribute more than his fair share; to do so would be to encourage the loss of their anonymity.

In regards to our Eighth Tradition, we do not single out our members as "professionals"; we try to maintain their chance to experience personal recovery and grow. Not forcing power and status on our members is yet another form of anonymity.

The service board and committees of our Ninth Tradition are directly responsible to a loving God as expressed in a group conscience. They are not responsible to any particular personality or set of personalities.

In our Tenth Tradition, we strive to limit the growth of powerful personalities and safeguard anonymity by having no opinion on outside issues. When controversy exists, people take sides, personalities, come forward, and as this happens anonymity fades. Here again we find consistency of action, and in its own way this is also anonymity.

In our Eleventh Tradition, we find that the way we relate to the outside world is in fact using personal anonymity. None of us are singled out, no one of us represents N.A.; to do so would be to place our personalities ahead of others and this would be a violation of our anonymity. In attraction rather than promotion, we give the addict the right to join in our anonymity and find recovery.

Anonymity is everywhere in our Traditions and in our Fellowship. It is one of the basics of recovery. The principle of anonymity protects us from our defects of personality and character. Where anonymity exists, personalities and differences have no power. Anonymity in action makes it impossible for personalities to come before principles.

The Twelve Traditions of NA Colorado Region of Narcotic Anonymous to give the service committee a better understanding.

Twelfth Tradition **Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.**

Anonymity is one of the basic elements of our recovery and it pervades our Traditions and our Fellowship. It protects us from our own defects of character and renders personalities and their differences powerless. Anonymity in action makes it impossible for personalities to come before principles.

Lone Star Region Tradition Workbook

In personal recovery, we seek to replace self-will with the guidance of a Higher Power in our personal affairs. In the same way, the traditions describe a fellowship that takes its collective guidance from spiritual principles rather than individual personalities. That kind of selflessness is what the Twelfth Tradition means by the word "anonymity," and it is the spiritual foundation upon which Narcotics Anonymous is built. Tradition Twelve is all the traditions rolled up in one, summarizing and reinforcing the message of the previous eleven.

Anonymity is essential in preserving the stability of our fellowship, making personal recovery possible. Recovery is a delicate thing. It grows best in a stable, supportive environment. Each of us and each of our groups play a part in maintaining that stability. Our unity is so precious that, given a choice between fulfilling our own wishes and preserving our fellowship's common welfare, we put the best interests of NA first. We do this not only out of enlightened self-interest but also out of our sense of responsibility to our fellow addicts. The principle of NA unity comes before the fulfillment of our personal wishes.

Anonymity is the primary principle underlying our tradition of membership. While we all have our personal differences, NA's only membership requirement is what we have in common, a desire to stop using. This simple principle draws the diverse personalities of those who suffer from our disease together in a common fellowship of recovery.

The principle of anonymity lies at the core of our fellowship's understanding of group conscience. The ideas of each individual group member have their importance, but the group takes its guidance from the collective conscience of all its members. Before the group makes a decision, its members consult their Higher Power, seeking spiritual guidance on the matter at hand. There individual voices humbly join in developing a collective sense of God's will for the group, and a strong common voice arises out of that mix to guide us all. We call this group conscience. The same principle applies to NA's concept of leadership. Though individual members serve as NA leaders, these leaders act only as our servants, carrying out their duties in accordance with the group's conscience. The principles of selfless service and collective guidance come before the personalities of our trusted servants.

Just as the principle of anonymity guides the evolution of a group's collective conscience, so it also applies to group autonomy. Each group is, of course, entirely free to fulfill its primary purpose as it sees fit, developing its own way of doing things and its own group personality. Our fellowship places only one restriction on this near-total liberty: The group may not exercise its personality at the expense of neighboring groups or NA as a whole. The welfare of each NA group depends, to an extent, on the welfare of all NA groups. Our groups do not seek ascendancy over one another; rather, they join and cooperate to work for the greater good of the fellowship as a whole. The principle of anonymity draws our autonomous groups together for the common welfare of them all.

The principle of anonymity shapes our primary purpose. Although individual ambition and personal purpose may provide motivation for our development as human beings, our fellowship is guided by its collective purpose: to carry our message to the still-suffering addict. When we enter Narcotics Anonymous, we leave our personal agenda at the door. We seek to help others rather than only ourselves. This selfless principle, not personal ambition, defines the primary purpose of our groups.

Anonymity guides our fellowship's interactions in society. We are not a secret organization; we are happy to see our name becoming better known throughout the world with each passing year. However, we do not trade that name for the endorsement of organizations that might possibly help us further our primary purpose. Nor do we attempt to gain public influence by asserting the prestige of our fellowship's name. If we are fulfilling our primary purpose, society will see our usefulness. We will have no need to trade our endorsement for the support of others. The good spoken of us by our fellowship's friends will be sufficient recommendation.

Anonymity is one of the guiding principles behind the way our groups practice the Seventh Tradition. We believe in the value of selfless generosity for its own sake. For this reason, we choose to receive support from our members anonymously. We also encourage each group as a whole to become fully self-supporting, not dependent on only one or two individual members. The principle of selfless giving, without expectation of personal distinction or reward, goes hand-in-hand with the principle of collective responsibility. Together, they assure both the spiritual solidarity and the financial stability of our groups.

This same principle of selfless anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our Eighth Tradition. In Narcotics Anonymous, we have no professional Twelfth Steppers. Rather, we use the simple language of empathy to freely share with one another the spiritual experience we call recovery. A spiritual experience cannot be bought or sold; it can only be given away. The more we freely share that experience, the more we strengthen the empathy that joins us together. This tradition reminds us to place the principle of anonymous, selfless giving before whatever personal desires we may have for recognition or reward.

In Narcotics Anonymous, we apply the principle of anonymity in the way we structure our service organization. Our fellowship has no authoritarian hierarchy. We create boards and committees solely to serve us, not to govern. The various elements of our service structure are guided by the primary purpose and collective conscience of our fellowship and are held directly accountable for the service they do on our behalf. Those who serve on our various boards and committees are expected to do so not to seek power, property, or prestige for themselves, but to selflessly serve the fellowship that has made their recovery possible.

Almost all our groups, service boards, and committees rotate different members through their service positions, rarely asking one individual to serve in a particular position of responsibility more than one or two terms in a row. The practice of rotation emphasizes our fellowship's belief in the value of anonymity in service. NA service is not primarily a personal endeavor; rather, it is the collective responsibility of our fellowship as a whole. This doesn't mean that we do not appreciate the care, experience, and insight that individuals may offer in carrying out their service duties. However, we place the principle of anonymity in service before the personalities of our individual trusted servants. Collective responsibility, not personal authority, is the guiding force behind NA service.

The principle of anonymity gives form to our fellowship's public voice. Each of our many members has personal opinions on a wide range of subjects. The public message our fellowship carries, however, is the message of our collective experience in recovery from addiction. As groups and as a fellowship, we have no opinions on anything but the NA program itself. In our interactions with society, we present only the principles of our program, not our members' personal opinions about other issues.

Anonymity applies not only to our public pronouncements but it is the principle underlying the whole of our fellowship's public relations policy. In our public contacts, we base the credibility of our program on NA's effectiveness, not on the personal reputation of any individual member. We seek to attract addicts and gain public goodwill solely by virtue of what we have to offer, not by grandiose promotional. Exaggerated claims about NA cannot take the place of the simple, proven validity of our message as the basis of our public relations policy.

Twelfth Tradition anonymity or "namelessness" serves a number of practical functions in our fellowship, each of which has broad spiritual implications. By reminding us that "what's said in this meeting stays in this meeting," our meeting formats help foster an atmosphere in which none of us need to fear public disclosure of what we share in the intimacy of our groups. They also remind us that the message, not the messenger, is what's most important about the sharing that occurs in our meetings.

Twelfth Tradition anonymity also means that, in the final analysis, our personal differences make no difference: In NA, in recovery, we are all equal. It's true that we all come into Narcotics Anonymous with our own personal histories, using patterns, educational and social backgrounds, talents, and shortcomings. But for the purpose of our own recovery, our occupational identity has no bearing on our ability to care for one another in NA. A college degree, a trust fund, illiteracy, poverty-these circumstances that so powerfully affect so many other areas of our lives will neither help nor hinder our chances at recovery. Likewise, they will not aid or impede our efforts to carry the message one addict to another.

We are equal in NA membership. We are all, at last, anonymous "part of" rather than uniquely "apart from" the NA fellowship. The anonymity spoken of in our Twelfth Tradition means that, we who have suffered so long from the isolating disease of addiction, "finally belong."

Truly, anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions. Without it, the unity upon which personal recovery depends would dissolve in chaos of conflicting personalities. With it, our groups are given a body of guiding principles, our Twelve Traditions, helping them join the personal strengths of their members in a fellowship that supports and nurtures the recovery of us all.

We pray that Narcotics Anonymous never becomes a gray, faceless collection of addicts without personalities. We enjoy the color, the compassion, the initiative, and the rough-and-tumble liveliness that arises from the diverse personalities of our members. In fact, our diversity is our strength. We find that the stronger our individual members are, the more strongly united our fellowship becomes. This is a great paradox of NA recovery: In joining together in a commitment to the greater good of Narcotics Anonymous, our own welfare is enhanced beyond measure. In surrendering self-will, humbly placing whatever individual power we may have at the service of the whole, we find an amazing power not only greater than our own but greater than the sum of all its parts. In serving the needs of others selflessly-anonymously-we find our own needs served, in turn, far better than we ever could have imagined. In joining anonymously in a fellowship with other recovering addicts, placing the welfare of the group ahead of our own, our own spiritual growth is enhanced beyond measure, not diminished. This is what Tradition Twelve means when it says that anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions. So long as we place spiritual principles first, our individual personalities can grow and flourish like never before, ensuring that our fellowship also continues to flourish, strong and free.

Our common welfare depends upon our unity. The only hope we have of maintaining that unity amidst the tremendous diversity we find in Narcotics Anonymous is by the application of certain common principles: those found in the Twelve Traditions. So long as we place the practice of those principles before the exercise of our individual personalities, all will be well.

Narcotics Anonymous Way of Life
Why It Works: 12 Traditions
TRADITION TWELVE
Moreland, Georgia Edit October 2001

Here in Narcotics Anonymous we have one promise - "freedom from active addiction." Members who were a part of the writing of the NA Basic Text can affirm that some other promises were considered, and eventually

discarded because we felt we did not need to make any other promises. The point was made that freedom from active addiction takes many forms and but all these forms are dependent on one thing: freedom from active addiction. In the process of recovery, what these words mean grow to mean freedom from all the avenues that addiction can take, even if we are totally abstinent from all chemical drugs. We come to acknowledge our powerlessness in other areas of our life: sex, money, prestige, fame, obsessions, gambling, anything we do to excess that creates problems for us by distracting us from reality.

How does it work? "Those who keep coming to our meetings regularly stay clean." Directly or indirectly implies anything else would be promoting NA. "If you want what we have to offer, and are willing to make the effort to get it, then you are ready to take certain steps." If our meetings are not surrendering to the Steps and Traditions, there is no atmosphere of recovery. This is not attractive. By allowing newcomers to see our recovery, we become attractive.

We do many things to promote unity within Narcotics Anonymous. Occasionally, by promoting unity we begin to promote our Fellowship. We need to be personally responsible for the way we allow society to see us if we choose to let society know us as NA members.

Customs and routines give us positive ways to handle things that come up from time to time. Our use of the word 'tradition' goes slightly beyond the dictionary definition. We apply it to mean that the interconnected group of principles reinforcing and combining to give us a whole much greater the sum of individual parts. Our Traditions are really a spiritual network that helps us get along with each other while fulfilling our mission to stay clean and help others.

Spiritual guides for addicts seeking recovery must be well worded and have sustained a certain amount of pressure. We cannot afford to play word games or sound good 'just for effect'. If our principles do not work for us, we are in serious trouble. Personalities are neither good nor bad in and of themselves. They become one or the other through usage. If our actions and reactions produce useful, interesting and positive effects, we are sure to be honest, open and willing to a degree.

Stepping out of the labels is the spirit of anonymity. What gets done or goes undone becomes important instead of accessing blame and passing out guilt. While bringing a problem to someone's attention is still an option, the burning desire to make someone feel badly subsides. Cutting this negative habit in half is part of the change, we experience through anonymity. If our differences take precedent over our similarity, we may find ourselves stuck in a cycle of useless conflict. This is bad in as much as it wastes time and energy and fails to satisfy our desire for personal improvement. And as long as we think the problem is with the other person(s), we're not apt to do the things we can do to help.

[5.10.02]

The Twelve Traditions of NA

First Tradition Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA unity.

Our First Tradition concerns unity and our common welfare. One of the most important things about our new way of life is being a part of a group of addicts seeking recovery. Our survival is directly related to the survival of the group and the Fellowship. To maintain unity within NA, it is imperative that the group remain stable, or the entire Fellowship perishes and the individual dies.

Second Tradition For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

Our direction in service comes from a God of our understanding, whether we serve as individuals, as a group, or as a service board or committee. Whenever we come together, we seek the presence and guidance of this loving Higher Power. This direction then guides us through all our actions. [...] When we choose a member to serve us in some capacity, we exercise mutual trust.

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

The Third Tradition encourages freedom from judgment. It leads us on the path of service toward an attitude of helpfulness, acceptance, and unconditional love. [...] Addiction is a deadly disease. We know that addicts who don't find recovery can expect nothing better than jails, institutions, and death. Refusing admission to any addict, even one who comes merely out of curiosity may be a death sentence for that addict.

Fourth Tradition Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole.

Each group does have complete freedom, except when their actions affect other groups or NA as a whole. If we check to make sure that our actions are clearly within the bounds of our traditions; if we do not dictate to other groups, or force anything upon them; and if we consider the consequences of our action ahead of time, then all will be well.

Fifth Tradition Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

What is our message? The message is that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. Our message is hope and the promise of freedom. When all is said and done, our primary purpose can only be to carry the message to the addict who still suffers because that is all we have to give.

Sixth Tradition An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

Within the limits established by Tradition Six, we have tremendous freedom to carry the message of recovery and help other addicts. We have clear boundaries set by our identity as Narcotics Anonymous. When we take care to observe those boundaries, our outside relationships enhance our ability to carry the message to the addict who still suffers rather than diverting us from our primary purpose.

Seventh Tradition Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

By encouraging our group to pay its own way, the Seventh Tradition gives our group the freedom to share its recovery as it sees fit, not obligated to outside contributors. Further, it gives our group the freedom that comes from inner strength, the strength that develops through applying spiritual principles.

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

In this tradition we say that we have no professionals. By this, we mean we have no staff psychiatrists, doctors, lawyers, or counselors. Our program works by one addict helping another. If we employ professionals in NA groups, we would destroy our unity. We are simply addicts of equal status freely helping one another.

Ninth Tradition NA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

NA groups join together, combining their resources to create service boards and committees that will help them better fulfill their primary purpose. Those boards and committees are not called to govern NA; they are called, rather, to faithfully execute the trust given them by the groups they serve.

Tenth Tradition Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the NA name ought Never be drawn into public controversy.

There are a great number of addiction-related issues that others might expect a worldwide society of recovering drug addicts to take positions on. [...] Our answer, according to Tradition Ten, is that our groups and our fellowship take no position, pro or con, on any issues except the NA program itself. [...] For our own survival, we have no opinion on outside issues.

Eleventh Tradition Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need Always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.

The existence of a public relations "policy" implies the importance of a public relations "program" in carrying out our fellowship's primary purpose. [...] As NA groups, service boards, and committees, we deliberately and energetically cultivate good public relations, not as an incidental result of our normal activity but as a way to better carry our message to addicts. [...] Public anonymity helps keep the focus of our public relations on the NA message, not the PI workers involved.

Twelfth Tradition Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Anonymity is one of the basic elements of our recovery and it pervades our Traditions and our Fellowship. It protects us from our own defects of character and renders personalities and their differences powerless. Anonymity in action makes it impossible for personalities to come before principles.

The 12 Traditions contain the brief 'cheat sheets' from the Colorado Region of Narcotic Anonymous to give the service committee a better understanding.

Twelve Concepts for NA Service

First Concept To fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose, the NA groups have joined together to Create a structure which develops, coordinates, and maintains services on behalf of NA as a whole.

The primary responsibility of an NA group is to conduct its recovery meetings, carrying the message directly to the addict who still suffers. Groups join their strength in the service structure, ensuring that other services—H&I, PI, literature development, for example—are fulfilled effectively and without distracting the groups from their own primary purpose.

Second Concept The final responsibility and authority for NA services rests with the NA groups.

The groups have final responsibility for and authority over the service structure they have created. By fulfilling their responsibility to provide their service structure with the conscience and ideas, people, and money it needs, the groups also exercise their authority. Conversely, the service structure must always look to the groups for support and direction.

Third Concept The NA groups delegate to the service structure the authority necessary to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to it.

In day-to-day matters, the groups have given our service boards and committees the practical authority necessary to do the jobs assigned them. This is not a blank check issued to the service structure; the groups still bear final authority. To make Concept Three work, we must carefully select trusted servants.

Fourth Concept Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.

Leadership is very important to the welfare of our fellowship. The essay on this concept describes an array of leadership qualities to be considered when selecting trusted servants.

Fifth Concept For each responsibility assigned to the service structure, a single point of decision and Accountability should be clearly defined.

In defining a single point of decision for each service assignment, we eliminate confusion about who has authority to do what. We also clarify accountability for our services: whoever is given the authority for a particular task will be held accountable for the fulfillment of that task.

Sixth Concept Group conscience is the spiritual means by which we invite a loving God to influence our decisions.

Group conscience is the means by which we bring the spiritual awakening of the Twelve Steps to bear in making service-related decisions. It is fundamental to our fellowship's decision-making process. It is not, however, merely a euphemism for "voting" and is not itself the NA decision making process.

Seventh Concept All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body's decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in its decision making processes.

All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body's decisions; therefore, all of them should be allowed to fully participate in its decision-making processes. NA service is a team effort. The full participation of each member of the team is of great value as we seek to express the collective conscience of the whole.

Eighth Concept Our service structure depends on the integrity and effectiveness of our communications.

Regular communication is essential to the fulfillment of all these concepts, and to the integrity and effectiveness of our services themselves.

Ninth Concept All elements of our service structure have the responsibility to carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.

To check judgment, to guard against hasty or misinformed decisions, and to invite the sharing of new ideas, our services must consider all viewpoints when making plans. This is essential to the development of a fair, wise, balanced group conscience.

Tenth Concept Any member of a service body can petition that body for the redress of a personal grievance, without fear of reprisal.

The Tenth Concept encourages us to treat each other with respect in the service environment, and provides us with a means of making amends when we wrong others. The essay describes ways in which an individual who feels he or she has been wronged can go about seeking redress of his or her grievance.

Eleventh Concept NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly.

The Eleventh Concept establishes the sole absolute priority for the use of NA funds: to carry the message. The importance of that priority calls for total fiscal accountability. Direct contributions to each level of service help us focus on our primary purpose, and enhance accountability.

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

Within the context of the Twelve Concepts, as a body, this concept serves much the same function as Tradition Twelve in the context of the traditions. It brings our consideration of concepts for NA service back to the spiritual root of selfless service. "A structure based on that foundation could only be one of service, never of government."

The 12 Concepts contain the brief 'cheat sheets' from the Colorado Region of Narcotic Anonymous to give the service committee a better understanding.