

The Traditions in Relationships

Foreword

In this workbook, we go over some ideas on how the 12 traditions can be used in a relationship, specifically a romance-based or love-based relationship. We look at some of the more typical problem areas found in relationships and see how some of these problems can be dissolved by incorporating the principles found in our 12 traditions.

It is said that personal recovery depends on NA unity and that unity depends on how well we follow our traditions. Our lives and the lives of all to come depend squarely upon it. The practice of our 12 steps puts our lives in order, but not necessarily our relationships. How to live successfully with others can be found within our traditions. They are the guidelines which keep our fellowship, and subsequently our relationships alive and free.

Unfortunately, we find members and their partners who are getting healthy individually but who are in relationships that are far from robust. The quality of a relationship can improve significantly through the use and practice of the Twelve Traditions of NA. That belief is based on member's personal experience, rather than opinion.

Position Statement

Any successful ongoing relationship (or individual life for that matter) must have an underlying set of values or principles by which it is conducted. There are a couple of reasons for this: One is that we have to have something to rely on when our lives fall off into the marginal to unbearable area. Any relationship is going to be assailed from time to time by misfortune: someone will lose a job; a bit of gossip will float in; illness will come along; financial hardship will strike; a parent will grow old and need help. If we don't have a set of values or traditions to get through these rough times, our relationship is at risk. Relationships can decompose under such stress.

The other reason is that values and traditions are needed to guide us in the way we treat each other. They characterize what we believe is fair and just. They constitute the "out of bounds" markers where we agree not to drag the other or allow ourselves to be dragged. Values define the rules governing anger and arguments and money and property and power and control and all the other things which frequently rankle in a relationship, no matter how close the parties may be or how much they love each other.

What values are we talking about? The values we refer to are fidelity or loyalty, commitment, honesty, integrity, fairness, equity, virtue, and the meaning of love. Without values, there is no morality. If there is no truth, there are no lies. Relationships should have mutually agreeable values and should be based on principles. When someone is asked point blank what he stands for, that person should be able to tell him. We are not talking about ones' "philosophy of life", presented in elegant prose nor are we talking about what one "thinks". We are talking about what one does, and more specifically, what one does when he is alone and nobody is watching or will ever find out.

So how do we integrate a set of principles or values into our lives that we can and will live by and what should they be? That is the question we are trying to answer in this workbook.

The right person . . .

Perhaps nothing in life is more fun and exciting than a romantic relationship with another person. Certainly nothing is more painful when it's not working. And nothing is more frightening or feels more emotionally hazardous than facing uncertainty when your heart is on the line.

Some of us approach romance or marriage as though it were a game of some sort. Many of us think the trick is to find the right person. Actually, the trick is to be the right person. So the question is not: Is he/she the right person? The question is: Am I the right person? Does my attitude, behavior, and appearance attract the kind of person that I would like to have with me?

How would an accurate ad in the personals column read if you were seeking a mate? For many addicts, it might go something like this:

Wanted: Single M/F. Must be willing to tolerate slovenly insensitive lazy mate. Must cheerfully endure for long periods without interactive communication other than occasional grunts. Must happily accept constructive criticism regarding dress, personal habits, vocabulary, hygiene, driving, language, housekeeping, laundry methods, cooking, and clothes folding. Must remain calm and unflappable during loud immature sometimes crude or vulgar outbursts and must quickly overlook and forget all threats and false bravado. Tolerance of poor hygiene and flatulence a plus.

Would you want to have a relationship with anyone who would answer such an ad? Are you the right person? This workbook is therefore meant to encourage you be the right person - *not fix your partner*.

A change in perspective

We need to take a look at some common negative or undesirable feelings and try to figure out how to change our perspective. To make a fundamental shift in perspective, we must first take some kind of action. Unless we do something, nothing will change. And the something we do is frequently going to be contrary to the way we feel. It is typically against our "better judgment". However, action will change the way we think which will, in turn, change the way we feel.

As you have probably heard many times, we cannot think our way into good living. We must live our way into good thinking. This means that we must do something - not think something. If we want self-esteem, we must do estimable things...not think estimable thoughts. If we want respect, we must be respectable. We must act in a respectable manner, not think in a respectable way. We must try to remember that we are what we repeatedly do - not what we repeatedly think. We are judged by our words and our deeds - not our intentions.

We will also need to take a look at the baggage we bring into our relationships. We all have some. It is

important therefore to stop and consider the conscious and unconscious behaviors we display in our everyday lives that came from our families, friends, and previous relationships. So we need to ask ourselves: What baggage do I bring into my relationships? It comes from many areas of our lives:

- Dysfunctional behavior from my family of origin.
- Functional behavior from my family of origin.
 - * taste or preference in food or the way it is prepared
 - * ways to do things - make beds, fold socks
 - * attitudes toward institutions and groups - education, religion, gender equality
 - * political leanings
- Sexual abuse, both physical and emotional, from family or previous relationships
- Emotional and mental abuse
 - * Accusations of laziness, stupidity, or incompetence
 - * Perpetual, relentless nagging * Being an unremitting "critical parent"
- Bad habits/good habits - smoking, eating, exercise
- Ideas about personal hygiene, dress, behavior.
- Fundamental attitudes (usually in the form of sweeping generalizations), especially about members of the opposite sex.

In addition, as addicts, there are behavioral symptoms to examine there as well. For example, many of us were always afraid to be seen as we really were. We were afraid of being laughed at. We were afraid of ridicule. We were afraid of humiliation. We were afraid of rejection. In other words, we viewed ourselves as victims. This is a load to carry into a relationship. Such attitudes are not only incapacitating to the individual, in the sense that they exert a powerful negative force on our lives and affairs but they are distasteful to our mates as well. My mate doesn't want to have a partner who is emotionally crippled.

All of these things help determine our nature as individuals. What else can we expect our nature as addicts to be?

Over and above such learned behavior, there are also other differences:

Men and Women are different. Beyond the obvious physical and hormonal differences, they differ as well in the organization of their thoughts and emotions. Recent findings suggest that woman's experiences, thoughts, and feelings do not pass through an "intellectual" filter. They do not think, "how should I feel about this" as men so often do nor or they as frequently confused about how they feel as men are. It appears that women have a direct physical connection between sensory and emotional areas of their brain that is simply not there in men. Science is suggesting, in other words, that we men can never think like a woman or feel like a woman. Thus our old-fashioned common sense is finally being underscored by scientific proof.

So, after all of this teeing up, let's go through the traditions and see how we may apply their underlying ideas to our relationships. Notice that they are called "traditions" - not "laws" or "rules". We all know how far we would get if we tried to impose laws or rules on addicts - bloody mutiny. But what is important is the underlying "spirit" of these traditions and that is what we want to look at.

The Twelve Traditions in Relationships:

1. Our common welfare should come first. Personal recovery depends on NA Unity

"If you have one hundred people who live together, and if each one cares for the rest, there is One Mind."

--Shining Arrows, CROW

One of the principles of Community is Unity. The alignment of thoughts in groups of people will cause One Mind to form. One Mind is Unity. Each individual in the community must align their thoughts with what other members are thinking. If all the people think of helping one another, then the community will be service oriented and powerful results will be enjoyed. Having our thoughts aligned within a group will cause our children to experience a positive environment. When they have children, the grandchildren will automatically experience these results also.

Unity begins with each individual. Having a solid relationship with a Higher Power within is vital to expressing unity in a relationship. If you are following the guidance and will of a Higher Power, you are more able to participate in a healthy loving relationship. Why? Because a working relationship with God provides faith and faith removes fear. Unity requires harmonious cooperation. Unity demands a willingness to listen to the ideas, feelings, and opinions of the other with an open mind. Unity means sharing views and not insisting on promoting our own way as the only way.

There are at least three areas in a relationship there must be union: The intellect, the emotions, and the genitals. There should be attachment in all three areas. You should find your partner intellectually stimulating, emotionally attractive, and sexually enticing.

Unity cannot automatically preserve itself. Like personal recovery, we shall always have to work to maintain it. Here too, we need honesty, humility, open-mindedness, unselfishness and, above all, vigilance. So we must ponder carefully the experience others have already had of trying to work and live together.

Communication is a most vital commodity. The strength of the family or relationship comes from recognition and understanding of our mutual needs and when we discuss them openly, we help each other. Sometimes one partner has to agree with what is best for the family or relationship as a whole, but not necessarily his/her own desires. A free and tolerant exchange of views is something that requires a persistent practice of the 12 Steps in all our affairs and especially within the family or relationship unit

"Hear me! A single twig breaks, but the bundle of twigs is strong."

--Tecumseh, SHAWNEE

You can take one arrow and break it in half. But if you take 12 arrows in a bundle, it's almost impossible to break any of them. There is strength in Unity. When we are together we are very powerful. This is the way the ancestors told us we need to be. Strong. We need to unite ourselves. This is why the Elders say, when we make decisions, we must first consider the good of the people. If every person in the community thinks this way, then we will always make strong decisions.

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 1:

- What am I willing to sacrifice for our relationship?
- What affect do my actions have on our relationship? On our family?
- Am I a giver or a taker?
- Do I do unifying things? or am I quick to criticize? Slow to praise?
- Do I use silence as a refuge or punishment while expecting my mate to read my mind?
- Do I listen when my mate has something to say?
- Do I admire and approve of my mate? Does he/she **know** that?
- Am I a healing, mending, integrating force in our marriage or am I divisive?
- Am I a peacemaker? Or, because of my own insecurity, is it critical to my ego that I be right? Why is unity so important to a healthy relationship?
- How does prejudice-narrow-mindedness affect unity with others?
- How important is open-mindedness in a relationship?
- Do you have a balance in your relationship avoiding extremes?
- Have you defined your needs in the relationship and openly discussed them with the others involved?
- Can you accept others as they are?
- Are you honest or self-deceived by your own thoughts and actions in the relationship?
- How does stubbornness affect your relationship and it's unity?
- How healthy are your current relationships?

Flexibility is taught by nature. You will see the trees bend in the wind. You will see that tree branches are flexible. To be rigid is to break. When we have life problems it is good for us to be flexible. Sometimes we need to flow with what is going on. If we resist, it becomes more painful. We need to be on the path of least resistance. Water flows down the mountain through the path of least resistance. Electricity flows through the path of least resistance. Power flows through the path of least resistance.

Flexible strength is better than inflexible. Let the storm flow over you, and then pop back up."

- Can you be flexible in matters of what you want in a situation or what you desire in the relationship?
- What must my mate do to accommodate my insecurity? My ego? Can he/she have both male and female friends? Can he/she go wherever he/she wants with whomever he/she wants, mostly whenever he/she wants?
- Do I try to be understanding when my mate rubs me the wrong way or does something that upsets me or am I abrasive and rageful?
- Do I speak about love while indulging in and secretly justifying behavior that bristles with hostility? Do I sneak around and do things that I know my mate won't like or that will violate our values.
- Do I share all of me - good and bad? Or do I have secrets?

It's acceptable to have **some secrets**. Emotional nudity can lead to needless strife and subsequent resentments. We all need a well-placed emotional fig leaf *at certain times*. To "let it all hang out" may make you feel better but, so does throwing up. It's still hard on the people around you. Remember step 9, "except when to do so would injure them or others". Sponsors and/or close friends may be a better choice when, for example sharing a 5th step

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

In a relationship based on the Traditions there is no such thing as individual authority. All decisions are arrived at by the majority agreement, reached after all elements of the problem or situation have been considered and a Higher Power has been contacted for guidance in the making of the decisions (an informed group conscience). We must learn somehow to subjugate our egos and allow our Higher Power to guide the relationship. When one partner speaks for the relationship without consulting the other member, they take on responsibilities to which they have no claim. Often, one partner is a dominating individual. Sometimes, one partner is very content to allow the other to dominate the relationship. This allows the dominator to feel indispensable and important and without realizing it, he or she then assumes a managing and controlling attitude. This is especially true when the one being dominated is afraid and unsure of themselves and want someone else to be responsible for all the decisions. They may feel that this absolves them of any kind of blame for mistakes or failure. In a situation such as this, love doesn't exist. The tendency to dominate or to be dominated must be checked through continually working the 12 Steps.

Agreeable decisions can be reached in relationships when the partners or all members are as informed as possible on the various issues. This does not necessarily mean that the "right choices" are always made, but they are made together and no blaming occurs and the unity of the relationship is preserved. There are no authorities in a relationship except that of a Higher Power as He expresses Himself to the members of that relationship. Of course, we are not aware of God personally sorting out our arguments and disagreements. We have to somehow work those out. There are times when each of us thinks the other is dead wrong about something. We are certain of it. Could such circumstances turn into a rip-roaring fight? You bet! We've all been in such predicaments. What does one do? Sometimes we quietly say the Serenity Prayer then drop it.

We must remember that active participation by both members in the relationship is vital to its growth. No partner can assume the position of speaking for the other without first having consulted him or her. Another word for this, at the very least, is courtesy. Usually, most of us find courtesy easily practiced with strangers or those outside our relationships yet when we are dealing with the most precious persons in our lives, we sometimes leave simple kindness out of our manner.

One problem is that most of us are uncomfortable with confrontation. We will stuff things rather than risk a flare-up. We are too insecure. The risk for doing this however is that resentments can build up. So it is important that we do whatever it takes to communicate with each other.

When this tradition is practiced, a state of humility exists because the authority is a Higher Power.

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 2:

- Do I insist on being the leader? Do I feel that it is my place to govern? Do we strive for equity?
- Do I try to speak for my mate without consulting him/her?
- Do I criticize my mate? Or do I trust him/her?
- Am I absolutely trustworthy? Try this little prayer: **"God, treat me tomorrow the way I treat my mate today. Or this one: God, help me not to do anything today that I can't tell my mate about tonight"**.
- Is my ego so strong that I must have credit for more than I do? Am I so insecure that I must always have praise for my actions and ideas?
- Do I do my share? And is that my opinion or my partners?
- Does the thought of God being in charge of our relationship cause me any discomfort or do I like

and rely on that idea?

- When one partner speaks for his relationship without consulting the other member(s) involved, is this trying to control or run the relationship and its activities? Is this really healthy?
- How is an informed family or relationship conscience taken?
- How do you feel and react when someone tries to, or dominates in your relationship?
- Do you have an inherent tendency to dominate people around you? How can you correct this defect of character?
- Are you someone who is always willing to allow someone else to take control and then complains because you don't like what was done, yet were unable to make a decision yourself.
- In your relationships, how do you share the responsibilities?
- What is the difference between suggestions, advice and guidance?
- Is God or a Higher Power the only authority in your relationship? How does this Higher Power express Himself to you when making any decisions?
- Why is it necessary to give the minority opinion an open-minded evaluation in a family conscience?
- When you find it desirable or necessary to end the relationship, do you honestly express your reasons for having to terminate the relationship to the other person? Why is this beneficial to both partners?
- How do you break a stalemate in your relationship?
- How does this Tradition promote confidence in the members of the relationship?

3. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using

One person alone cannot make a relationship work. Both partners have to want it to work and be willing to work on it. Each must have the same goal and each must try to achieve that goal. You must allow each other to grow and change and not put restrictions or rules on each other to force acceptance of one's own principles or beliefs. We must accept one another "as is" and leave room for growth or change.

Willingness to be in the relationship may ebb or flow. In other words, there may be days when your attitude is such that you become indifferent to being in the relationship or lazy about upholding your part of the relationship. But, these attitudes are usually a temporary thing and they will pass. There may also be days in which your partner has the indifferent attitude or is seemingly unwilling to work on his/her part of the relationship. These feelings and situations are not uncommon among us. However, this is "not" a majority circumstance of great duration. If it becomes so, an inventory of the relationship and one's attitude can be helpful in getting back on track.

There are many other reasons people stay in relationships than a mutual desire to be in the relationship. Financial security, emotional security (having a mate), being trapped due to responsibilities, (children to raise and fear of doing so alone), are some of the reasons that do not fall under the "desire to be in the relationship".

When we allow outside things to divert us from our goal of making our marriage or relationship work, we create confusion and thus dilute our marriage or relationship and its unity. This can be done easily by our self-centered fear or self-centeredness in any aspect. When we pursue our own interests to the exclusions of our partners, this is not healthy. Outside interests include hobbies carried to an extreme (and we do seem to be people of extremes- compulsive and obsessive) extra- marital affairs or unfaithfulness (by thought or deed) or any other thing that diverts us from our goal of wanting to make our relationship or marriage work. When we are tempted to do these kinds of things, the program suggests for us to fix our minds on the Traditions and our actions on the use of the 12 Steps that can change our lives for the better and thus change our relationships that can change our lives for the better and thus change our relationships for the better, as we refuse to allow distractions to confuse us.

Judging one another in a relationship is a real detriment to unity of the relationship. The mutual desire to make the relationship work needs to include acceptance, understanding, tolerance and love. Some days, we are either intolerable or uncompromising and the desire is all there is. When either person is being a jackass, the other must try to be accepting, kind, tolerant, loving, and understanding - and silent. After all, the next time the roles will be reversed and it will be the others turn to be a jerk.

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 3:

- Do my actions say that I have a desire to be in this relationship?
- Do I set myself up as a judge of my partner's intentions or sincerity? Do I judge my partner in anything?
- Do I approach my marriage unselfishly or do I depend on my mates language, looks, race, education, age, appearance, job, or other such things for my own self esteem? What does my mate have to do to keep my ego fluffed up.
- Am I committed to and do I encourage my mates spiritual, professional, and individual growth and freedom?
- Am I able to share my feelings with my partner? Can I listen to my partners feelings with an open mind?
- Am I reluctant to work on my part of the relationship?
- What are the basic requirements for being in a relationship or marriage?
- Are understanding and encouragement given by you in your relationship?
- How could having too many outside interests affect a family situation or relationship?
- Why is it beneficial to limit our goals in a relationship?
- Why is dilution harmful to your relationships? What are you doing now that could dilute and injure your relationships?
- What is meant by a family conscience Do you have a desire to be in your current relationships? Are you working on being healthy in them?
- Are you able to share your feelings with your partner? Are you able to listen with an open mind to the feelings of your partner?
- Are you committed to having healthy relationships?
- How do you deal with vulnerability in your relationship?
- How does this Tradition when practiced, promote unity within the relationship?
- What are some positive suggestions for working on a relationship?
- Are you lazy about working on your part of the relationships?

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

We are prone to go off into this self-centeredness and do whatever it is that self wants to do, not concerning ourselves with the responsibility of these actions - we use the saying, "if it feels good -do it." However many things will 'feel good' for the moment which in actuality are not good for you or with whom you are trying to have a healthy relationship. Perhaps the better thing to say to yourself would be 'if it feels good and it doesn't hurt anyone, especially my partner or myself and our relationship, do it'. Always keeping in mind the responsibility for your own actions lies squarely on yourself.

Remember not to make someone or something else your Higher Power. You will want your actions and behavior to be in line with the common purpose of the relationship - to make it work for you and then do whatever is necessary to achieve this goal. In a relationship we are separate and independent persons and we each have the right to be right or the right to be wrong and each has the right to do our own thing except when the doing creates problems or threatens the unity of the relationship, the family or society as a whole.

Keep in mind; ego-driven individuals rarely have healthy relationships.

This tradition gives our relationships freedom - complete freedom in all essential matters. Each partner is free to choose their own way of functioning, yet this freedom carries the responsibility of preserving the unity of the relationship as a whole.

Each relationship is an individual entity strictly reliant on its own conscience as a guide to action with two exceptions: (1) when it injures anything or anyone else (this does not mean to imply that getting angry or disagreeing constitutes an injury. An injury is when a person is harmed, spiritually, emotionally or physically by our actions. The partner is responsible for his/her own reactions to our autonomy. We are responsible for actions, not someone else's reactions... these are in God's hands.) and (2) when it would conflict with anything or anyone else as a partnership. Serenity through acceptance has to be objective and in all other respects there is freedom of will and action. When our unity is not maintained, confusion replaces acceptance and harmony in our relationships.

Be sure to take your program and your relationships seriously, but don't take yourself too seriously. The Traditions themselves provide their guidance, and a person who keeps himself familiar with them and is trying to practice them on a daily basis is not likely to make decisions which would damage the relationship.

Allowing your mate to be free - to be responsible for himself should not be a stumbling block. Each person can support and encourage the other to follow their heart. When we have become secure within ourselves and our relationship through the step working process we do not have to feel threatened. We can celebrate each other rather than stiffen one another.

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 4:

- Do I feel like there are only certain ways to do things? And are they my ways? And do I insist on things being done in those ways?
- Do I always think about how or if my decisions will affect my partner? And if so, do I communicate with my partner and come to agreement?
- Am I willing to go to any lengths - his/her lengths, not mine - to protect the integrity of the relationship?
- Do I carefully avoid injuring my mate emotionally, physically, or spiritually?
- How do I deal with my partner's anger regarding something I've done through my autonomy? Am I defensive? Do I try to subdue him/her with still greater anger? Do I point out previous "mistakes" they have made? Do I try to punish him/her in any way?
- What is meant by autonomy in a relationship?
- How with this kind of "unlimited freedom" can we preserve unity in our relationships?
- How do you deal with a partner's anger regarding something you've done through your autonomy?
- What are some things that could happen to a relationship that could not be justified by "personal autonomy"?
- In your relationships must you come to an agreement on all goals?
- What are some different kinds of goals in a relationship?
- How important is a good relationship with a Higher Power to using your autonomy wisely?
- Why is autonomy a necessary ingredient to having healthy relationships?
- What "questions" could we ask ourselves before we make a decision to use our autonomy?
- How does an outside the relationship affiliation harm the relationship?
- Does autonomy excuse or justify improper behavior in a relationship?

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

This tradition has to do with our primary purpose and fully understanding what our primary purpose is. Our primary purpose is to express the theme of love, in all that we do and to share this knowledge freely with others. By limiting ourselves to the one purpose - to serve as an expression of love -we eliminate fragmentation of our relationship and promote unity at the same time. We best help others when we ourselves practice the 12-Step Principles as a pattern of daily living. How we express our primary purpose within our relationship is as important as carrying our message of recovery to the addict that still suffers. "Actions speak louder than words". Are we acting with integrity? If we didn't tell others we are in a loving relationship, would it be apparent by our actions? We are, by nature, selfish, self-willed people. We can easily deceive ourselves and our motives. There is little justification for unrestrained trash-talking to or about our partner when we apply this Tradition to our relationship. We must ask ourselves "How do I express my love for my partner?" and "Is this how I would want my partner to express love to me"

It is only within the framework of NA we can remember to look at our part in any situation. That we individually have a part in everything that goes on. Neither of us must ever forget that whenever there is a disagreement between us, we each sincerely believe that we are the one that is right!

Tradition five also asks us to give comfort, encouragement, and understanding to our partner. When one of us does something or says something that is harmful or hurtful, it is often because we are unhappy with something about ourselves and could possibly need compassion instead of judgment or an angry response. Rather than lashing out, we try to say to ourselves: "At a time like this, what do I think a loving mate would do?" We then try to do that. If you can't come up with an idea of what you think a loving mate would do, try to find someone that you feel displays those qualities and ask them how to respond. You might also ask your Higher Power to help.

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 5:

- Do we have a "primary purpose" and do we know what it is?
- Do I resort to emotional blackmail? Do I ever start sentences with the phrase, "If you loved me you would...."
- Do I really understand that I have a part in everything and that whenever I am upset, there is something wrong with me?
- How do we conduct ourselves to express a loving relationship?
- How important is liking myself to my relationship. Do I have or need self-esteem, self-respect?
- Am I a patient and uncritical listener?
- Can I see my partner through God's eyes or hear my partner through God's ears?
- How do I express God's love in my relationship?

6. NA 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.

Our best relationship is one where "dependence is mutual, the independence is equal and the obligation is reciprocal."

This tradition means that either one can endorse things for themselves but not for both. Neither of us can make loans without the others prior knowledge and agreement. Neither can say, "come on and move into our house for a while". We have to remember that we are a team and that we must always consider the other.

It is our belief that a partner ought not to be overly supportive spiritually, emotionally, or physically to the relationship. That is to say, one should not work harder on their partner's program than they do. One needs the assurance that their well-being and/or recovery is between them and God and does not depend on another person. There is no human alive that does not ultimately have feet of clay. Despite their very best intentions, others will ultimately fail from time to time.

This is important in protecting the relationship and its unity. It keeps each one of us responsible for themselves. Neither of us can meet all of the needs of the other. We are each responsible for taking care of ourselves, but we are enhanced by our association with each other. Our separateness is our mutual strength. It promotes a relationship of healthy equals.

A partner should be supportive spiritually, emotionally and physically to the relationship, but a mature partner doesn't do for the other what they can do for themselves. Doing so could promote an inflated ego which would divert the primary purpose of the relationship, which is to express love and not one's own self-will. It is our experience that God does not do for us what we should and can do for ourselves. God helps when we need something beyond our own power - this is part of God's love for us. To help us when we can help ourselves is to cripple us and to compromise his greatest of all gifts: free choice.

Being needed to be needed seems to be one of the symptoms of our disease. We have found that from time to time, we have an over-developed sense of responsibility. Without realizing it we can create situations in which we place ourselves in the role of helper, fixer, or enabler. This kind of behavior can create sick dependencies in those we try to help. We have a false sense of security when we are needed in this way. We think that we are okay because we think that we are fulfilling a vital role. The tragedy to this is that our self-esteem is placed in the hands of others and when they no longer "need us" we feel worthless.

We encourage each other and are interested in each other's growth, but we have found that we must each allow the other the dignity to grow, and perhaps to fail on their own without assistance, insistence, or advice. We allow each other to have different ideas, concepts, beliefs, and feelings.

Partners complement one another. They are not crutches for one another. Being totally dependent upon another person isn't living and it is surely not love. This tradition protects each individual's identity in the relationship and thus preserves the unity of the relationship. The best relationships are those where dependence is mutual, independence is equal, and obligations are reciprocal."

Kahlil Gibran wrote about marriage in his book, *The Prophet*:

*Love one another, but make not a bond of love:
Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.
Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.
Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf
Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone,
Even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music.
Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.
for only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.
And stand together yet not too near together:
for the pillars of the temple stand apart,
And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.*

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 6:

- Do I encourage and support my partner?
- What motivates me when I find myself trying to be all things to my partner?
- Do I pretend to agree with my partner just to keep things going?
- Am I in this relationship just to feel needed or loved?
- Am I using a healthy form of encouragement and support in my relationships?
- Emotionally dependent people create what kinds of feelings in their partners?
- Are you an equal in your relationships -spiritually, emotionally and physically?
- What is meant by "our separateness is our mutual strength?"
- How important are the "little things" in a relationship?
- What is meant by "allowing my loved one the dignity to fail"? Do I allow my partner the dignity to fail?
- What is meant by "our best relationship is one where "dependence is mutual, the independence is equal and the obligation is reciprocal?"
- Must you agree with your partner on basic beliefs and principles in order to have a healthy relationship?
- Do you take responsibility for your own needs - spiritual, emotional and physical, or are you so busy taking care of another, you short change yourself on these needs?
- Are you helping your partner or contributing to "making someone a cripple" spiritually, emotionally or physically?
- Do you allow your grown children to be adults or do you continue to accept the consequence for their mistakes by fixing their problems, getting them out of trouble, continuing to assume their financial responsibilities, etc.?
- Are you in the relationship because you feel needed or because you feel loved? Do you love them because you need them or do you need them because you love them?

7. Each group ought to be fully self-supporting declining outside contributions.

Each partner is responsible for his/her own growth - spiritually, emotionally and physically. We need to know as individuals that if the relationship should end through any type situation (mutual agreement, divorce, death, abandonment, etc.) that each partner could continue to function and be a whole person and survive without the other.

In a relationship it is important that both members can be independent spiritually, emotionally and physically. It is easy for the member bringing in the finances or the greater amount of finances to control through the purse strings which can become ropes to bind the other partner. Resentments fear and other problems occur from this type attitude and action. The non-earning or lesser-earning member may even lose his/her identity or the earning member may begin to feel his/her only purpose is to be a paycheck in the relationship.

Being self-supporting is impossible if one of the partners becomes the Higher Power for the other. The same is true when one person in the relationship is overly dependent on the other for their emotional well-being. Our self-worth comes from within and from God, not from having to have someone in our life in order to feel to feel okay about ourselves

When we are dependent upon someone else for our well-being, we are vulnerable prey for sick relationships. This is especially demonstrated in the person who cannot feel whole without a love partner in his/her life all the time. Because of this sick exaggerated need, the person fails to find a lasting relationship and thus goes from person to person trying to find themselves and some security through someone else. People are put here to enhance our lives - not to be our lives.

When each partner of the relationship understands that they are responsible for their own survival and progress, a greater spiritual strength flows into each and the relationship is made doubly strong. Each partner is able to do their own part without asking or expecting the other to do it for them. We each are able to be responsible for our own growth.

If you are not responsible for yourself, you cannot be an equal in your relationships. You then become a potential victim for the managers and controllers of the world. You place yourself in a position of greater vulnerability and you will be hurt.

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 7:

- Do I try to be boss? Do I attempt to assume control of my partner and our relationship?
- Do my needs for comfort or a feeling of safety limit my partner's options?
- Do I accept responsibility for myself? Can I admit to my innermost self that my problems are of my own making?
- Do I think that because something is good for me personally that it is also good for my mate?
- Do I deceive myself by thinking how unselfish and giving I am when in reality I am giving only when I can do it on my own terms? Can I remember that giving is a position of control and that receiving is a position of powerlessness?
- Do you try to manage and control through the purse strings allowing another only what you deem is necessary or what you want them to have? How does this make you feel?
- Are you controlled by the bread-winner or tied up by the purse strings? How does this make you feel?
- Is your partner your Higher Power? Do you look for your partner to set the tone for your feelings,

attitudes and actions? explain

- How much do you ask or expect others to fill your emotional needs?
- Do you have a God of your own understanding or do you depend upon your partner's beliefs and spirituality?
- Do you have any marketable skills (even though you may not currently be working)? What are they?
- Do you take responsibility for your own feelings and not blaming others for feeling as you do?
- Do you allow another to be responsible for you or are you self-supporting spiritually, emotionally and physically?
- When you're uncomfortable with something you're doing, does this always indicate that you are out of God's will for your life?
- Could you take care of yourself financially if you had to today?
- What one thing determines the degree of healthy independence a person truly has?
- Does your partner enhance your life without being your life? Do you enhance your partner's life without being your partner's life?

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

When entering a relationship we generally have ideas and expectations of our partner in each area of the relationship. More often than not, however, we fail to communicate to our partner what these things are that we expect of them or what we are willing to do ourselves as well as what we will not do. If we are not careful we can also get into a "I did this, thus you should do that" attitude or we start justifying and rationalizing our participation or lack of participation in the relationship. This is giving with a price tag - not giving for free.

Giving can also be done seemingly with the best of motives at the time, only to find out at a later date when feelings of resentment or hurt arise when we are denied a favor - "and after all I've done for you" "How could they not do this small thing for me?" And in the guise of self-pity - the scorekeeping comes out again.

We must also avoid taking a "professional" or know-it-all attitude. In the final analysis, personal opinions are just that - personal. Neither of us is a certified expert on addiction, the twelve steps, sex, marriage, medicine, child psychology, spirituality, or humility. Neither of us knows when the other should call their sponsor or go to a meeting.

Keeping score in a relationship is dangerous as it is a judgmental attitude. What you give in a relationship, you get back - it is a spiritual principle. What you sow, you reap - what goes around comes around. Many times one looks to receive freely from the person they gave freely to - this is not necessarily the case. What you give freely will be returned, but from someone else or somewhere other than where it began. Never limit God's ability to return these things to you - be open to them, don't expect - it is a tall order but it will work.

When one is living by the principles of the 12 Steps and has a good relationship with a Higher Power, a sense of serenity and peace with your fellow man helps to remove self-centeredness which is the biggest barrier in relationships. This being in touch with God makes freedom easily practiced. Freedom is not just something we want to have, but something we must give to others. Too many times we have taken hostages or been taken hostage in a relationship. If our spirits are to fly, they must be free!

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 8:

- Do these traditions accurately describe my behavior? If not, what needs changing?
- Do I try to sound like an expert on things? If so, why do I need to do that? Is my security at risk? Is my fear triggered? Does my ego feel threatened?
- Do I believe that one or the other partner should be in charge based on their gender? Or experience? Or education? Or job? Or anything?
- Do I make an effort to understand my partners opinions and views? Do I really listen to my mate and show respect for those opinions and views?
- Does my identity and feelings of self-worth depend upon my relationship with my mate?
- Who or what was my role model for a healthy relationship?
- Can I give for fun and for free - requiring nothing in return?
- Do I charge my mate a fee for being in a relationship with me? If so, what is it? How expensive is my love and companionship?
- Does your identity and feelings of self-worth depend upon your participation in your relationship?
- Do you have a healthy balance in your relationships?
- Why is your relationship with a Higher Power important to the practice of this tradition?
- Do you ever ask God to allow you to see your partner as He sees him/her?
- How does realizing your own freedom help you to give to others freely?
- How does standing in one's own shadow affect us and others?
- Are you consistent about practicing the program principles in your relationships?
- What is grudging compliance and why is it unhealthy in relationships?
- Do you need the approval of someone else to validate you as a person?
- Are you possessive of your loved ones?

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

Our defiant individualism was the main reason we all failed in life and resorted to drugs. When we couldn't compel others to conform to our plans and desires, we used. When others tried to pressure us, we used. Even though we are now clean, we still resonate with these early traits which caused us to resist authority. Therein probably hangs a clue to our lack of personal government in NA, manifested by no fees, no dues, no rules and regulations, no demands, no leaders - just trusted servants.

With all this in mind, it follows that a relationship ought never be organized. It needs to be spontaneous, unpretentious, unrehearsed, and candid. Organization carries with it a certain level of safety. Organization is meant to avoid or pre-empt the unexpected, usually because of fear of the unknown.

This tradition is also an exhortation to have fun, be playful, lighten up. Don't take yourself too seriously. Our lives have been very difficult at times and there weren't a lot of laughs. Have some laughs. Exercise your sense of humor. As a friend of mine says, "if you want to hear God laugh, share your plans with Him".. Organization leads to attempts at control, the nemesis of a happy relationship. As we have just said, attempts to control are so futile as to be almost laughable and lead only to anger, rebellion, and resentments. A marriage or romantic relationship is no place for a constitution, org chart, bylaws, or Robert's Rules of Order.

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 9:

- Do I try to be the boss?
- Am I mature enough to understand and use the principles of AA in my relationship - even if no one makes me do so - with a sense of personal responsibility?
- Do I exercise patience and humility in the things I do in my relationship?
- Do I assume responsibility or do I try to take on authority?
- Have I learned how and when to step aside gracefully when I begin to overstep my bounds?
- Who decides who does what in the day-to-day business of a relationship?
- Am I a "peace at any price" person? Doesn't this get to be expensive at times?

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

Growth however is not accomplished as a unit, but individually by each member of the relationship or family at his/her own pace. It is important to operate on a set of principles as suggested by our 12 Steps and 12 Traditions.

In a healthy relationship there must exist some mutually agreed upon guidelines of acceptable conduct for the members of the relationship. Knowing yourself - what you have to give, are willing to give and how flexible you can be - is very important in determining you're mutually agreed upon guidelines for acceptable conduct. Communication is very important so that all understand exactly and precisely what the guidelines are and the consequence for non-adherence to the guidelines. Many times we discover another member is not adhering to the mutually agreed upon guidelines. The sooner we discuss this with our partner, (instead of hoping it will go away if we wait and say nothing) the better, because that eliminates the "denial" of the situation and we are dealing with the reality of our relationship.

We should try to always be courteous. The very essence of Narcotics Anonymous is treating others - all others - with patience, tolerance, courtesy, and kindness. A quiet composed response will dampen anger. It adds to our dignity and stature when we are able to avoid saying things we will surely regret.

This tradition suggests that we don't speak ill of our partner to friends or in public. Being publicly critical gets to be a habit and is one of the symptoms of addiction. We get carried away with how "it" is someone else's fault. Besides, feelings are temporary unless stated publicly. Somehow, giving voice to them in public gives them authenticity and longevity. They are remembered after all, look at the tabloids.

Love is an action - not a feeling. If you love someone, you treat them like you love them. If you want to know whether or not you are loved, ask your heart. Your heart knows everything. Do you feel loved? Do the words match the actions?

Heated controversy is very dangerous to a relationship. Controversy is usually fired up by some form of fear. Some of the by-products of heated controversy are power-driven anger, resentment, closed mindedness, breaks in general communication and even damaged or destroyed relationships.

Some people make a pact "not to let the sun go down on anger" or "not to go to bed made at one another". This, is however, is sometimes a futile gesture when heated controversy takes place between partners. In an argument no one wins. Rarely does one change another's mind with heated argument. Both sides "dig in" regarding their own ideas and opinions. Occasionally, in order to end the war, one partner will "supposedly give in" just to end the controversy, but deep inside he/she hangs on to his/her feelings and ideas and the resents himself/herself for having been dishonest in expressing his/her feelings and actions just to end the

argument. This is likened to submission where temporarily one submits to a situation, but lurking in the back of the mind is the thought, "there will come a day when I'll win", and no peace of mind exists.

A possible remedy for this situation is to find areas of agreement rather than dissension. If there seems to be no area of agreement, perhaps if you back off, think, pray and meditate, maybe your Higher Power can reveal some areas of agreement or even an entirely new slant to the situation neither has seen before. Many times there is no right or wrong - just a difference in thoughts or opinions. We must allow each other the right to have those differences as well as the right to be right and the right to be wrong. It is equally as important to allow ourselves to have dissimilar feelings and thoughts regarding the same situation, opinions, actions, etc., and both to be okay.

Sometimes a Fourth Step Inventory of the situation will reveal what feelings are involved in the controversy and which of our defects of character were at play. What were our motives? It always takes two fools to argue. Two wise men will not argue. One wise man will not argue with a fool. Thus, it takes two fools to argue. Ask yourself, "how important is it to take a stand on this issue?" "Will it leave a lasting effect on my life?" If not, perhaps it would be best not to continue the stand in this situation. Remember, you may not win on an issue, but you will save your serenity and dignity and you will not be damaging the relationship.

Prayer on the situation does not always change the situation, but it will change you and your attitude toward the situation. When a Higher Power is in charge of your life, it is highly unlikely His will for you will be to argue and quarrel with another of His kids. God does not bring chaos or confusion - God brings love and love is stronger than fear or anger. Bringing God into the situation helps defuse the situation.

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 10:

- Do I give the impression that "we" have an opinion?
- Am I careful to keep confidences given to me by my partner?
- If my relationship with my partner were not guided by this tradition, what would it be like? Where would I be?
- Am I publicly critical of my mate?
- What would my mate say if asked whether or not I loved her/him?
- How important is it for me to be right? Would I rather be right than happy?
- Do I expect or need my partner to see and feel the same as me on issues?
- Can I let my partner disagree with my ideas without feeling rejected and without getting defensive?
- Do I accept that, as individuals, we are always at different levels of growth in the relationship?
- Are you flexible in your relationships?
- What do you do when your partner's actions are repeatedly unacceptable to you?
- Are you a "peace at any price" person? Doesn't this get to be too expensive at times?
- Do you often have heated controversy in your relationships?
- How do heated controversies affect you physically, emotionally and spiritually?
- Can you accept that you may be wrong in a situation?
- How important are the majority of things you quarrel about? Do you blow their importance out of proportion?
- Do you hold grudges and carry arguments over from day to day, or week to week while still trying to convince your partner of your idea?
- Do you use Steps 9 and 10 to try to heal the damage done by you to your relationships?

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.

In this Tradition we accept another person as they are and they go about learning to be the person we are trying to become by living the way we would want someone else living with us to live (putting both the Golden and Silver Rules into practice within the relationship). Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Silver Rule: Don't do for others what they need to do for themselves.

By living our own lives and philosophies, one day at a time, quietly and serenely, putting our principles into practice, we are more apt to attract someone to our way of living than if we constantly call attention to the fact that he/she is not living the way we think he/she should. Walking the walk is far more effective than just talking the talk. Being a living example of our new way of life and its tools for healthy relationships is much more attractive than having someone try to "preach" to you about how to live.

When we first encounter this new idea in the application of the traditions to our relationships and some experience is gained, it is not unusual for us to want to share this newfound way of life with others, especially those closest to us. And, as we promote our program we are dismayed to find that our loved ones usually want no part of recovery for themselves (in fact are even offended that we have suggested they need improvement) leaving us with feelings of rejection and bewilderment. Some of us will regroup and try to find just the "right angle to present our case" and begin an all-out campaign to convert them to our new way of life. Some, however, will learn from this experience and thus gain wisdom. We cannot "fix" anyone but ourselves. However, it has happened that as we become saner and begin to practice the principles of the program in our day to day lives, we will begin to attract these same people to us and our new way of living. One cannot give another recovery, wisdom or serenity or the desire to change. We can only share the benefit of our own experience (when asked). The rest is up to our partners and a Higher Power.

Learning from one's own mistakes is the biggest key to wisdom there is - the wisdom to realize that what you're doing doesn't work, has never worked and will never work and being willing to scrap those plans and find another way from a Higher Power - a way that works - Good Orderly Directions.

One has to recognize their own need to change. Forced change rarely works over the long haul. Others preaching on a daily basis does not bring any change. Hard sell just doesn't work either. When one sees something he is attracted to (as opposed to force upon) he is more likely to want to change. Forced change (promotion) also breeds resentments - even when the change is positive - no one likes to have his freedom of choice removed or to be badgered until he gives in, to gain a moment's peace.

Anonymity in a relationship is that ability to do something good and not have to advertise it - a positive attitude; not complaining when things are not just as you'd have them; keeping silent when your partner makes a mistake; saying encouraging things to your loved ones; showing gratitude for small favors, etc. Doing good for good's sake without having to take credit or receive special strokes is a sign of true humility - being happy doing good without expectations of reward or return. However a nice by-product is the spiritual principle "what you sow, you reap." Thus we have a guarantee that we will be given as we give. There is no room in healthy relationships for self-glorification and pride and there is much room for great amounts of gratitude, humility and a willingness to serve others.

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 11:

- Is my relationship treated with care in public?
- Do I think my relationship is attractive to others? Or does it appear shabby?
- Is my partner ever embarrassed or humiliated by my appearance or actions?
- Do I give relationships a bad name?
- Am I guilty of promotion rather than attraction?
- Can I go about my affairs without giving my partner advice on how he or she should conduct theirs?
- Can I do good things for my relationship anonymously? DO I do good things for my relationship anonymously?
- Can I give my partner the right to be wrong? Can I give my partner the right to be right?
- Which do I give more of to my partner: Positive strokes or negative zingers?
- What happens when one partner in the relationship is getting noticeably better and the other is not?
- Can wisdom or serenity be transferred from one person to another?
- How important is humility to this Tradition?
- 9. How important is your experience to others?
- 10. How do you feel and what do you do when someone criticizes the way you are trying to live your recovery program?
- Can you do good things for yourself without having to brag or mention them to others?
- 14. How grateful are you today for the relationships in your life?

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

One of our greatest gifts or privileges of Narcotics Anonymous is to be of service to others. There is no room in this purpose for ego, pride, arrogance, selfishness, unwillingness, etc. However, there is lots of room for gratitude, humility, willingness, love, forgiveness, understanding, joy, freedom, etc.

We must learn to place principles above personalities and sometimes this is very difficult as it requires great humility. Humility is sometimes defined as "being teachable." Spiritual growth through humility has its roots in the principle of anonymity - the ability to learn from anyone whether we like them or not, whether we believe they're working a program of recovery or not, etc. We should not discount any message just because we don't like the messenger. We should avoid allowing our personal knowledge of someone to interfere with what they say - we are not to judge one another's action or motives - this is none of our business - this is God's business.

Lessons can be learned from everyone - some will teach us how to be; and others will teach us how not to be. But, as we listen to shared experience and observe and learn from all people, it is much easier to determine what is appropriate for oneself. We have choices to make regarding the quality of our lives; these choices being guided by our Higher Power.

Practicing these principles is done on a personal level by the application of the 12 Steps as a way of life. But we must accept ourselves first as a Spiritual being and then we are more able to see and accept another person and in that acceptance we see that both of us are free to be ourselves and change at our own individual growth pace.

Another important principle is that of good communication - saying what you see and how you feel about it. Remember feelings are not always facts. Feelings are neither right nor wrong - they just are. Facts may be wrong or the way we express them may be wrong, but we have a right to have our own feelings and express them. One way to do this is by saying "I may be wrong, but this is how I see it."

Or, "this is how I feel about it." Avoiding the use of "you always", "you never", or beginning any sentence with the accusatory "YOU" will enable better lines of communication. No blaming or threat is transferred when we express our own feelings honestly with "I feel -----" We are being responsible for our feelings and the communication of same. By developing the attitudes, humility, communication, etc., we have discussed in the previous eleven Traditions, we can see that the practice of the principles and concepts will not only benefit our marriages, our family and relationships in general, but will also enable us to become God-conscious people who are willing and able to be of maximum service to our God and our fellowman as outlined in the Seventh Step Prayer. We will also begin to see that slowly but surely we are being released from the bondage of self and becoming healthy within ourselves and also outside ourselves and our relationships.

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 12:

- Is there a spiritual foundation to our relationship? Have we had a spiritual awakening?
- Do I place our common welfare first? What would happen to me if my mate disappeared?
- Do I treat my mate in a way that I'm proud of? Do I treat my mate one way in public and another in private? Do I care if others see every aspect of how I treat my mate? Can I comfortably say, "I can't do anything my mate can't watch"?
- Do I have an immature need for attention and recognition?
- What is meant by 'discounting the message because of the messenger'?
- Do I have personal integrity? Can I be true to my own beliefs?
- Is my relationship growing healthier or getting sicker?
- Is it necessary to justify, rationalize, explain or tell someone that I'm doing what I consider my Higher Power's will?
- What exactly is meant by the term - "God-Consciousness"?
- What has helped you most in placing principles above personalities?
- Why is humility a must in practicing this Tradition or any of the Traditions?
- Why is it necessary to express your feelings to your partner?
- How important are gratitude and praise of our partner?
- How can you express how you feel without putting blame on another for that feelings?
- Do you "walk the walk" or merely "talk the talk"?

Conclusion:

Having a warm loving relationship with another is one of life's greatest achievements and one of God's premium gifts. It contains all there is in great measure if you let it...love, fun, sex, humor, tears, laughter, and pain. It is worth all of its trouble and tears ten times over.

Our ability to conduct a good relationship usually has to be learned and somehow it must become our way of life - our values - what we do when nobody is watching and there is no chance of getting caught.

By doing our best to adapt these traditions and their underlying concepts of good attitude, humility, communication, fearlessness, love, tolerance, courtesy, and honesty, we can have healthier relationships than we thought possible