

# 2016–2018 Issue Discussion Topic Input Summary

## How to Use Guiding Principles

As we have done in previous cycles, we offered an IDT this cycle to familiarize members with a new piece of NA literature. Workshops previewed the structure of *Guiding Principles* and used questions from the “In Service” section on the first three Traditions. We received feedback from members who participated in 14 different workshops hosted by area and regional service bodies, assemblies, conventions, a multi-regional service conference, and one convenference. These events were held in six countries on five continents. This session was one of the most popular IDTs in recent years, with standing room only reported at several events.

We asked, “Does our NA community work together in a spirit of unity? How can we build or enhance a spirit of unity?” to prompt Tradition One discussions. There was general agreement that the key to unity lies in a focus on our common welfare and primary purpose. The input identified a number of unity-building activities coordinated by groups and service bodies. These ranged from taco Tuesdays (reported from someone attending Western Service Learning Days) to many mentions of consensus building by service bodies. Notably, the bulk of the input on Tradition One reflected the inclusive, informal actions of individuals. As someone at the Irish Regional workshop mentioned, “NA unity depends on personal recovery,” and vice versa. Members described how they both demonstrated and enhanced unity before and after their home groups. Their efforts and observations included reaching out to newer members and those who seem isolated, exchanging phone numbers, resisting cliquishness, offering empathy, encouragement, and informal mentorship, and extending invitations for post-meeting activities to all.

Questions from the chapter on Tradition Two in *Guiding Principles* served as a second discussion prompt. Small groups exchanged ideas on “Does our NA community work together in a spirit of unity? How can we build or enhance a spirit of unity?” and offered a vision of an inclusive and informed group conscience process that practices open-mindedness, is Higher Power-centered, and is respectful to all participants. Asked “What would an observer notice about decision making in our service body?” the input suggests that our passion for carrying the message of NA and our loosely organized approach to business might be noted. One Oregon area may have articulated a common thread most clearly when it reported a group conscience process committed to being “spirit led, not ego driven.”

To prompt discussion of our Third Tradition, we started by asking, “Who is missing from our meetings?” A familiar list emerged, including older and younger addicts, gay and lesbian members, those with physical limitations, addicts with young children, geographically isolated members, women, and members of various ethnic and language groups. As a follow-up question, workshops discussed, “How and why do outside issues affect opportunities for addicts to recover in NA in our community?” Responses echoed some of the findings of our [NAWS] environmental scan, including stigma about addiction, religious and anti-religious views, the influence of treatment programs, and the perception of NA as an unsafe place by addiction professionals.

## Atmosphere of Recovery in Service

In the 2016 CAR Survey, this topic scored the highest percentage of regional survey responses and the second highest percentage of individual responses (after Applying Our Principles to Technology and Social Media). It was also included in a regional proposal that identified the second bullet point from A Vision for NA Service: *Every member, inspired by the gift of recovery, experiences spiritual growth and fulfillment through service.* To attain that spiritual growth and fulfillment, an atmosphere of recovery in our service meetings is essential.

Being of service in NA is as much a part of our recovery journey as step work, attending meetings, or connecting with a Higher Power. Through service, we become connected with our Fellowship. We begin to chip away at our self-centeredness and to understand the importance of selflessness as we discover the value we bring to helping others. When we come together in our service bodies, each of us at various stages of cleantime and recovery, we practice what we're learning in our individual journeys. So, harmonious, inspiring, and spirit-filled service meetings don't just happen as all of us are learning to apply a variety of spiritual principles, NA Traditions and Concepts, and behavioral changes. Achieving an atmosphere of recovery in service requires effort on the part of all members involved.

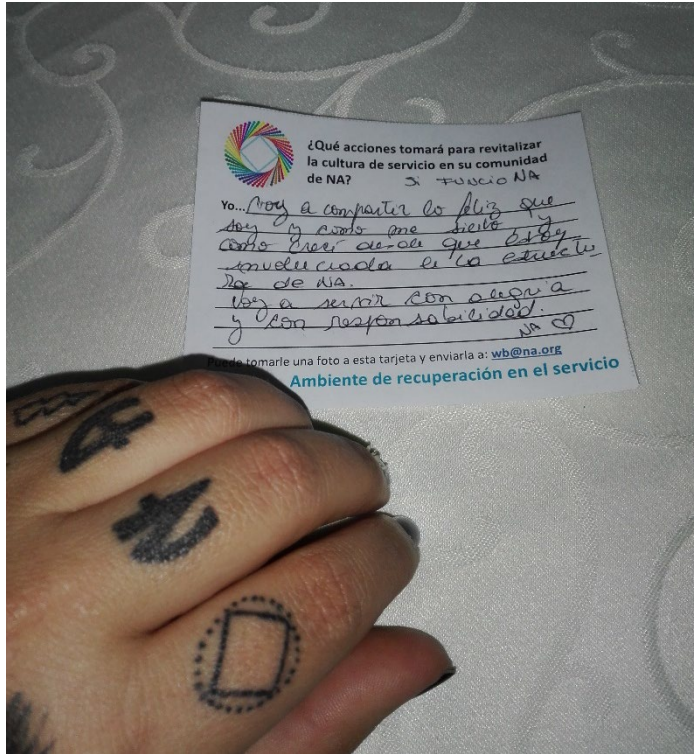
This IDT workshop called on members to share their understanding of and experiences with:

- spiritual growth and fulfillment through service,
- what an atmosphere of recovery looks like,
- what members and service bodies can do to nurture an atmosphere of recovery,
- specific actions members can take to make service more attractive, and
- inspiring members to serve in ways that best match their skills and talents.

Member input from 30 events held in nine countries ranged from common sense to inspirational. Responses to all of the questions often included maintaining a focus on our primary purpose; being guided by our Steps, Traditions, Concepts, spiritual principles, and a loving Higher Power; providing mentoring and training to incoming trusted servants; and teaching newer members through sponsorship, exposure to service opportunities, and example about the importance of service. Most responses identified spiritual growth and fulfillment as the result of a transformation marked by a shift away from doing service strictly out of a perceived duty. Instead, many noted feeling inspired, joyous, and grateful to be of service. Others noted how applying spiritual principles had led them to participate more fully, to accept consensus, and to serve with humility.

When asked what an atmosphere of recovery in service looks like, members shared about the importance of actively listening to and respecting each other; and providing an atmosphere that is safe, welcoming, and inclusive. Words like *gratitude*, *consistency*, *delegation*, *empowerment*, *trust*, *guidance*, and *humility* were frequently used to describe an atmosphere of recovery. One member said simply that an atmosphere of recovery looks happy.

The questions asking what members and service bodies can do to nurture an atmosphere of recovery and how to inspire members in ways that match their skills garnered many ideas. Input included honoring the spirit of rotation, having an effective meeting facilitator and a focused agenda, and being familiar with and following guidelines. Another idea was to assess the existing



service system and make adjustments and changes such as adopting a task- or project-based system to streamline services. Actively recruiting members to be of service, speaking positively of service experience, and personally inviting members to get involved also topped the list of suggestions. The simple act of getting to know fellow members better—whether through one-on-one interaction or organized icebreaker/team-building activities at service meetings—or inviting members to participate in specific tasks were often mentioned as ways to help members find ways to serve in ways that best match their skills. Finally, some responses emphasized the importance of providing thorough training, ongoing mentorship, and clear, reasonable expectations of fellow trusted servants.

A unique aspect of this IDT workshop is the card that participants are asked to complete at the end of the session. The card is a call to action with the question, “What actions will you take to revitalize the service culture in your NA community?” Members were encouraged to forward photos of their action cards, and to date we have received 132 cards with a variety of inspired, enthusiastic, and determined commitments. From sharing a positive attitude about service to practicing principles before personalities and thanking fellow members for their service, members shared their passion and dedication to helping to create an atmosphere of recovery in service.

## Technology and Social Media: Applying Our Principles

The final 2016–2018 issue discussion topic, Technology and Social Media: Applying Our Principles, asked several questions about the principles relevant to the use of social media and the successes and challenges experienced by members and service bodies. The session asked members to prioritize and discuss some of these challenges and offer ideas for solutions. A summary of these discussions is provided below.

We received input from 19 different workshops hosted by area, regional, and zonal service bodies. These were held in five countries on three continents.

### *Principles*

Anonymity was the most commonly mentioned principle that does (or should) come into play when using social media. The principle was predominantly discussed in terms of personal anonymity or privacy, but the spiritual aspect was also mentioned more than once. Other frequently mentioned principles included integrity, responsibility, love, respect, unity, tolerance, compassion, humility, and honesty.

### *Successes*

We heard about a range of successes using social media, ranging from letting people know about NA and that it is a viable program of recovery, to the improved ability for service bodies to communicate and share information internally with members. Some members shared strategies that have been successful in their personal use of social media, all of which are captured in the solutions section below.

### *Challenges*

Unsurprisingly, the single most frequently mentioned challenge faced by individual members was the loss of personal anonymity due to posting pictures and tagging members without permission. Negative or abusive behavior was also mentioned several times.

The challenges encountered by service committees included the spread of misinformation, a poor public image of NA, the lack of guidelines for the use of social media, and the inadvertent sharing of personal information.

### *Solutions*

The most substantial portion of the workshop asked attendees to consider solutions to these challenges and asked two questions: “What principles are lacking?” and “Considering the challenge and applying our principles, what solutions can you offer?”

The responses regarding which principles are lacking were similar to those shared as relevant to the use of social media. Better utilizing these principles for guidance was one of the main solutions offered. Several ways to better educate members in the appropriate and effective use of social media were suggested, including:

- member-to-member guidance from sponsors and others with experience,
- local workshops, and

- referring to relevant literature such as Tradition essays.

Several workshops also offered suggestions for additional resources. These included:

- written guidelines for trusted servants, including the administrators of social media groups and pages;
- a list of dos and don'ts;
- changes to group formats that reference the use of social media during meetings; and
- revisions to the Traditions to include social media.

Workshop participants also offered a range of personal actions to improve how we manage our social media presence, including:

- informing ourselves about how different platforms function and about their settings,
- how to deal with any challenges that may arise,
- applying spiritual principles in our personal behavior.

### *Social Media as a Public Relations Tool*

Very little of the input we received offered responses to the IDT question regarding successes and challenges with using social media as a PR tool. The successes we did hear about included:

- using social media as a point of contact and to share information about NA to potential members, families, and professionals;
- using “push only” pages;
- utilizing social media platforms to show public service announcements; and
- considering how to maximize the visibility of NA pages in search engines.

The reported challenges included the difficulty of training members to apply the Traditions effectively and the lack of available resources to answer all social media requests.