

CHAPTER SIX

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

We keep what we have only with vigilance and just as freedom for the individual comes from the Twelve Steps so freedom for the groups springs from our Traditions.

As long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well.

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.
2. For our Group purpose there is but one ultimate authority -- a loving God as He may express Himself in our Group conscience, our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each Group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other Groups, or N.A., as a whole.
5. Each Group has but one primary purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An N.A. Group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every N.A. Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our Service Centers may employ special workers.

9. N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. N.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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

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

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

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

For most of us, understanding of these Traditions comes
slowly over a period of time. We pick up a little infor-
mation here and there as we talk to members and visit various
groups. It usually isn't until we get involved with service
that someone points out that "personal recovery depends on
N.A. unity", and that unity depends on how well we follow
our traditions. Because we hear about "suggested steps" and
"no musts" so often, some of us make a mistake and assume
that this applies to our groups the way it applies to the
individual. The Twelve Traditions of N.A. are not suggested,
and they are not negotiable. These are the rules that keep
our fellowship alive and free.

By following these principles in our dealings with
others in N.A. and society at large, we avoid many problems.
That isn't to say that our Traditions eliminate all problems.
We still have to face difficulties as they arise: communi-
cation problems, differences of opinion, internal controver-
sies, problems with individuals, groups outside the fellow-
ship. However, when we apply these principles we avoid
some of the pitfalls.

Many of our problems are much like those our predeces-
sors had to face. Their hard won experience gave birth to

1 the Traditions; and our own experiences have shown that these
2 principles are just as valid today as they were yesterday.
3 Our Traditions are what protect us from the internal and
4 external forces which could destroy us. They are truly
5 the ties that bind us together, but they don't work auto-
6 matically. It is only through understanding and appli-
7 cation that they have power.

TRADITION ONE

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

8 1 It makes sense that our First Tradition concerns unity
9 and our common welfare. 2 One of the most important parts of
10 our new way of life is being a part of a group of addicts
11 also seeking recovery. 3 Our survival is directly related
12 to the survival of our groups and of our fellowship.

13 4 Before coming to N.A., most of us tried to clean up or
14 stay clean on our own. Many of us sought treatment or
15 professional help. These efforts were unsuccessful for us;
16 it wasn't until we came to Narcotics Anonymous that recovery
17 seemed possible. 5 This program can do for us what we could
18 not do for ourselves. 6 We came and saw this program work in
19 the lives of other addicts. Their recovery gave us hope
20 for ourselves. 7 We became part of a group and found that we
21 could make it, too. We also learned that those who did not
22 continue being an active part of the Fellowship faced a
23 rough road and often relapsed. 8 Most of us agree that without
24 N.A. we would be in real trouble. We know we can't do it
25 alone, and nothing else ever worked for us. For our own good
26 we try to do what is best for the group.

27 9 This isn't to say that the group is shoved down the indi-
28 vidual's throat. Most of us had never experienced the kind

of attention and personal care that we found in the program. 1
10 We are accepted and loved for what we are; instead of "in 2
spite" of what we are.11 The individual is precious to the 3
group, and the group is precious to the individual.12 No one 4
can revoke our membership or punish us, or make us do any- 5
thing that we don't choose to do.13 We are taught this way 6
of life by example rather than direction. We share our 7
experiences and learn from each other.14 In our addiction we 8
consistently placed our personal welfare before anything 9
else. Here we found that in the long run what's best for 10
the group was usually good for us.15 We chose to conform to 11
the common good because that's what worked for us. 12
16 Our personal experiences while using differed from 13
member to member. However, as a group we found many common 14
themes in our addiction.17 One of these shared symptoms was 15
our need to prove self-sufficiency. We convinced ourselves 16
that we could make it alone and proceeded to live life on 17
that basis.18 The results were disastrous, and, in the end, 18
each of us had to admit that our self-sufficiency was a 19
lie.19 We found that we could no longer control our using, 20
nor could we manage our own lives.20 This surrender was the 21
starting point of our recovery, and is a primary point of 22
unity for the Fellowship. 23
21 Not only are these common themes in our addiction, but 24
we find that in recovery we also have much in common. We 25
share a common desire to stay clean.22 Each of us has learned 26
to depend upon a Power greater than ourselves, which is our 27
source of strength.23 Our purpose is to carry the message 28
to the addict who still suffers.24 We have our Traditions, 29
the rules that protect us from ourselves.25 We share many 30
things, and each is a point of unity for us. 31
26 Unity is a reality in Narcotics Anonymous.27 This isn't 32
to say that we don't have our disagreements and conflicts; 33
we do. Whenever people get together there are differences 34

1 of opinion and impressions.²⁸ However, when the chips are
2 down we pull together. Time and time again we've seen
3 this; in times of crisis or trouble we set aside our
4 differences and worked for the common good.²⁹ How often
5 have we seen two members who usually don't get along very
6 well working together with the newcomers? How often have
7 we seen a group doing menial tasks to pay the rent for their
8 meeting hall? How often have we seen members drive hundreds
9 of miles to help support a new group?³⁰ These activities and
10 many others are commonplace in our fellowship. They must
11 be, because without these things N.A. could not have sur-
12 vived.³¹ Without N.A. few of us would have survived, and
13 fewer still would have found recovery.

TRADITION TWO

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

14 ¹ In N.A. we have a great concern in protecting ourselves
15 from ourselves. Our Second Tradition is another example of
16 this.² By nature we seem to be strong-willed, self-centered
17 people, seeking self-gratification in the realms of money,
18 power, and sex.³ An important part of our recovery is
19 learning how to live with these drives; how to realign our
20 misguided instincts, how to stop acting out our insanities,
21 how to disarm our self-destruct mechanisms, and how to
22 rechannel our energies toward constructive ends.⁴ In other
23 words, we have to replace our "dying program" with a "living
24 program".⁵ Early in our recovery we learned that we did a
25 pretty poor job with our lives. One of our sayings is "Our
26 best ideas got us here".⁶ This seems apt as we look back
27 and see how many times our schemes and plans got us into

trouble despite their original intent.⁷ We were powerless 1
over our addictions and could not manage our own lives. 2
⁸ Now we find ourselves thrust together in N.A., mismanagers 3
all, not one of us capable of making consistently good 4
decisions.⁹ When we realized this had related to our new 5
group oriented way of life we often experienced a sort of 6
gut-level panicky feeling. 7
¹⁰ At this point our old timers usually come forward to 8
reassure us. "Don't worry. God takes care of fools and 9
addicts."¹¹ This is a spiritual program and He won't let us 10
screw it up", they say. They go on to explain that in N.A. 11
we rely on a loving God as He expresses Himself in our 12
Group conscience rather than on personal opinion or ego. 13
¹² In working the Steps we need to come to depend on a Power 14
greater than ourselves. We continue this relationship and 15
utilize it for our Group purposes.¹³ If we each turned our 16
will and our lives over to His care and seek to do his will, 17
he will express Himself on a group level.¹⁴ When a decision 18
needs to be made for a group, each of the members should 19
take the time to meditate on what is most beneficial to our 20
common welfare. If we do this, then the results will 21
truly be an expression of the spiritual concept of our Group. 22
¹⁵ We know that this is a fact for our Fellowship, but some- 23
times we are confused when it seems our decisions don't work 24
out very well. We forget that we are not perfect, and that 25
we are only experiencing spiritual progress.¹⁶ When personali- 26
ties and self will creep into our efforts then the results 27
suffer. We must be constantly on guard that our decisions 28
are truly an expression of God's will.¹⁷ There is often a 29
vast difference between Group conscience and Group opinion, 30
powerful personalities, or popularity.¹⁸ Some of our most 31
painful growing pains have come as a result of decisions made 32
in the name of "group conscience".¹⁹ Our experience has 33

1 shown that there had been nothing spiritual about some of
2 our decisions.

3 20 "We took a Group conscience and decided that..."Wait
4 a minute! We don't take Group conscience, we take votes.

5 21 One group decided that members must be graduates of a
6 specific treatment program, another felt that only heroin
7 addicts should attend, another accepted only Christians.
8 Another decided that residents of a halfway house could
9 attend if they promised not to talk. Another let others
10 sit in on their group only if they would contribute to the
11 collection. Another decided to pay its officers wages.
12 One group promised that anyone who attended their meetings
13 would be able to get a job at a local counseling center
14 and so on and so on. 22 We've made a lot of bad decisions and
15 pawned them off as Group conscience. 23 This worries many of
16 us. How can we really tell if our decisions are really
17 Group conscience or not, and how do we prevent painful
18 mistakes?

19 24 There is one truth which helps guide us. True spirit-
20 ual principles are never in conflict; they always comple-
21 ment each other. The true spiritual conscience of a group
22 will never contradict any of our other spiritual principles.

23 25 Whenever we are faced with a group decision, we first try
24 to eliminate personalities, prejudices, and self-centered-
25 ness. 26 Then we review our decisions to make sure they are
26 not in violation of any of our Twelve Traditions. If we
27 take another look at our decision and try to resolve it.

28 27 This approach isn't foolproof, but it has helped to prevent
29 problems many times.

30 28 The Second Tradition also concerns the nature of leader-
31 ship in N.A. 29 We have seen that we try to rest authority in
32 the spiritual conscience of the group. In keeping with this,
33 we make a special point of trying to prevent authoritarian
34 leadership. 30 We have learned that for our Fellowship,

leadership by example and by selfless service works, and
that direction and manipulation fails.³¹ The way we design-
nate our trusted servants insures this. We choose not to
have presidents, masters, chairmen or directors.³² Instead
we have secretaries, treasurers, and representatives.
These titles in themselves imply service rather than
control.³³ Our experience shows that if a group becomes
an extension of the personality of a leader or a certain
member, then it loses its effectiveness. Newcomers don't
stay, and members stop coming.³⁴ The group must then change
or die. This is sometimes a difficult and agonizing
process.³⁵ Those who stay grow through the experience; but
what happens to those who leave?³⁶ An atmosphere of recovery
in our groups is one of our most precious assets; and we
must guard it carefully lest we lose it to politics and
personalities.

³⁷ Those of us who have been involved in service for a long
time or in getting a group started and keeping the doors
open through the hard early days sometimes have a hard time
letting go of the reins.³⁸ Sometimes our egos get in the way,
sometimes ungrounded fears get in the way, and sometimes
the group gets in the way. Most of us come with a poor
self-image and low self-worth.³⁹ With time and some successes,
we begin to recover somewhat and develop healthier egos.
We enjoy these feelings for they are healthy for us.⁴⁰ We
like recognition and attention and we often deserve them.
However this sometimes gets out of hand. We begin to pursue
these things as ends in themselves and find ourselves in
trouble.⁴¹ With more time and maturity we grow in humility
and learn to deal with these new feelings in a more realis-
tic and spiritual way.⁴² Another situation which often causes
us problems is fear. We sometimes fear that there is no
one else who can serve the group as well as we. We are

1 afraid that if we turn over the responsibility to new
2 members, something terrible is going to happen.⁴³ We may
3 even have tried to get others involved before without
4 success. It doesn't matter, whenever we are unwilling
5 to take a chance to let the group grow on its own, or when
6 we become afraid of change, we are playing God.⁴⁴ Our friends
7 may tell us to let go and work the Third Step, but some-
8 times we are deaf to their love. In these cases it is our-
9 selves who must go and grow. But again, what about those
10 we lose in the process?⁴⁵ Still another situation which
11 causes leadership problems is when senior members are
12 thrust into positions of power.⁴⁶ Sometimes a group or part
13 of a group will be afraid to let their leaders step down
14 gracefully. The members time and time again draft the same
15 leaders; demanding that they perform, demanding that they
16 rule the roost. In these cases change is especially hard
17 because it seems that only a crisis will do the job.

18⁴⁷ Usually, the leader himself must refuse to serve. This goes
19 against the grain because we've been told never to refuse
20 an N.A. request, and this has been a valuable part of our
21 program.⁴⁸ To refuse to lead because it's not what's best
22 for the group requires a lot of maturity and humility.

23⁴⁹ Most of those involved with service sooner or later
24 have to deal with these problems. At first they are unaware.
25 They run on good feelings, the notoriety, and the attention.

26⁵⁰ After a while, they may begin having mixed feelings. Part
27 of them revels in the spotlight, while another part is very
28 uncomfortable because they know they are just another member.

29⁵¹ This period is often followed by a period in which they deny
30 their leadership and value to the group. Eventually and
31 gratefully they find a degree of humility which allows them
32 to accept themselves and their places in the Fellowship.

33⁵² They accept that they are truly just a part of a greater

whole, that they in themselves are not indispensable or dis- 1
pensible. 53 Along with this they also accept that they do have 2
special and valuable experiences which can benefit the group. 3
They become a resource for the group; seeking neither to 4
control the group nor to set themselves apart. 54 It is at this 5
time that their long service truly contributes the most. 6
They encourage us, inspire us, and teach us by example. 7
55 Even though their services are less dramatic than when their 8
group was struggling to survive, they provide a foundation 9
of stability, strength, and experience upon which our Fellow- 10
ship can grow. 11

TRADITION THREE

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

1 This Tradition is very important for both the individual 12
and the group. It relates directly to many of the basic 13
ideas of our program. 2 Desire is the key word in this 14
Tradition and desire is the basis of our recovery. 3 In 15
our story and in our experience of trying to carry the 16
message of recovery to the addict who still suffers, one 17
painful fact of life has emerged again and again. An addict 18
who does not want to stop using will not stop using. They 19
can be analyzed, counseled, reasoned with, prayed over, 20
threatened, beaten, locked up or whatever; but they won't 21
stop using until they want to. 4 The only thing we ask of 22
our members is that they have this desire. Without it, they 23
are doomed, but with it miracles have happened. 24

5 This is our only requirement, and rightfully so. Addiction 25
does not discriminate, why should recovery? 6 Our disease 26
does not recognize race, religion, sex, age, occupation, 27
economics, or any of the other lines people draw to separate 28
themselves. 7 "An addict is a man or woman whose life is con- 29
trolled by drugs." 8 The newcomer is the lifeblood of N.A. and 30

1 when one comes to us seeking help we welcome them with open
2 arms. 9 We don't care who or what they are or even what they
3 used. As long as they want to stop using there's a place
4 for them in N.A., and this Tradition guarantees them that
5 place. 10 Every clean member of N.A. could have been rejected
6 by some kind of membership requirement or another. Many
7 of us would not be alive today if we hadn't found a program
8 which accepted us when we wanted help. 11 We originally came
9 to this program for many reasons, but those of us who have
10 stayed have done so for the same reason--the desire to stop
11 using. 12 Many of us didn't even know that addiction was a
12 problem. Many of us could not visualize a life without
13 drugs, let alone want it. Many of us had reached the point
14 in our addiction where we felt there was no hope for us, we
15 only wanted a little relief. 13 It wasn't until after we came
16 to N.A. that we found out that we had a disease and that
17 recovery was possible for us. 14 Membership in N.A. isn't
18 automatic when someone walks in the door; it isn't every auto-
19 matic when the newcomer has a desire to stop using. The
20 decision to become a part of our fellowship rests with the
21 individual. 15 Any addict who has a desire to stop using can
22 become a member of N.A.

23 16 We are Narcotics Anonymous and our problem is addiction,
24 other fellowships deal with other problems. 17 Most newcomers
25 are led to the fellowship which best suits their needs.
26 Individuals come with problems that express themselves in
27 various ways. They don't clearly fit into our fellowship.
28 18 Many of these people become valuable and active members of
29 several fellowships while others single out the fellowship
30 with which they are the most comfortable. 19 Our primary pur-
31 pose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers;
32 where they find recovery is not our basic concern. 20 We know
33 of members with a history of drug abuse who have found
34 recovery in other fellowships. We support these members and

rejoice in their recovery, and addict who has found freedom
and recovery anywhere is a friend of ours.²¹ Although we
would welcome them in our groups, we do not seek them out
or force them to join N.A. This would not be in keeping
with our spiritual aims.

²² The twelve step fellowships do not compete. We are mutually
supportive and cooperate for the common good.²³ For us re-
covery is more important than membership.²⁴ However, some
newcomers seem to have trouble finding a fellowship or
fellowships in which they fit. We encourage them to shop
around, to attend various meetings and find out where they
most fully identify.²⁵ They might ask themselves: "Where do
I hear about problems most like my problems? Where are there
members who are living the kind of life I would like to live?
and Where am I most comfortable?"²⁶ We have also met members
who are uncertain about where they really belong. We suggest
that they ask themselves three questions:

- 1.-What message do you carry? (What is the nature of your
recovery and what have you recovered from?)
- 2.-Who are you trying to carry this message to?
- 3.-Where are you trying to carry this message?

²⁷ We suggest that the answers to these three questions should
not be in conflict; we cannot give away anything we haven't
got. We cannot carry any message that is not our own.

²⁸ The choice of membership rests with the individual.²⁹ We
feel the ideal state for our fellowship exists when an addict
can openly and freely come to an N.A. meeting; wherever and
whenever they choose and leave just as freely if they want to.

³⁰ We realize that there is nothing we can do to make an addict
stop using.³¹ However, we have learned that recovery is a
reality and that life without drugs is better than we ever
imagined.³² We open our doors to addicts hoping that they can
find what we have found; but knowing that only those who
have a desire to stop using and want what we have to offer

1 will join us in our new way of life.

TRADITION FOUR

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

2 1 The autonomy of our groups is one of our most precious
3 possessions. 2 This sounds great but what does it mean? What
4 is it to be autonomous? Websters defines autonomous as
5 "having the right or power of self government", "undertaken
6 or carried on without outside control", "existing or capable
7 of existing independently", "responding, reacting or develop-
8 ing independently of the whole". Autonomy is all these
9 things to us and more. 3 Our groups are truly self-governing
10 and are not subject to outside control. 4 Each group can
11 exist on it's own if it must. Each group has had to grow
12 on its own and stand on its own two feet. 5 One might ask:
13 Is this really true, are we truly autonomous, what about
14 our service committees, our offices, our activities, our
15 hotlines, and all the other things that go on in N.A.? 6 The
16 answer, of course, is that these things are not N.A. They
17 are services that we can utilize to help us in our recovery
18 and to further the primary purpose of our groups. 7 Narcotics
19 Anonymous is a Fellowship of men and women, addicts, meeting
20 together in groups, and using a given set of spiritual prin-
21 ciples to find freedom from addiction and a new way to live.
22 8 All else is not N.A. Those other things we mentioned are the
23 result of members caring enough to reach out and offer their
24 help and experience so that our road may be easier. 9 Whether
25 or not we choose to utilize these services for the benefit
26 of a group is up to us, they are not thrust down our throats.
27 10 Some have taken offense to this, they say that when they
28 started out they were told they had to register their group.
29 11 This may be true, but many groups exist that have never regis-
30 tered. We ask groups to register because we can't recognize
31 them unless we know that they exist. 12 Once a group registers

they are sent a starter kit. This contains many suggestions 1
and is one of the ways we share our experience to help the 2
group.³ Whether or not they take our suggestion is their 3
decision. In this starter kit it says that we must abide 4
by the Twelve Traditions in order to call ourselves Narcotics 5
Anonymous.⁴ This is also true, but these Traditions are part 6
of the set of spiritual principles that are N.A.⁵ Without 7
the Traditions, N.A. does not exist.⁶ It really is up to 8
the group, in the end they must choose for themselves.. 9
They are autonomous. 10

¹⁷ But we said that for N.A. autonomy was more than this, 11
and it is. For us in Narcotics Anonymous autonomy is also 12
creative freedom.¹⁸ It gives our groups the freedom to act on 13
their own to establish their atmosphere of recovery, to 14
serve their members, and to fulfill their primary purpose. 15
¹⁹ It is this aspect of autonomy that makes it one of our most 16
precious principles. It is for this reason that we guard 17
our autonomy so carefully. 18

²⁰ We are autonomous; and from what we have said it would 19
seem that we, in our groups, can do whatever we decide to 20
do, regardless of what anybody says. Well, yes and no. 21

²¹ Each group does have complete freedom except when their 22
actions become a threat to other groups and the rest of N.A. 23

²² This is the other half of Tradition Four and the way we 24
use our autonomy is just as important as autonomy itself. 25
Like group conscience, autonomy can be a two-edged sword. 26

²³ In the past group autonomy has been used to justify the 27
violation of other Traditions.²⁴ This should never be allowed 28
to happen because as we have said spiritual principles are 29
never in conflict with other spiritual principles.²⁵ If a con- 30
flict or contradiction does exist that means that somewhere 31
along the line we have somehow slipped away from the true 32
principles. 33

²⁶ When we use our autonomy for the good of our group we 34

1 must be careful that our actions do not hurt other groups
2 or N.A. as a whole.²⁷ Again we are given a simple rule of
3 thumb. If we check to make sure that our actions are
4 clearly within the bounds of our Traditions, if we don't
5 represent anyone but ourselves, if we don't dictate to
6 other groups or force anything upon them, and if we take
7 the time to consider the consequences of our actions ahead
8 of time, then all will be well.

TRADITION FIVE

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

10 ¹ "You mean to say that our primary purpose is to carry the
11 message? I thought we were here to clean up? I thought our
12 primary purpose was to recover from drug addiction?"² For
13 the individual this is certainly true, our members are here
14 to find freedom from addiction, and a new way of life.³ How-
15 ever, groups aren't addicted and don't recover. All our
16 groups can do is plant the seed for recovery and bring addicts
17 together so that the magic of empathy, honesty, caring,
18 sharing, and service can do its thing.⁴ The purpose of this
19 Tradition is to insure that this atmosphere of recovery is
20 maintained.⁵ This can only be achieved by keeping our groups
21 newcomer and service oriented.⁶ The fact that we require
22 each and every group to focus on carrying the message pro-
23 vides consistency. An addict can count on us if they want
24 help.⁷ Unity of action and unity of purpose make possible
25 what seemed impossible for us--recovery.

26 ⁸ The Twelfth Step of our personal program also says that
27 we should carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
28 This is no coincidence.⁹ Working with others is one of our
29 most powerful tools. "The therapeutic value of one addict
30 helping another is unparalleled."¹⁰ For the newcomer this is
31 how they find out about N.A. and how they stay clean; and for

the members this reaffirms and clarifies what they have
learned.11 The group is the most perfect vehicle we have for
carrying the message to the addict who still suffers.12 When
a member carries the message, he is somewhat bound by his
interpretation and personality.13 The problem with litera-
ture is language; the feelings, the intensity, and the
strengths are sometimes lost.14 In our groups, with all per-
sonalities, the message is a recurring theme; an underlying
reality.

15 What would happen if our groups had other primary pur-
poses? We feel our message would be diluted and then lost.

16 If we concentrated on making money many might get rich. If
we were a social club we'd find many friends and lovers.
If we specialized in education we'd end up with many smart
addicts. If our specialty was medical help many would get
healthy.17 If our group purpose was anything other than carry-
ing the message, many would die and few would find recovery.

18 What is our message? We hear this question answered
many ways. In our groups we share our experience, strength
and hope and this is our message - that an addict, any addict,
can stop using drugs; lose the desire to use again; and find
a new way to live.19 Their message is hope and the promise of
freedom.20 When it's all said and done, our primary group
purpose can only be to carry this message to the addict who
still suffers because this is all we have to give.

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.

1 Our Fifth Tradition defines our primary purpose and our
Sixth Tradition tells us some of the things we must do to
preserve and protect this spiritual aim.2 This Tradition tells

1 us that we ought never endorse, finance or lend the N.A.
2 name to any outside enterprise.³ And then we are warned
3 exactly what can happen if we ignore this advice.⁴ This
4 Tradition is the basis for our policy of nonaffiliation
5 and is extremely important to the continuation and growth
6 of N.A.⁵ Unfortunately, this Tradition has also been a point
7 of controversy within our Fellowship.

8 ⁶ Let's take a closer look at what this Tradition really
9 says. First thing a group ought never to endorse.⁷ To en-
10 dorse is to sanction, approve, or recommend. Endorsements
11 can either be direct or implied.⁸ We see direct endorsements
12 everyday in T.V. commercials. Direct endorsements can also
13 be in writing and often appear in proposals and promotional
14 sales material.⁹ A direct endorsement is often used to try
15 and persuade someone to do something.¹⁰ An implied endorse-
16 ment is one that is not stated.¹¹ Although we don't usually
17 recognize it as such, implied endorsements occur in our
18 stories. We say, "The big kids used it and if they used it,
19 it had to be good."¹² The next thing we ought never do is
20 finance. This is more obvious; to finance means to supply
21 funds or to help support financially.¹³ The third thing
22 warned against is lending the N.A. name. This means letting
23 someone use the name, Narcotics Anonymous, for something
24 that is not Narcotics Anonymous.¹⁴ It also means letting an
25 outsider mention or utilize our name for their own purposes.
26 Several times other programs have tried to use Narcotics
27 Anonymous as part of their "services offered" to help justify
28 a funding proposal. Had we allowed this, we would have been
29 letting them use our name.¹⁵ These are the "ought nevers" in
30 the Sixth Tradition.

31 ¹⁶ This tradition also tells us "who". A related facility
32 is any other facility or place that involves N.A. members.
33 ¹⁷ It might be a halfway house, a detox center, a counseling
34 center, a clubhouse, or anyone of a number of such places.

Oftentimes, people are easily confused by what is N.A. and what are the related facilities.¹⁸ Recovery houses which have been started or staffed by N.A. members have to take special care that the differentiation is clear.¹⁹ Perhaps the most confusion exists when it involves a clubhouse situation. Newcomers and even older members often identify the clubhouse with N.A. and N.A. with the clubhouse. We should make a special effort to let these people know that there is a difference.²⁰ The second "who" outside enterprises. An outside enterprise is any agency, any business venture, any religion, any society, any organization, any unrelated activity, or any fellowship.²¹ Most of these are pretty straight forward, except for other fellowships. Most of us would not confuse N.A. with something like a specific religious fellowship, but when it comes to other twelve-step fellowships, we sometimes have problems.²² Let's face it; Narcotics Anonymous is not Alcoholics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Emotional Health Anonymous, Smokers Anonymous, Parents Anonymous or any other anonymous.²³ Narcotics Anonymous is a separate and distinct fellowship in its own right. Our problem is addiction, the other twelve-step fellowships specialize in other problems, and our relationship with them is one of "cooperation not affiliation".²⁴ The use of the literature of another fellowship in our meetings constitutes an implied endorsement of an outside enterprise.²⁵ The Sixth Tradition goes on to warn us what may happen if we do what we ought never do: "...lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose".²⁶ If you say this quickly it almost sounds like "money, power and sex;" our old enemies. If you say it real quickly, it might sound like "people, places and things;" our old resentments and fantasies. Even if you don't say it quickly, they have much in common.²⁷ They often become obsessions and shut us off from our spiritual aim.²⁸ They are the sort of

1 things we get involved with and run with until we are con-
2 sumed.²⁷ For the individual, this type of abuse can be
3 devastating, but for the group, even the slightest touch
4 can be disasterous.³⁰ When we as a group waver from our
5 primary purpose, addicts die who might have found recovery.
6 ³¹ The Sixth Tradition has been one of those just sort
7 of read and let it go at that. It's hard to understand.
8 But when we really take a look, when we really try to
9 understand, it's simplicity amazes us.³² We can see the danger
10 of endorsement, financial support and letting others use our
11 name; we can see how easily things can lead to abuse of money,
12 property and prestige; and we can foresee the results of this
13 abuse and the heartache it can bring.

TRADITION SEVEN

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

14 ¹ Being self-supporting is an important part of our new way
15 of life. For the individual, this is usually quite a change.
16 ² In our addictions, we were dependent on people, places and
17 things. We looked to them to support us and to supply the
18 things we found lacking in ourselves.³ As recovering addicts,
19 we find that we are still dependent, but our dependence has
20 shifted from the things around us to a loving God and the
21 inner strength we get in our relationship with Him.⁴ We who
22 were unable to function as human beings now find anything is
23 possible for us. Those dreams we gave up long ago can now
24 become realities with God's help.⁵ Addicts as a group have
25 been and still are, millstones around society's neck.⁶ In
26 N.A., our groups of addicts not only try to stand on their
27 own two feet, but demand the right to do so.
28 ⁷ Money has always been a problem for us. We could never
29 find enough to support ourselves, our habits and our self-
30 gratification.⁸ We worked, stole, conned, begged and sold

ourselves; there was never enough money to fill the emptiness inside.⁹ In our recovery, money is often still a problem; we stopped trying to support our habits; we got to work and often find unexpected success.¹⁰ We clean up the wreckage of our past and things seem to be going our way for a change. However, financial security can still seem to run like water through our fingers.¹¹ We've got a lot of growing up to do and this takes time. Common sense and responsibility are things most of us usually have to learn from scratch.

¹² Learning how to live can hurt a lot, but for most of us it's a great adventure.

¹³ N.A. needs money to run the group; there is rent to pay, supplies to buy and literature to pay for.¹⁴ We pass the hat to cover these expenses and whatever is left over goes to support our services and to further our primary purpose.

¹⁵ Unfortunately, there's usually pitifully little left over after a group pays its way.¹⁶ Sometimes members who can afford it kick a little extra in to help. Sometimes a few get together and put on some activity to help raise funds.¹⁷ These efforts help a lot and without them, much that we have been given to do would have had to be left undone.¹⁸ N.A. remains a shoe-string operation, and even though it's sometimes frustrating, we really wouldn't have it any other way; we know the price would be too high to bear.

¹⁹ Our poverty enables us to be much closer to our Fellowship. We all have to pull together, and in pulling together we learn that we really are a part of something greater than ourselves.

²⁰ Our policy concerning money is clearly stated: We decline outside contributions, our Fellowship is completely self-supporting.²¹ We accept no funding, no endowments, no loans, no gifts, and no handouts because we know that there's no such thing as a free ride.²² Everything has its price, regardless of intent. Whether the price is money, promises,

1 concessions, special recognition, endorsement, favors or
2 anything else; it's just too high for us.²³ Even if those
3 who would help us could guarantee no strings, we still
4 would not accept their aid. The price would still be
5 too high.²⁴ Nor will we charge for our services for to do
6 so would distract from our spiritual purpose.²⁵ We cannot
7 even afford to let our members contribute more than their
8 fair share. Because for us the price is paid within our
9 groups: disunity, controversy, insanity and death.²⁶ We
10 will not put our freedom on the line again; not for "an
11 easier, softer way", not for anything; never again!

TRADITION EIGHT

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

12 ¹ Some have described N.A. as a fellowship made up of the
13 failures from other programs.² To a great extent this is
14 true; many of our members have unsuccessfully sought re-
15 covery in many other programs, in many other ways.³ "Jail
16 did not help us at all."⁴ Medicine, religion and psychiatry
17 seemed to have no answers for us that we could use.⁵ We
18 ourselves have said, "Give us the ones you can't do any-
19 thing with; give us your hardest cases. We'll welcome them
20 with open arms."⁶ Somehow N.A. works when other programs
21 and methods have failed.⁷ What is it about us that makes
22 this so? We don't have any secret or special methods. We
23 don't have any cure-all remedies. We don't really have
24 many of the things that others offer addicts.⁸ What is it
25 about N.A. that makes us the most widespread and success-
26 ful program for addicts in the world? Perhaps it's some-
27 thing simple. Perhaps it's because we don't have these
28 things, that it is possible for us to succeed where others
29 have failed.⁹ What do we have? We have our steps; we have
30 mobility; we understand and care; and we are motivated; we
31 have each other.

16 The basis of our program is the Twelve Steps.11 We got 1
these Steps from Alcoholics Anonymous, who thought enough 2
of them to give them freely. A.A. got the Steps from 3
various sources.12 The Steps are based on spiritual prin- 4
ciples that have been known and followed for centuries. 5

13 Most religious or spiritual orders utilize these same 6
principles in some way.14 These principles are certainly 7
not unique to us, but they are spiritual principles and 8
that makes them special.15 Spiritual principles are basic 9
truths that do not change with time or place; they simply 10
work in all cases. 11

16 This program has been called a "hip pocket program". 12
We don't require any equipment or special facilities. It 13
doesn't take special training to make this program work. 14

17 We carry this program with us wherever we go.18 We carry 15
our message to the addict wherever he is and whenever he's 16
ready.19 This program fits every addict because the addict 17
learns to apply our Steps to his life in his own way.20 Our 18
ability to reach addicts anytime, anywhere has certainly 19
been a great advantage for us. 20

21 Perhaps our greatest asset is empathy, our ability 21
to understand and identify with the newcomer.22 We know 22
what it's really like to kick the habit; we've been there. 23
We know what it's like to face life without drugs, each of 24
us has had to do this. We know the prices of addiction; 25
we've all had to pay them.23 We can't look down on the addict 26
who comes to us; we've all been newcomers. We can't con 27
each other; we've played all the games.24 We understand the 28
addict and addiction perhaps better than anyone else can, 29
after all, this is the life we lived.25 We care for and 30
love the addict as if he were ourselves, because the addict 31
really is ourself. 32

26 Our motivation is simple; this program was given freely 33
to us by addicts who cared.27 We only do the same. We have 34

1 learned that "we can only keep what we have by giving it
2 away". We know that recovery is a matter of life and
3 death for the newcomer and for ourselves.
4 29 These are the things we are and how our program works.
5 They are a reality for us. We have our Steps; we have
6 mobility; we really understand and care; and we are moti-
7 vated by survival.30 All these things are a contradiction to
8 traditional recovery approaches and to professionalism.
9 31 The professional has no place in our Fellowship; our very
10 nature prohibits this.32 Professionalism as such is not the
11 problem.33 We recognize and admire the professional and his
12 sphere.34 Many of our members in the endeavors outside the
13 Fellowship have become professionals in their own right.
14 35 It's just that there's no place for professionalism in N.A.;
15 for our purpose we have learned the therapeutic value of one
16 addict helping another is truly without parallel.
17 36 Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the
18 addict who still suffers.37 We do the best we can and some-
19 times we need a little help.38 Volunteer work is the back-
20 bone of our service, but volunteers work only to the best
21 of their abilities, only at their convenience. Some of our
22 services require skills or abilities we are unable to supply
23 as volunteers.39 Most of us do not have the training necessary
24 or the extra time required to fulfill these functions.40 Our
25 Eighth Tradition also recognizes this and tells us that we
26 may employ special workers in our service centers.41 Without
27 their help, we might be unable to respond to many of those
28 who reach out to us for help.

TRADITION NINE

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

1 This Tradition defines the way we run our Fellowship. 2 A lot of confusion has occurred because of misinterpretations of our Ninth Tradition. 3 Our members are addicts who have the desire to stop using, who want what we have to offer, and who have chosen to join us. 4 Our meetings are a gathering of members for the purpose of staying clean. 5 Our principles are the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions. 6 Another point of confusion is the term organized, which has several meanings. 7 Our Steps and Traditions are uniform and set in a specific order. They are numbered; they are not random and unstructured. 8 Certainly they are organized, but this is not the organization of our Ninth Tradition. 9 For the purpose of this Tradition, organized means having an administrative structure, and this implies management and control. 10 On this basis, the meaning of Tradition Nine is clear. N.A. should never be run by bureaucracy or management nor controlled by individuals within an administrative structure. 11 If we were to allow this, N.A. would surely lose the best it has to offer and choke to death on our insanities. 12 Even without this Tradition, organization such as this would be in opposition to our spiritual principles. 13 A loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience would find no place within an administrative structure. 14 How could a trusted servant manage and control? Service and management are contradictory. 15 Government implies control, but our leaders do not govern. How could autonomy exist in an administrative structure? 16 Specialization and professionalism are the basis of any management scheme. 17 Any administrative structure, by its very nature, eliminated the possibility of autonomy. 18 An organized N.A. is a contradiction in terms and any attempt to force organization on us would destroy us. 19 The Ninth Tradition goes on to define the nature of the

1 things that we can do, outside N.A., to help N.A. 20 It says
2 that we may create service boards or committees directly
3 responsible to those they serve. 21 This is the basis of our
4 service structure, but keep in mind that although these en-
5 tities are created to serve our Fellowship they are not, in
6 fact, a part of Narcotics Anonymous. 22 Our service structure
7 consists of our groups and their business sense: our area
8 service committees, regional service committees, World
9 Service Conference, World Service Board of Trustees, and
10 World Service Office. 23 Each of these is directly responsi-
11 ble through the service structure, to the members of N.A.
12 and to be loving God as He may express Himself in our group
13 conscience.

TRADITION TEN

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

14 1 In order to achieve our spiritual aim, Narcotics Anony-
15 mouse must be known and respected.. Nowhere is this more
16 obvious than in our history. 24 N.A. was founded in 1953.
17 For twenty years our Fellowship remained small and obscure.
18 3 In the 1970's, society realized that addiction had become
19 a worldwide condition and began to look for answers. 4 Along
20 with this came a change in the way people conceived the
21 addict. 5 This change allowed addicts to seek help more
22 openly. 5 N.A. groups sprang up in many places where we were
23 never tolerated before. Recovering addicts pave the way
24 for more groups and more recoveries. 6 Today, N.A. is a
25 worldwide Fellowship; we are known and respected everywhere.
26 7 If an addict has never heard of us, he cannot seek us
27 out. If those who work with addicts are unaware of our
28 existence, they cannot refer them to us. 8 One of the most
29 important things we can do to help in our primary purpose
30 is to let people know who, what and where we are. 9 If we do

this, and if our reputation is good, we will surely grow. 1
10 We were led to addicts so we could give to them what 2
others gave us. 3
11 Our recovery speaks for itself. Our Traditions protect 4
us. 12 Our Tenth Tradition specifically helps protect our 5
reputation. 13 This Tradition says that N.A. has no opinion on 6
outside issues. 14 We don't take sides. We don't endorse any 7
causes. We don't have any recommendations. 15 N.A., as a 8
Fellowship, does not participate in the politics of society. 9
To do so would be to invite controversy; it would jeopard- 10
ize our reputation. 16 Those who agree with our opinions 11
might commend us for taking a stand, but some would always 12
disagree. This would effect the way they see us. 13
17 With a price this high, is it any wonder that we choose 14
not to take sides in society's problems? 18 For our own sur- 15
vival we have no opinion on outside issues; we keep our- 16
selves apart so that we will never forget why we are here, 17
and so that others will not mistake our purpose. 18

TRADITION ELEVEN

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

1 This Tradition also deals with our relationship to those 19
outside the Fellowship. 2 It tells us how we should relate to 20
the addict who still suffers, and it tells us how to conduct 21
our effort at the public level. 3 This has meaning for deal- 22
ing with both potential members and the general public. 4 We 23
have learned the value of teaching by example rather than 24
direction. This has worked for us and we utilize this prin- 25
ciple when we work with other addicts. 5 Our message is most 26
obvious in our lives. In this sense we are the message. 27
6 When working with a newcomer, we try to tell them where we 28

1 came from and what has happened to us.⁷ If they can identify
2 with us and if they want what we have to offer them, they
3 may join us. This is attraction.⁸ We never promise anything
4 other than a chance to stop using if they want to.⁹ This is
5 all we really have to offer and to make any other promise
6 would be to distract from our primary purpose.

7 ¹⁰ We should never misrepresent what we offer even if by
8 doing so we might be able to get a few more addicts to attend
9 our meetings.¹¹ It is easy to make promises.¹² We can tell an
10 addict that we offer all kinds of things other than recovery.
11 Addicts would flock to our doors; they would come for a
12 free meal, or housing, or money, or a job, or a lover, or
13 any kind of free ride.¹³ But how many would have a desire to
14 stop using, and how many would leave as soon as they found
15 out we wouldn't keep our promise? How many would never
16 come back? How many would die without ever having a chance
17 to find recovery?¹⁴ Promotion is representing ourselves as
18 something we are not.¹⁵ In order to accomplish something we
19 want, we don't use promotion to encourage addicts to come
20 to us and we don't use promotions to make ourselves more
21 acceptable.¹⁶ Our successes speak for themselves.

22 ¹⁷ Our Eleventh Tradition also tells us we need also main-
23 tain anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.¹⁸ Most
24 of us interpret this to mean that we don't give our names or
25 show our faces publicly as members of N.A.¹⁹ What would
26 happen if a member publicly declared that he was a member of
27 Narcotics Anonymous and let everyone know the wonderful
28 things that N.A. can do for addicts, and later he was found
29 dead of an overdose? What would people who had heard his
30 declaration and also knew about his death think about the
31 value of N.A.?

32 ²⁰ Personal anonymity is really much more. It is a point
33 of freedom, and personal recovery.²¹ No member of N.A. should
34 ever place themselves in a position where they have to make

a statement for N.A. as a whole. No one member is N.A. and
no one member can speak for us. ²We have no elite class nor
special members. Each of us has our story, and our own
recovery. ³Individually, we are powerless but as a Fellow-
ship we can achieve great things.

TRADITION TWELVE

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

- ¹ The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous are even
more inter-related than our Steps. ² They compliment each
other and are bound together by the principle of anonymity.
- ³ We've heard "principles before personalities" so often it
has become a cliché like "Take it Easy" or "First Things
First". But what does it mean? What is the principle of
anonymity?
- ⁴ Anonymity is the whole basis of the program; it is
truly the foundation. In order to survive, we must set
aside the differences we live by and become a part of a
greater whole. ⁵ The awakening of anonymity in each of us
occurs when we finally give up trying to manage our lives
and begin to depend on a power greater than ourselves.
- ⁶ Let us examine anonymity. It is the spiritual founda-
tion of our Traditions. ⁷ The First Tradition talks about
common welfare and N.A. unity. The placing of common wel-
fare before personal welfare in the group setting is a
direct application of anonymity. ⁸ The "I wants, I wills and
I shoulds" are replaced by "we"-oriented thinking for the
common good; the result is unity. ⁹ Unity is the direct
result of the application of the principle of anonymity
within the group and the fellowship.
- ¹⁰ The Second Tradition talks about having but one ultimate

1 authority. No single person (no personality) has authority.
2 11 This is vested in a loving God to whom we have turned over
3 our will and is vested in a loving God to whom we have
4 turned over our will and lives. 12 The anonymity of the ser-
5 vant should be typical of our leaders. They themselves are
6 not important; it is only the service which counts.
7 13 The Third Tradition is a statement of anonymity. We do
8 not define our members. 14 We only insist that they have a
9 desire to stop using. Nothing else should matter. 15 This
10 desire is the one crucial must of our program. We must
11 either come with it or develop it before this program will
12 work for us.
13 16 Anonymity makes possible the autonomy of our Fourth
14 Tradition. Without the principle of anonymity, each group
15 would set itself up as something different from the rest--
16 something special. 17 Our groups would begin competing with
17 each other for members and for recognition. The resulting
18 loss of unity would eventually destroy N.A.
19 18 Our Fifth Tradition says that each group has but one
20 primary purpose. This unity of purpose is the tie that
21 binds our groups together. 19 Our groups are not truly differ-
22 ent; each has the same spiritual aim and orientation. This
23 anonymity, and the anonymity of the groups, make it possible
24 for an addict to depend on us for help.
25 20 Tradition Six tells us that we ought never finance,
26 endorse, or lend the N.A. name to any facility or outside
27 enterprise. 21 To violate this rule would be to lose our anony-
28 mity. With anonymity gone, personalities would take over
29 and problems of money, property and prestige would surely
30 divert us from our primary purpose.
31 22 Our Seventh Tradition guarantees each member the right
32 and privilege to share in the financial support of Narcotics
33 Anonymous. Each of us is given the equal opportunity to help
34 anonymously. 23 We uniformly reject outside contributions

regardless of their source. We also do not allow a member to
contribute more than his fair share; to do so would be to
encourage the loss of their anonymity.

24 In regards to our Eighth Tradition, we do not single out
our members as "professionals"; we try to maintain their
chance to experience personal recovery and grow.25 Not forcing
power and status on our members is yet another form of anony-
mity.

26 The service board and committees of our Ninth Tradition
are directly responsible to a loving God as expressed in a
group conscience.27 They are not responsible to any particu-
lar personality or set of personalities.

28 In our Tenth Tradition, we strive to limit the growth
of powerful personalities and safeguard anonymity by having
no opinion on outside issues.29 When controversy exists,
people take sides, personalities come forward, and as this
happens anonymity fades.30 Here again we find consistency of
action, and in its own way this is also anonymity.

31 In our Eleventh Tradition, we find that the way we
relate to the outside world is in fact using personal anony-
mity.32 None of us are singled out, no one of us represents
N.A.; to do so would be to place our personalities ahead of
others and this would be a violation of our anonymity.33 In
attraction rather than promotion, we give the addict the
right to join in our anonymity and find recovery.

34 Anonymity is everywhere in our Traditions and in our
Fellowship. It is one of the basics of recovery.35 The prin-
ciple of anonymity protects us from our defects of personality
and character. Where anonymity exists, personalities and
differences have no power.36 Anonymity in action makes it im-
possible for personalities to come before principles.