

Narcotics Anonymous®

# **It Works:** How and Why

Part Two

## **The Traditions**

Review Form Material

Traditions One — Six

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NOT FOR USE IN N.A. MEETINGS  
FOR REVIEW AND INPUT  
INPUT DUE OCTOBER 1, 1991

## **The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous®**

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. Narcotics Anonymous 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.

Volume Two

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It Works: How and Why  
The Traditions

*Review Form, 1991*



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# WORLD SERVICE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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TO: The Fellowship  
FROM: World Service Board of Trustees  
DATE: April 11, 1991  
RE: Review form of *It Works, How and Why: The Traditions*  
Traditions One through Six

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As the final preparation of the attached drafts progressed, we decided that including the following information might enhance members' understanding of the process, development, and current state of the project. We have included not only background information regarding decisions, but also some discussion about issues that we have not yet resolved. Information about the review period, the type of input requested, and our plans for the completion of the traditions portion of *It Works: How and Why* is also included.

The attached drafts were generated by the BOT Traditions Ad Hoc Committee utilizing the 1988 brown and beige input form of *It Works* and the resulting input from the fellowship as the foundation for their work. Committee drafts were reviewed by members of the World Service Conference Literature Committee and the Board of Trustees. After factoring in their input, final drafts were then developed for the consideration of the full World Service Board of Trustees.

In discussions held by both the ad hoc committee and the BOT, some questions arose about various aspects of the work. As a result of some of those discussions, the following was adopted as the statement of purpose for this book: "*The Traditions portion of It Works: How and Why, shall serve as a resource for N.A. groups and the individual member. The book seeks to: explore the spiritual principles within the traditions; engage members with the spirit--not the law--of the traditions; and, provide a basis for thought and discussion about the traditions.*" This book is not meant to fulfill every need for every group or every member, rather it is to be a book that will generate discussion and allow for local interpretation of the practical application of the principles contained in the traditions.

In order to engage the reader, this book is written in more of an experiential rather than in a didactic or "how to" manner. This decision is a result of lengthy discussions about whether the work should be idealistic in its presentation or if it should be more reflective of current practices within the fellowship. We strived to write this material in a non-judgmental tone, keeping the discussion on a level that is spiritual in nature. The style prefers the simple rather than the complex in



presenting the concepts contained in the material, and is written to engage rather than impress the reader. The audience this book is aimed toward is the membership of Narcotics Anonymous and the N.A. groups, rather than non-members.

While there has been a consensus reached that it should not be a "how to," there are continuing discussions about how voice is used in the drafts. Some members have indicated a desire to see the work provide more practical guidance regarding the application of the principles in the traditions. Some have suggested including examples within the material. While we have generally agreed that examples may be limiting in nature, we have reached no final conclusion as of yet. Our ongoing discussions have included some debates about whether it would be more valuable to use actual, existing situations or theoretical examples to illustrate practical applications of the traditions.

Additional discussions centered around providing a historical perspective of the traditions. While no final decision has been made about including an historical perspective in each chapter, a discussion about the history of the traditions will be included in either the Introduction to the book or the Preamble to the traditions. Another possibility that has been raised is the inclusion of a section, containing questions to facilitate the study of the traditions, either at the end of each chapter or at the end of the book. If you have any input on these issues, we would certainly welcome your comments.

The attached drafts are out for fellowship review and input until October 1, 1991. As we have stated within our various reports, we are looking for conceptual, rather than line-by-line input on these drafts and, as a result, have not included line numbers. You will find six questionnaires in this package, covering each of the chapters. Please complete them as fully as possible and return them to us in care of the WSO. We are hoping that you will tell us what we may have missed, or what may be incorrectly or insufficiently articulated. If you feel that these drafts are on target, please let us know that too.

Our plan for completing our work on this book, depending upon the availability of resources, is as follows:

1. Complete the second half of the book, and release it for fellowship review and input by December 1, 1991.
2. Complete the approval version of the traditions portion of *It Works: How and Why* by October 15, 1992 for action at the 1993 World Service Conference.

It is important to realize that, depending upon the nature of the input we receive and the conclusions we reach to the ongoing discussions mentioned above, the approval version of this work may be somewhat different than the attached drafts.

We thank you for your ongoing interest and support of our work. If you have any questions about this material, please contact us through the WSO. It continues to be a privilege to work on this project for the fellowship. Thank you for allowing us to be of service to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

# WORLD SERVICE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

## TRADITIONS ONE - SIX REVIEW FORM

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE	PAGE
TRADITION ONE (Review Material) .....	1
TRADITION ONE (Input Form) .....	9
TRADITION TWO (Review Material) .....	11
TRADITION TWO (Input Form).....	19
TRADITION THREE (Review Material).....	21
TRADITION THREE (Input Form) .....	27
TRADITION FOUR (Review Material).....	29
TRADITION FOUR (Input Form) .....	37
TRADITION FIVE (Review Material) .....	39
TRADITION FIVE (Input Form) .....	45
TRADITION SIX (Review Material) .....	47
TRADITION SIX (Input Form) .....	55

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INPUT DUE OCTOBER 1, 1991





**TRADITION ONE**

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

Narcotics Anonymous is more than just the first meeting we attend, or the other meetings in our community. We are part of a much greater whole. Addicts apply the principles of Narcotics Anonymous in their personal recovery across town and around the world. Just as we learned in early recovery that we need each other to stay clean, we come to believe that all of us, every N.A. meeting and group, are interdependent. We share an equal membership in N.A., and we all have an interest in its common welfare. Unity is the spirit that joins thousands of members around the world in a spiritual fellowship that has the power to change lives.

One way to look at placing our common welfare first is to say that each of us is equally responsible for N.A.'s well-being. In our recovery, we have found that living clean is impossible without the support of other members. Our individual recovery depends on meetings that take place regularly, other recovering addicts who participate, and sponsors who share with us how to stay clean. As each individual member relies on the support of the group for survival, so the group's survival depends on its members.

The relationship described in the First Tradition is reciprocal. Groups work together in a spirit of cooperation to insure the survival of Narcotics Anonymous. In turn, those groups receive strength and support from every other group, and from all our services. The strength of our mutual commitment to N.A. creates the unity that binds us together in spite of all that might divide us. The common welfare of N.A. is the continued growth and well-being of the fellowship, in every corner of the world.

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Unity flows from that which we share in common. Unity has to do with a sense of belonging, as well as our shared commitment to personal recovery. 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 to do what we can to support each other and our group. Sometimes, we comfort each other merely by being present. 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 of our mutual reliance on spiritual principles and on a Higher Power.

N.A. 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 N.A. accessible to more addicts. Many groups are formed when members of a more established group decide to start another meeting. Sharing the responsibility, then, enhances our common welfare and creates unity among N.A. members who work together. Groups flourish with the loving support of addicts helping addicts. Within existing groups, too, we foster the unity that is our lifeblood by giving attention to each member. Every addict needs the support of the group. We strengthen our unity by participating in each other's recovery.

The unity described in our First Tradition is not the same thing as uniformity. Our membership is richly varied, made up of many addicts from widely differing backgrounds. These members bring with them a variety of ideas and talents. That

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diversity enriches the fellowship, and gives rise to new and creative ways to reach addicts who need our help. Our purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers--allows room for everyone to serve. When we unite in support of this purpose, we are able to overlook our differences. Working together for our mutual well-being is a significant source of unity in Narcotics Anonymous.

### **Unity in action**

While we often think of unity as a feeling or a condition, unity doesn't just "happen." Unity requires personal commitment and responsible action. A commitment to a home group is one example of a personal commitment that furthers N.A. unity. The unity enhanced by our commitment strengthens our groups, allowing us to carry a message of hope. Meetings flourish in this atmosphere of hope. The fellowship grows as a result of our united efforts.

Communication goes a long way toward building and enhancing unity. 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. Communication involves an effort on our part to listen carefully to the needs and problems of our own group, and to the needs and problems of other groups wherever those groups may be. Encouraging each member to speak openly, from the heart, enhances communication. Thorough discussion and active listening help 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, in our discussions, it's also

important to remember the "unseen members"--the members yet to come. When we work to insure the vitality of N.A., we're not working just for ourselves, but for those who will come after us.

Unity is created not only by working together, but also by playing together. The friendships we develop outside meetings strengthen N.A. unity, as well. 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, campouts, and sports days 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 N.A. unity.

### **Applying spiritual principles**

In the Twelve Steps of N.A., 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 service in N.A. In supporting our unity, we first apply principles to guide our own behavior. As groups, we use the same principles for guidance. That guidance engenders 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 that strengthen unity as well.

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*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 their 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 N.A., 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 level of commitment to recovery in N.A. 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 N.A. as a way of life. Our commitment is reflected in service. Regular meeting attendance is one way to express that commitment. Greeting newcomers as they arrive, or giving our telephone number to someone who needs help, reflects our decision. Sponsorship, sharing in meetings, setting up chairs before a meeting, all these are ways in which we express our commitment. Each member finds 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, to lovingly serve the needs of others. In order 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 when we speak, and in the way we treat one another. We try to share our experience, strength, and hope in a way that 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 that we show for each other attracts newcomers and strengthens us all, fueling our sense of unity and common welfare.

*Anonymity*, the spiritual foundation of our traditions, supports N.A. 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, regardless of physical or mental circumstance, geographic location, or any of the other things that might separate us. In order to preserve our common welfare, 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.

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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. Each succeeding tradition builds upon the strength of our unity as a fellowship. 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 unity strengthens our understanding of all the other traditions. Many questions can be answered simply by asking ourselves, "How will the action we contemplate affect the unity of the fellowship? Will this serve to divide us, or to bring us closer together?"

Our ultimate point of unity is our trust in a loving Higher Power. In this trust, we find the strength to work together toward our shared goal: recovery from addiction. In the unity that grows in trust, we can move ahead to the Second Tradition, ready to work together for our common good.





**IT WORKS: HOW AND WHY - THE TRADITIONS  
INPUT FORM****TRADITION ONE**

1. Does the draft reflect the concepts contained in this tradition accurately?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

2. Are there any concepts missing? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, what?

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3. General Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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**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.*

Tradition Two builds on the practical foundation of Tradition One. We begin with unity, founded on the strength of our commitment to recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. Our commitment is reflected in service: supporting a meeting, sharing with other members, sponsorship, any of the ways in which we reach out to other addicts. As groups, too, our purpose is to serve, to carry the message. Everything we do in service to N.A. is related to that purpose. Without direction, however, our services might lack consistency. To guide us in serving others, then, the group seeks direction from a Higher Power, our ultimate point of unity.

Personal service arises from the application of principles. Ideally, personal service is founded in a relationship with the same Higher Power that guides our recovery. This Higher Power also guides our groups. Our direction in service comes from a God of our understanding, whether we serve as individuals or as a group. When we come together as groups, we seek the presence and guidance of this loving God. 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 decide? 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.

**The group conscience process**

If we, as a group, are to find guidance from an ultimate authority, we need to find a means of hearing that guidance. 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 willingness into the group setting.

Something happens when we, as individuals, practice the steps and learn to apply principles in our lives. We develop an awareness of our behavior, and its effects on ourselves and others. In other words, we develop a conscience. This conscience is a reflection of our relationship with a Higher Power. It reflects the guidance we receive from the God of our understanding, and our commitment to follow that guidance. In our groups, a similar process occurs: a collective conscience develops. That conscience reflects the relationship of the group's members to a loving Higher Power. When consulted regularly, that collective conscience guides the group in fulfilling its purpose, while preserving its unity and common welfare.

Group conscience can be thought of in much the same way as personal conscience. Group conscience reflects a collective awareness of, understanding of, and surrender to spiritual principles. The conscience of a group takes shape and is revealed when members take the time to talk with each other about their personal needs, the needs of the group, and the needs of N.A. as a whole. Each member draws upon his or her relationship with a Higher Power when speaking to the group. As members listen carefully to each other, and consult their personal understanding of a loving God, something happens. Solutions to problems become apparent, solutions that take into consideration the needs of everyone concerned. In developing a group

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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. In the best of circumstances, however, the group continues discussion until it reaches unanimity. The resulting solution may be so obvious that no vote is needed.

### **The evolving group conscience**

Group conscience is a process, and it may be expressed differently at various times. Because of the changing nature of group conscience, it's not reasonable to expect that the solution to one group's needs will be sufficient for every group. What works today for one group may not be appropriate for another--or even for the same group at a different time. The principles involved in group conscience are always the same, but our awareness or understanding may change. It's important for us to continue cultivating our group's conscience. We consult that conscience and seek the guidance of a loving Higher Power whenever a question arises.

A surrender to group conscience means we allow our groups to be shaped by a loving God. We are tempted sometimes to take control of the group's daily affairs, believing that our great concern for its welfare could never lead us astray. However, as we become more trusting, we realize that the group is directed by a loving Higher Power. Our reliance on that Higher Power is demonstrated by our willingness to carry out the direction expressed in our group conscience, in a belief that all will be well.

Any group may become bogged down in disagreement, or sidetracked by seemingly insurmountable problems. In these situations, it's important to look beyond the personalities involved in a controversy. We keep our focus on the

solutions. Agreement is reached when we step out of the way and allow a loving God to direct us.

Only when we listen for the direction of a Higher Power are we able to hear it. The conscience of a group is most clearly expressed when every member is considered an equal. God 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.

Group conscience is not fixed and inflexible. We know that personal conscience changes as an individual's relationship with a Higher Power grows and strengthens. In the same way, the conscience of a group evolves as its members mature in recovery, and as new members arrive. Group conscience is subject to change with the addition of new members, improved understanding, additional information, and personal growth.

In our personal recovery, as we stay clean and grow spiritually, our thoughts and actions change. We don't get better overnight, and sometimes our growth is sporadic and uneven. This same pattern of growth and maturation occurs in groups as well. As groups grow and evolve, their resources change, and so do their needs. Groups may change trusted servants, or meeting format, or even location, depending upon their resources and their needs. These changes in a group may not always feel like progress. Just as our personal recovery doesn't always progress in an orderly fashion, our group doesn't always evolve as we would expect. Often, as groups go through this growing process, the group's conscience evolves as well. Changes in the group conscience are not a cause for alarm, merely part of the growing process.

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**Leaders as servants**

When a group or committee has sought direction from a loving Higher Power, it may ask some of its members to help carry out that direction. When we ask members to serve, we don't set them apart as somehow better than the rest of us. Leadership in N.A. is a service, not a class of membership. For this reason, we call our leaders *trusted servants*.

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 relationship as a group with a loving Higher Power. And we extend that trust to the members we have elected 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 serve with dedication and fidelity, and the group is responsible to support those members.

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 our actions. We can look to our conscience, and to the conscience of our group, for guidance in all our group's affairs.

The spiritual relationship reflected in our personal conscience is influenced by our connection to the conscience of the group. This connection with the group conscience is completed when we, as servants, carry a continuous flow of information that is honest and open. We help form the conscience of our group, 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 group's conscience.

Our trusted servants lead us best when they lead by personal 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 be informed and knowledgeable about all aspects of service in N.A., and to continue to seek personal recovery. All of these attributes are essential to their ability to serve us well.

### **Applying spiritual principles**

We noted earlier in this chapter that personal service arises from the practice of principles. By applying these principles, we learn to listen for direction from our Higher Power. 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 unity of N.A. when we place the needs of the group and 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 ourselves. Faith demands courage, since we often practice an active demonstration of



faith in spite of our anxiety. Our faith is strengthened through the experience of seeing a loving God work in our groups.

*Humility* in practice is the honest assessment of our strength and weakness. That kind of assessment is a necessary ingredient in our willingness to surrender. Humility prepares us to set aside our personal wishes so that we can effectively serve the group and the 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*. 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 other groups, 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 principles. 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 the knowledge of God's will. Regardless of our personal feelings for others, in practicing anonymity, we offer them our love, attention, and respect. 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 relationships with others. A loving Higher Power is the guide, the source of direction for N.A. 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 or as groups.

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 N.A. 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.

Service is for those we serve. Our best talent in service is 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 insure that newcomer's 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. With that guidance, and with the willingness to serve, we look ahead to Tradition Three.

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**IT WORKS: HOW AND WHY - THE TRADITIONS  
INPUT FORM**

**TRADITION TWO**

1. Does the draft reflect the concepts contained in this tradition accurately?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

2. Are there any concepts missing? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, what?

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3. General Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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THESE ARE THE RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS OF THE DATA FROM THE SURVEY OF THE TRADITION TWO.

CONCLUSIONS

THE RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS OF THE DATA FROM THE SURVEY OF THE TRADITION TWO ARE AS FOLLOWS:

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**TRADITION THREE**

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

Narcotics Anonymous offers recovery to many different addicts, around the world. We focus on the disease of addiction, rather than on any particular drug. Our message is broad enough to attract addicts from any social class or nationality. When new members come to meetings, our interest is in their desire for freedom from active addiction. Our most personal interest ought to be in how we can help them.

The Third Tradition helps N.A. offer recovery to so many addicts by freeing us from the need to make judgments about prospective members. It eliminates the need for membership committees or applications. We are not asked to make decisions about fitness for membership. Since the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using, then we as members are free from any 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 N.A. grow by encouraging us to welcome others.

**Freedom to choose**

Membership is a personal decision reached by each individual. We can do a lot to allow addicts the freedom to make that decision, and to reaffirm their commitment to recovery. We can help them feel comfortable in meetings by greeting them at the

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door, sharing in meetings, speaking to other addicts before or after meetings, 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 may choose a format that reflects an invitational tone. 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 who will stay to recover and who 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 men over women, or any other external factor. Because we are not capable of measuring another's desire to stay clean, we also are not equipped to decide who should join. We are free to offer welcome, instead of judgment.

We look for ways to help instead of 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 should not be discounted. While maintaining an emphasis on the importance of total abstinence, still-using addicts should be welcomed into our meetings with special encouragement to keep coming back. Many addicts do not have access to regular meetings, for reasons 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.

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### The desire to stop using

Addicts attend their first meeting for many reasons. Our motives for coming to N.A. aren't particularly important. The desire to stop using may not be clearly realized; it may be no more than a subconscious 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 N.A. 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 sufficient indication of desire. It may take a while for an addict to find the desire that will keep him or her 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 N.A., 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 N.A. Each addict should be allowed to decide if N.A. is the answer for him or herself. We cannot make the decision for others.



Although the Third Tradition is written simply, when it talks about a "desire to stop using," we know it means using *drugs*. We understand that N.A. is a program of recovery for drug addicts. Although *addiction* takes on a broader meaning for us as we continue in recovery, it's important to remember that we first came to N.A. because of our drug problems. If new members are to feel that they belong in N.A., they need to hear something that they can identify with. If N.A. opened its doors to people who have other problems, drug addicts would not find the sense of identification they need to keep them coming back. Those addicts might not survive.

### **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 commitment, tolerance, compassion, anonymity, and humility.

*Commitment* in the context of the Third Tradition is reflected in our decision to become members. There is a difference between being an addict and being a member of Narcotics Anonymous. 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. But membership is a choice. The decision to join involves commitment. We decide to become members because we want what N.A. offers, and we feel that we belong. In turn, that sense of belonging is strengthened by our decision to be a part of Narcotics Anonymous. Showing up is not enough; sharing in meetings is not enough. We have to make the decision to join.

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INPUT DUE OCTOBER 1, 1991**

*Tolerance* reminds us that judgment is not our task. The disease of addiction does not exclude anyone. N.A. 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, or think like us, or share like us. We teach by example and through sponsorship. 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 another's 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 others 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. A knowledge of our personal 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. N.A. has no classes of membership, no second-class members. The common denominator in N.A. is the disease of addiction. We are all equally subject to its devastation. We share an equal right to recovery.

The practice of anonymity insures 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 insure 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 N.A. 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.

Because there are no requirements for membership other than the desire to stop using, any addict is free to find recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. And N.A. groups are encouraged to welcome any addict who comes to a meeting. The freedom offered by the Third Tradition helps N.A. grow. That freedom is balanced with responsibility. In the Fourth Tradition we begin to examine the responsibility that supports our freedom.

**IT WORKS: HOW AND WHY - THE TRADITIONS  
INPUT FORM****TRADITION THREE**

1. Does the draft reflect the concepts contained in this tradition accurately?

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2. Are there any concepts missing? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, what?

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REVIEW DRAFT, TRADITION THREE

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**TRADITION FOUR**

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

N.A. groups have a great deal of freedom. We've already seen in Tradition Three that groups are free from the demands of screening their members, or setting requirements for membership. Our N.A. groups are free to offer recovery to any addict. The Fourth Tradition enhances that freedom, allowing the rich diversity of our varied experience to help us serve.

Freedom can be exhilarating. Many of us have little experience with freedom of any sort. Our lives in active addiction often seemed more like slavery. When we first experience the freedom of recovery, we may find it overwhelming. Any freedom, though, is balanced with responsibility. We learn in the steps to be responsible for our individual actions. As we accept that responsibility, we can then see how the Fourth Tradition encourages us to act responsibly as groups, and as a fellowship.

**Autonomy as freedom**

N.A. groups are a vehicle for carrying 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 the community 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. As we've seen in Tradition One, N.A. 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 differing 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 N.A. 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 community and our 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.

There is still another benefit to group autonomy. Strong, independent groups are less likely to be affected by the problems of other groups. If one group closes its doors, the other groups in the community will not be adversely affected unless they are somehow closely connected. The N.A. group, as our basic unit for helping each other find and maintain recovery, protects its survival with that independence.

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One of the most common ways in which groups express their autonomy is in the choice of meeting format. Most N.A. communities will offer a number of different types of meetings, from speaker, to step study, to topic discussion, or any other format or combination of formats that meets the needs of the local members. Some meetings will be open to the public, while other meetings will be closed. Larger communities may offer several different types of meetings each night. Some addicts will hear the message of recovery in one type of meeting, while others may prefer a different format. When an N.A. community offers a variety of meetings, it 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, allowing them the freedom to carry the message in a manner that 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 any N.A. meeting. As long as a meeting observes the Twelve Traditions and espouses the Twelve Steps of N.A., it may be considered a meeting of Narcotics Anonymous. No matter how a group structures its meetings, however, all N.A. groups are encouraged to keep the focus of their meetings on recovery from the disease of addiction.

### **Responsibility**

Sometimes it's hard to know what affects N.A. as a whole. The Fourth Tradition offers a way to balance the freedom of autonomy with our responsibility to preserve N.A. unity. We are challenged in Tradition Four to apply autonomy in ways that will enhance the growth and vitality of N.A. Autonomy encourages groups to

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become strong and lively, but also reminds groups 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 who is affected by our group, we have to look at other groups, the addict yet to come, the newcomer, and the community in which we have meetings. We have an effect on other groups or N.A. as a whole if we're not recognizable as an N.A. meeting. It helps to remember what we needed to hear when we were new: hope for recovery from drug addiction. When addicts first come to N.A., they 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 consider the message we send to newcomers in our meetings. And thoughtful consideration of our primary purpose may help insure that meetings will be available for those addicts yet to come.

It's also important to consider how we're viewed by the community. In many places, when N.A. meetings first began, it was illegal for addicts to meet under any circumstances. Even where meetings are legal, the community often views groups of addicts with alarm. Until N.A. has established a reputation in the community, it may be difficult for addicts to find meeting places. If our behavior as N.A. 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

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a group chooses may be a reflection on N.A. 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 the members gauge their success at carrying the message and reaching addicts in their community. At the same time, groups can examine their part in contributing to the unity of N.A. 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 that supports that freedom. Together with open-mindedness, unity, and anonymity, these principles, applied in our group affairs, help protect N.A. as a whole.

While autonomy gives us certain freedoms, we are *responsible* for our actions. Groups are autonomous only within the context of a greater consciousness, contact with a Higher Power and the rest of Narcotics Anonymous. As groups, we exercise our responsibility to a loving God and to the fellowship by taking inventory of our behavior and how we hold meetings. We are responsible for the continued well-being of N.A. Our freedom ends when we run the risk of misrepresenting N.A.

*Open-mindedness* is essential if we are to use autonomy to help N.A. 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 N.A. community. We encourage each member of the group to contribute thoughts and ideas. Our attitude of open-mindedness helps us remember that each group is part of a greater whole. Acknowledging that we are part of something bigger than ourselves 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. Although we are autonomous, we may offer loving support to other groups, by attending their meetings or offering other help. N.A. meetings thrive when groups look beyond their immediate needs to offer help to each other. When we take care to preserve our unity, autonomy can make us strong.

*Love* is the principle that guides us to see N.A. as a greater whole. This impacts our responsibility as autonomous groups. Our group's autonomous decisions, based on our love for N.A., 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 in our community.

*Anonymity* applied to the Fourth Tradition reminds us that each group has an equal place in the fellowship of N.A. Larger groups are not more important than smaller groups; older groups are not "better" than newer groups. While each group has the freedom to apply principles in the way that seems best, those same principles make each group an equal partner in recovery. Each group also bears an equal responsibility in the work and in the reputation of N.A.

Autonomy in N.A. gives groups the freedom to act on their own to establish an atmosphere of recovery, to serve their members, and to fulfill our primary purpose. The responsibility that balances our autonomy reflects the principles expressed in the first three traditions. Preserving the unity of the N.A. Fellowship comes first. Next, we seek direction from a loving God. And we hold meetings that welcome any addict who attends.

Healthy, vital groups are essential to the growth of Narcotics Anonymous. Groups provide an atmosphere for one of the most basic services we offer, that of one addict reaching out to another to carry the message. In the Fifth Tradition we learn more about that basic service, the primary purpose of our groups.

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INPUT FORM****TRADITION FOUR**

1. Does the draft reflect the concepts contained in this tradition accurately?

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THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20315-5000

MEMORANDUM

TO : THE SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

FROM : THE CHIEF OF STAFF

SUBJECT: [Illegible]

[Illegible body text consisting of multiple lines of a memorandum format]

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20315-5000

**TRADITION FIVE**

*Each group has but one primary purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.*

Our primary purpose is at the heart of our service. With guidance from a loving Higher Power and a clear focus on this purpose, N.A. 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 become blurred and our energies diminished. The Fifth Tradition asks us to practice integrity by keeping our purpose foremost.

Tradition Five helps our groups fulfill the fundamental reason for their existence: to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. N.A. groups, as we learned in the Fourth Tradition, are free to find new and unique ways of presenting meetings. This freedom is important; it protects and encourages diversity, letting us reach addicts by many means. In this autonomy, each group develops a character of its own. The character of the group is not its purpose, however. The message we carry is not our group personality, but the message of Narcotics Anonymous--the principles of recovery.

What is the message that we are asked to carry? Groups carry the message of N.A.--that we never have to use again. This message may be voiced in many ways. Sometimes we share simply that if we don'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

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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.

### **Primary purpose**

The groups' focus on carrying the message is so important to the survival of N.A. 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 purpose in 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.

There are many distracting influences that can divert us from our primary purpose. For instance, our groups may be tempted to use meeting time to discuss their business and finances, or to talk about some controversy. And as individual members, we can get caught up in socializing with our friends, ignoring another addict who may be in pain and need our encouragement. But each time our focus is diverted from our primary purpose, the addict seeking recovery loses out.

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Other influences can distort our group's focus on its primary purpose. From the money members contribute, our groups pay rent on their meeting halls, buy literature and supplies, conduct activities, and support N.A. services. All of these can 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 halls are tools we can use to help us carry the message. However, they should serve us, not rule us.

The groups can provide many services to carry the message. Our primary service is the N.A. meeting, where addicts share their recovery directly with one another. Additional services--such as phonedlines, public information work, and H&I panels--also help carry the message. In rural areas and newer N.A. communities, groups are sometimes the only source of 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 secondary services to their area committees. By allowing service committees to take care of these services whenever possible, 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 insure 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? Are there addicts our group isn't reaching? How can we make our meetings more accessible? What can we do to make new members feel more at home? Has the atmosphere of recovery diminished? Would a change in our meeting format strengthen that atmosphere?

Considering the needs of the larger N.A. community may lead to other changes. For instance, if there are no step meetings in a community, a group may consider having one or two meetings each month that focus on the steps. There are many ways to carry the message and to meet the needs of both the group and the N.A. community.

### **Carrying the message**

There is a Power that works through this program. We tap this Power when, as individuals, we practice the Twelfth Step, carrying the message to other addicts. When groups carry the message, the impact of the Twelfth Step is greatly multiplied. Even more impressive than sheer numbers of recovering addicts is the unity of purpose and the atmosphere of recovery found in meetings--a spiritual power. The evidence of that power in the group is hard to deny. It is a power we can draw on between meetings to stay clean.

Tradition Five focuses the group's priority on carrying the message. Members can do many things to further our primary purpose. For example, we show our care and our willingness to help by taking turns greeting people at the door, or by preparing lists of telephone numbers to distribute. Some meetings offer packets of literature to newcomers, often combined with the group's list of telephone numbers.

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 the newest members. Those 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 no less 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 principles, is demonstrated when groups carry the N.A. message of recovery. Many of our members have much to offer on a variety of subjects besides the Narcotics Anonymous message. But our fellowship has its own special message: freedom from active addiction through practice of N.A.'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 N.A. program. When groups conscientiously cultivate this kind of integrity, their meetings further our primary purpose.



The Fifth Tradition 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 N.A. 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 insure not only our own personal recovery, but the recovery of every N.A. 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.

Narcotics 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 insure 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.

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**IT WORKS: HOW AND WHY - THE TRADITIONS  
INPUT FORM****TRADITION FIVE**

1. Does the draft reflect the concepts contained in this tradition accurately?

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THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE  
FINDINGS OF THE INVESTIGATION

CONCLUSIONS

THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE  
FINDINGS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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FINDINGS OF THE INVESTIGATION



**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.*

While "each group has but one primary purpose," there are many ways to fulfill that purpose. Our groups often go to great lengths to carry the message. We carry out our primary purpose as individuals, groups, and through our service structure. In carrying the message, groups come in contact with other organizations in the community. Good community relations can help our groups better fulfill their primary purpose. But cooperation with other organizations can also lead to conflict, diverting our groups from carrying the message. Tradition Six tempers our zeal to carry the message, establishing boundaries for our relations with others in the community.

Our fellowship's primary purpose defines us. We are a society of addicts sharing with others the hope of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. When N.A.'s identity becomes too closely tied to the identity of another organization, the clarity of our primary purpose is muddled, losing some of its power.

The Sixth Tradition warns us of three things that could blur the distinction between Narcotics Anonymous and other enterprises in the community: endorsement, financing, and the lending of our name. An endorsement is a statement of support for another organization. Financing another organization further endorses its primary purpose. Lending our name to a related facility or outside enterprise--allowing an addiction treatment facility, for example, to call itself The N.A. Medical

Center--is the ultimate endorsement, permanently tying our primary purpose to theirs in the public eye.

By establishing boundaries, the Sixth Tradition helps our groups avoid some of the problems that commonly arise between community organizations. If we endorse an organization that later runs into trouble, our reputation would be damaged along with theirs. If we publicly support another organization, the community, the addict who still suffers, even our own members might confuse that organization's purpose with ours. If we fund a related facility or outside enterprise, money that could be used to fulfill our own primary purpose will be diverted. If we withdraw that funding later, problems could occur. If we finance or lend our name to one organization instead of another, we could be drawn into a conflict between the two. By helping our groups avoid such problems, Tradition Six allows us to devote all our energy to carrying a clear N.A. message to addicts seeking recovery.

### **Our relations with others**

We must exist in the world. It's not possible to be entirely separate, evading all contact with outside agencies. Not only is it impossible, it's not a good idea. Cooperation with others is healthy for Narcotics Anonymous. Contacts between our groups and the community help others understand N.A. better. They help increase the community's goodwill toward N.A. They lead doctors, teachers, sheriffs, friends, and relatives to recommend N.A. to addicts who want recovery. They help us carry the message to addicts who can't get to regular meetings. Letting others know who we are and what we offer increases the chance that addicts seeking recovery will hear our message.

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N.A. groups often cultivate good relations with nearby facilities. They make it known that their meetings are always open to addicts from these facilities, and make them welcome when they visit. There's a difference, though, between cooperation and endorsement. When a group's primary purpose becomes blurred by its relationship with some other facility or organization, it's time for the group to step back and examine that relationship.

For instance, when a group or an area holds a dance, should it offer a reduced entry price to patients from such facilities? Could such preferential treatment imply an endorsement of those facilities? We should ask these kinds of questions whenever our group's relationship with a related facility or outside enterprise becomes so close that our group appears to be linked with the other organization. By asking ourselves these questions, we help insure that our cooperation with an outside agency does not inadvertently become an endorsement of that agency.

There are many "related facilities and outside enterprises" devoted to understanding addiction and aiding recovery. Like N.A., each has its particular primary purpose, reflected in its literature and its message. That purpose may be similar to ours, but because the organization is separate from N.A., its primary purpose will be different from N.A.'s. We use N.A. literature and speakers in our meetings to help us fulfill N.A.'s primary purpose. An N.A. group that uses another organization's literature or speakers endorses that organization's primary purpose, not ours.

Although a few N.A. groups meet in their own buildings, most do not. Those who rent meeting space from other organizations need to take special care never to endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to the organizations from which they rent

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their meeting halls. For instance, is the group paying substantially more to meet in a particular facility than it would somewhere else? Does this make it appear that the group endorses the facility in which it meets? Is the group better able to carry the N.A. message by meeting at that facility, or is the group funding an outside enterprise with its "rent" payment? When we devote our energies and funds to carrying the N.A. message, we free ourselves from distractions or confusion with the primary purpose of other organizations.

It's important to remember that we as N.A. members and groups are responsible for observing our Twelve Traditions. The facilities in which we meet do not have this responsibility; neither do other organizations. If it appears that some outside organization or facility is compromising our traditions, we are responsible to discuss their actions with them. While we cannot demand that they change their behavior, a reasonable approach and open discussion will often lead to mutually satisfactory solutions.

A group's meetings provide a forum in which individual members can share their recovery with one another. The message we carry in our meetings can either enhance our efforts to fulfill our primary purpose, or distract us from it. Each of us can play a part in carrying out Tradition Six by asking ourselves, "What do I do to clarify N.A.'s ties to other organizations?" Many of us use a variety of resources in our personal programs of recovery and spiritual growth. Not all of them, however, relate directly to N.A.'s primary purpose. Do we imply an endorsement of a related facility or outside enterprise when we share in an N.A. meeting about the good things we've found elsewhere? Do we distract other members at the meeting from N.A.'s message of recovery, or give new members the wrong impression about the Narcotics

Anonymous program? No one can answer these questions for us. But by answering these questions for ourselves, we can each help free our group of problems that could divert us from our primary purpose.

### **Applying spiritual principles**

The application of principles is the basis of our freedom. When we adhere to the principles of recovery, we are free to carry the message and interact with others, knowing that we will not compromise our purpose. Some of the principles that help us observe Tradition Six include humility, integrity, faith, harmony, and anonymity.

*Humility* reminds us of N.A.'s role in the community. We have a program that has provided much help to many addicts seeking recovery. We do not, however, have any other purpose in our community than to carry the N.A. message. We don't pretend that Narcotics Anonymous is more than it really is. It may be tempting to think of other good things we might do in the world, or for each other, if we extended our focus, closely allying ourselves with a wide range of related facilities or outside enterprises. These grandiose dreams serve only to divert us from our primary purpose. Carrying our message to the still-suffering addict is sufficient for us.

Carrying a clear message of recovery in N.A. reflects *integrity*. Our message is outlined in our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, and further articulated in N.A. literature. Because our message is also our identity, we take care not to confuse it with the beliefs or literature of other organizations.

We demonstrate *faith* when we don't trade our endorsement, funds, or name for the cooperation of others. It's true that our friends in the community can help us carry our message to the addicts who needs us. But our faith lies in the effectiveness



of our message and the Higher Power that guides our recovery, not in the related facilities and outside enterprises we deal with. If a relationship with another organization compromises our devotion to carrying the recovery message, we need not be afraid to let go of that relationship. Our strength is in the power of the N.A. program--after all, *it works*.

The principle of *harmony* is both assumed and supported by Tradition Six. Our groups seek to cooperate with others in our communities whenever possible and as much as possible. Our contacts with others are made simple and straightforward when we let them know, right from the start, how far we can go in cooperating with them. By respecting the Sixth Tradition's boundaries in our group's relations with other organizations, we generate harmony in those relations.

Our identity as a fellowship is founded in *anonymity* and selfless service, carrying the message one addict to another. The ties we have to our community are not based on the personalities of our leaders; our groups themselves are responsible for their cooperation with other organizations, making those contacts stronger and more effective.

Additionally, anonymity helps us avoid blurring our purpose in our contacts with other organizations. Our relationships with outside agencies exist to help us fulfill our primary purpose, not merely to build our reputation or prestige. When we observe the spirit of anonymity, we seek nothing other than to carry the recovery message to the addict who still suffers.

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

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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.

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**IT WORKS: HOW AND WHY - THE TRADITIONS  
INPUT FORM****TRADITION SIX**

1. Does the draft reflect the concepts contained in this tradition accurately?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

2. Are there any concepts missing? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, what?

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3. General Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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**THE DEADLINE FOR INPUT IS OCTOBER 1, 1991**



## The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous®

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.



