

Dear Friends:

Enclosed please find our contributions for the Narcotics Anonymous 12 Steps and 12 Traditions. The compilation of these 24 principles was made possible through the devoted efforts of many members willing to work hundreds of hours to complete this manuscript. Through the incredible joint efforts of Northern & Southern California Regions, we are now prepared to turn our work over to you. We humbly request any and all comments at this time be directed to the World Literature Committee.

In grateful appreciation for the opportunity to participate in this work, wish to acknowledge each & every member personally for their patience and support in this effort.

Yours in service,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Viv Long", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Viv Long, Chairperson
Northern California Reg. Literature Subcommittee
May 5, 1983

STEP ONE-"We admitted we were powerless over our addiction--that our lives had become unmanageable".

It makes little difference how or when we realized that drugs had become a problem for us. What is important is that we felt so miserable we knew we couldn't go any further without help. We needed some relief - now.

Surrender did not come swiftly or easily for most of us. Our pride, ego and dishonesty blocked our efforts to come to terms with our complete failure to control our using. The bottom line is we could not stop using.

Powerlessness indicates an absolute incapacity to control events in our lives, --to prevent or predict their outcome. Learning that help was available and that we could once again live with some semblance of sanity was great news to us. We were tired of using drugs and of the pain they brought us. Drugs had stopped working the way we wanted them to. It was easier to quit than to run out of drugs!

We were forced to clean up at different times by lack of money, fear and jails. But some of us saw temporary periods of abstinence as evidence of our ability to control drugs. We told ourselves that we could stop if we wanted to; yet we denied the times we wanted to stop and couldn't. Powerlessness means using against our will.

The admission of powerlessness is central to recovery. Our addiction had been pointed out to us numerous times by others, but we denied that drugs were the problem. Clearly, we were unwilling to change old habits. It was much easier to justify and rationalize how life had dealt us a bad hand.

Often, we felt others caused us to experience hurt and upset. We chose to blame them rather than look within ourselves. We realize today, that we alone are responsible for our misery. Sometimes we have the idea that we might as well have just one more drug to see if we can handle it. We need to remember we never could handle drugs. Must we hit rock bottom to change our lives for the better?

We can only stop the progression of our addiction by not using drugs. We stay clean by going to meetings and developing an attitude of willingness to try the 12 Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. Unless we are truly tired of living the way we were, there is little chance of recovery. We must believe above all else that there is hope if we stay clean and sober.

Respectfully submitted by the participants of the Northern California Regional Literature Conference, April 22, 1983
San Francisco, CA.

STEP TWO-"Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity".

Some of us upon joining this fellowship had little difficulty with the First Step. Although not comprehending it fully, we knew we were addicts and out of control. But the Second Step seemed insurmountable. Some of us had turned our backs to our Higher Power while others of us thought our Higher Power had turned its back to us. Others of us vigorously denied that a power greater than ourselves ever existed. In coming to grips with this step, we found we would have to change some of our deepest and strongest beliefs. This at first seemed an impossible task. Going back to the First Step and comprehending our powerlessness over our addiction seemed to help. This allowed us to let down our defenses a little and take a look at what this step is about.

Many of us have been acquainted at some time in our lives with a Higher Power or Creator. But because of feelings of guilt or fear associated with our actions, chose to ignore or forget entirely any belief in this power. Only when our actions and feelings in recovery began to cause us more pain than we could cope with on our own, were we willing to recognize and ask for assistance from that part of our lives we left behind.

Still others came to Narcotics Anonymous with a preconcieved idea of a punishing or revengeful God that controlled our lives through reward and punishment. One of the most difficult tasks was to change that conception to one of a Power which was loving and forgiving, one which only wanted the best life for us. This became easier as we talked with others who had experienced the many benefits from successful acceptance of the Second Step and who had achieved a conscious contact with a Higher Power with daily use.

We can't tell you in simple words how we came to believe. For each of us it's been different. For some it was a magic moment of realization, profound and even mystical. Most of us built a foundation of belief in a Higher Power a little bit at a time.

For many of us this belief was long in coming because of our lost ability to have faith in anyone or anything other than ourselves. Only through perserverance and hard work and continued involvement with other clean addicts did we achieve the willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves.

Being as honest, openminded and willing as we can be with ourselves is indispenspensible in working this or any of the 12 Steps. It takes honesty to admit that we are not the greatest power there is and to admit that we need to be restored to sanity. It takes openmindedness to consider what powers are greater than ourselves which we can trust and have faith in. It takes willingness to try to work this step. A willingness to believe that there is some power that can restore us to sanity is all that is asked of us by this step.

Coming to believe does not necessarily mean our intention in coming here was to develop or enrich our sense of belief in anything. Most of us being extremely self-willed had no problem arguing that what we knew to be true was exactly as it was. For those of us who experienced our own power as ultimate in determining our direction in life, the acceptance of a power greater than ourselves became more of a challenge. For us, "acting as if" and accepting that others had the right to believe as they did somehow worked to create enough space for each of us individually to gain the willingness and humility to accept it. Eventually all of us realized, usually at the cost of bitter pain, the need to move from our position at the center of the universe and into a sense of joining with others in the fellowship.

The Power can be the group itself or it can follow a religious tradition. The only thing we want to emphasize is that you should feel comfortable with your Higher Power and be able to make the statement that your Higher Power cares about you. If you can accept the fact that a large number of addicts like yourself have found a way in the program of Narcotics Anonymous to live clean, then you only have to believe what you see in order to experience Step Two.

N.A. has many members. This collective Spiritual Power is certainly greater than that of any individual member. What is impossible for one alone is often light work for the many, because the many are a greater idea of a power greater than yourself. Just look around with an open mind and you will see a positive power all around N.A. You can call it love, or harmony or peace, or cleanness or good, or you can call it God. It doesn't matter and by looking and listening as openly as you can, you find that N.A. has the power to help addicts.

Pick a power, any power. We suggest one that's loving, forgiving and supportive. Many of us started by using the group at each meeting of the fellowship.

Agnostics, atheists, believers and the devoutly religious are all subject to the illness of addiction. We all could see ourselves somewhere within this range when we first get to N.A. and our membership still includes persons who fall within all of these categories. Narcotics Anonymous does not demand any specific belief or faith from any of its members and neither does this step. It is a suggestion. It is a principle that has made our recovery possible. If an individual has a desire to stop using, then we suggest these steps as a way to recover that has proved it has worked in our own experience and lives. Narcotics Anonymous is not a religious program, nowhere does it say that we must believe in God or in any particular philosophy

or dogma.

Faith is one of those things that offer us freedom. It gives us the courage to take chances and live a life that has new meaning and opportunities. Fear is the lack of faith. A belief in a Higher Power gives us the strength and courage to approach the unknowns confronting us.

Faith is not an easy word to define, but we know from our experience that those of us who have it seem to function better than we could while using drugs, or just existing without them. The Second Step says we came to believe, not that we have to believe, and that's where our freedom began.

We gradually begin to find some order in the universe and accept that "some power" was supplying us with a conscience we had never listened to before. We came to meetings and saw that we were staying clean. We were receiving the power to overcome the compulsion to use. It certainly wasn't coming from us, individually. Many of us have come to believe that the forces of life know what our real needs are and will take care of us when undisturbed by self-will. We have begun more and more to see how much a Higher Power really has to offer. Clean living is only the beginning of a new life. Life without fear is a gift we receive for the price of acceptance.

Many of us arrived here with a sense of being extremely beaten by the life we had been living. We were hopeless and in despair until we could see that many of our attitudes and old ways of thinking had been the source of our unhappiness. We had subscribed for so long to the lies and deceptions necessary to keep from getting busted that few of us knew the meaning of truth or sanity, and some of us still aren't sure. Our warped sense of responsibility to a hierarchy of thieves and cut throat deals left us knowing that the only way to win was at the expense of another. We felt it necessary to beat one

-another or anyone out of whatever we could in order to survive.

In a real way our insanity became our reason for survival.

For many of us, this insanity of isolation occurred well before we ever took our first fix, pill, drink or joint. We always felt cut off and isolated. We saw ourselves as different from others. Other people called us weird or crazy. When we started using, we seemed to have some relief from the pain we felt in our loneliness. But as our disease progresses, our isolation simply got worse and getting loaded no longer stopped the pain. Seeing our disease in these terms gives the opportunity to consider "restoration to sanity" as the experience of coming home. We rejoin our fellows through the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. We find the willingness to give up our cherished and painful isolation. We allow ourselves to be a "part of" rather than "apart from".

Still others of us have seen our insanity in terms of denial. We don't know of any addicts who have come to Narcotics Anonymous with the belief that a power greater than themselves could restore them to sanity. Denial is one of the most outstanding symptoms of our disease. Most of us come to this fellowship denying that we have had a problem with drugs, denying that we are addicts, denying that addiction is a disease. We have denied that we needed help. We have denied the existence of God. We have denied that we were not sane. In fact, many of us have lived our whole lives while we were using as if we were the only sane people in a world gone mad. Some of us have even held this attitude while incarcerated in psychiatric wards and sanitariums. The point is that our experience demonstrates that this step can be worked by anyone no matter what your present condition. We didn't take this step fully in one day. We have worked this step and applied it to our lives to the best of our ability and over time our belief that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to

sanity has grown.

When all is said and done, insanity is using drugs compulsively because of the mental obsession we have had, and sanity is freedom from this obsession. We can not be restored to sanity and continue to use. Some of us have considered ourselves mentally ill in the past or have been diagnosed as such by psychiatrists and other public health professionals. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on the issue of whether or not addiction is a mental illness. Sanity here does not necessarily mean freedom from being neurotic, although it is possible to use the 12 Steps to solve this or any other problem for our steps are spiritual principles that constitute a way of life.

There seems to be as many definitions of sanity and insanity as there are individual members of this program. Each of us, as a result of our own experience, has a differing idea of what these words mean. We have found, however, that we can choose to see sanity as freedom from the obsession to use. Not using just for today is made possible by this freedom. This sanity comes from becoming willing to believe that some power greater than ourselves exists and can produce this change in us. We have already admitted that alone we are unable to exert this power over our addiction. Thus, this is the compelling reason we offer the newcomer who asks why he or she should be willing to believe in a Higher Power and have faith and sanity.

The 12 Steps were given numbers because in this sequence the preceeding step furnishes the essential base that is necessary to continue the progression through which we and our lives are made whole and new. We therefore suggest working them in the order in which they were written. Having worked the first two steps to the best of our ability, we are ready for Step Three.

Respectfully submitted by Northern California Area & Regional
Literature Committees, March 19, 1983
San Francisco, CA.

STEP THREE-"Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him".

Step Three offers no compromise, reservation or delay. It calls for a decision here and now. With promptness and determination, we give up our control and surrender our lives to that "Power" which alone can provide us with the daily strength to stay clean and sober.

To make a decision is to start a course of action. Making a decision may take some time but the action that follows takes longer. We do not take this step easily. We are not capable of turning our will and our lives over to the care of God. But we can make a decision to do that and start a course of action that will culminate in our actually surrendering to our Higher Power.

Many of us have had great difficulty making any kind of decisions in our lives. This is a very human trait. Most people hate to make decisions. We experience colossal anxiety whenever choices confront us, even trivial choices like what to wear when we wake up in the morning. Sticking to the decisions we make for many of us is even harder, but that is what a decision implies: commitment.

The commitment of making a decision inspires fear for many of us. We have feared what will happen if we do something and feared just as much what might happen if we don't. So we do nothing. Paralyzed by our fears, we make no decisions; we take no action; we shy away from all commitments.

Major decisions often require the faith that no matter which choice we make, everything will be o.k., that the world will not come to an end. We hope what we have to say about our own experience with the Third Step will help you to acquire the willingness you need to make this crucial decision for yourself.

The pain of living with the decisions that many of us have made in our first year when our minds were still fogged and our moods varied from moment to moment has prompted us to pass on this experience so that others might benefit. We often hear at meetings the suggestion to newcomers to not make any major decisions in the first year of recovery. Most addicts need to make their mistakes and learn their own lessons from these experiences, and so disregard this suggestion entirely.

"Surrender means not having to fight anymore". Surrender is one of the underlying principles of the first three steps. For most people it brings up a whole host of negative images: defeat, loss, failure. Yet we say in Narcotics Anonymous that to surrender is to win. How can this be?

One answer to that question is that our experience has demonstrated that when we give up our former thinking and behavior, we gain a way of living in the world that provides us with much happiness and peace within. For most of us this new way of life is unlike any kind of existence we have ever known. We win when we surrender because what we give up is our attempts to control our addiction, our delusion that we can manage our lives alone, and our insanity. We receive the power, strength and guidance that make it possible for us to stay away from that first fix, pill, drink or joint and for us to lead responsible and productive lives. When we surrender to the program our recovery begins.

Great variation exists among us regarding how much we have suffered during our using and in our recovery, before we became willing to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him. This process of becoming honest enough to admit to ourselves the need to surrender is painful. As individuals, our pride and denial

have kept us dishonest and unable to see what others could clearly see. We need to surrender our way of doing things to make room for a better way.

Step Three identifies our spiritual illness and helps us see clearly that any life run on self-will can only suffer. "Running the show" was a favorite pastime. People, places and things were a constant disappointment. "if only", "maybe", and "next time" were common excuses. We couldn't run our own lives, though we attempted to run the lives of others.

As addicts we want to control other people. We know nothing of interaction among equals. Our unhappiness is so colossal that it fills our horizons. We only know that we are hurting and that we know no way to stop that pain. And so we turn to drugs. In time, drugs stop working and we are addicted and in pain. In this way we feel we are justified in doing anything at all to make us feel better. The sight of other people's happiness only makes us bitter.

With this rationalization we feel we are entitled to anything we want. We have no sense of proportion. The smallest thing will cause us to drop a person from our lives. The function of other people is to do exactly as we wish. People exist only to meet our needs. Their job is to satisfy all our needs immediately. We are angry brats. We want it all and we want it now. Denial is part of this. We do not relate to the things we did that we wish we hadn't done. We have selective vision that says we were perfectly justified in doing whatever we did. But we really didn't do it anyway.

As addicts we lived a code that said: "it didn't happen". But if it happened, we didn't do it. And anyway "it's not our fault".

When "our way" was no longer working, we often sought solutions outside ourselves, not knowing we alone were the source of our discomforts. We found new connections, changes of scenery, quick cash and other schemes to feed our addiction. We used everyone around us for what they had to offer. Eventually, this self-centeredness left us with an insatiable void that no drug could fill. We were at the crossroads, not knowing which way to go. We had to make a decision...

Willingness is all that is needed to start working on Step Three. If necessary one can pray for this willingness. When first trying to make a decision to turn over our will we need only look back at our destructive past and the willingness should come easily.

Many of us found it difficult to be willing at all, for instance we wouldn't solve our problems. But when we asked ourselves whether we were willing to be willing, it was easier to accept that there was a solution to our problems. We gradually became receptive to the idea of willingness. The same applies for many of us in the area of turning our lives over to a Higher Power.

If we act promptly in acceptance of the God of our understanding, the willingness to act on Step Three soon comes. Turning our will over to this Higher Power creates the space for feeling that serenity we all strive to attain. This means no more than going along with what is happening. God's will is whatever happens. We can either go along with this or fight it. If we go along with it we are finding our place in the order of things. This is a new experience for addicts. We were always out of place, doing inappropriate things, and so forth. When we are willing we open ourselves to the possibility of change.

"Turning it over" simply means "letting go" of our old ideas and allowing our Higher Power to take charge. By using this simple self-help guide, we often find new ways to deal with problems that were previously hard to solve. In this way we gain a new found freedom by which we can share our burdens with this Power we've learned to trust. This reliance continues to grow if we place faith in our Higher Power. We step aside, we give up attempts at control, we let a Higher Power shape our reality -- these are some of the ways we can "turn it over".

Why do we turn our self and life as a whole over to anything? Why do we turn it over? Because we have found that we cannot manage our lives without help. We have been unable to live whole in health, happiness and harmony. This has been true for us whether our insides or our outsides were the more unmanageable. We receive the strength, power and guidance we need by making the decision to allow a power greater than ourselves to care for us.

Turning something over also means getting rid of it. When we want to use, we turn our desire over to our Higher Power, the group, or the universe. Then we do the next thing: use the phone, go to a meeting, take a walk, pray, etc.

When we want to do things our way and it's not working, we can also turn this over to our Higher Power, and go on to the next thing. We continue to turn it over again and again. As long as we're turning it over, we can handle our problem. When we stop, the problem comes back again. This seems unfair. But, that's what people do they struggle with their problems. We learn to live like that.

Turning it over liberates us from our obsessive concern with ourselves and releases us from the burden of managing our own lives alone. If we say to ourselves, "Please help me, I am willing to be helped," then this is a way of working the Third Step. Although we may not

have used these particular words, it was the expression of this idea to our own individual conception of a Higher Power that made it possible for us to develop a working relationship with that Higher Power that has revolutionized our lives.

Step Three allows us to grow in our understanding of the spiritual. Our ability to use Step Three is not hindered by an incomplete or vague sense of a Higher Power. Our understanding right now is good enough. As it changes and grows, we develop room and opportunity to change our way of putting it to use in our lives.

It would be easy for many of us to avoid altogether any further mention of God, Higher Power or any spirituality whatsoever. But, to do this would flagrantly lack honesty, for without the help of an understanding God, all willingness for future growth would virtually disappear.

Addicts who fail to incorporate a belief in a Power greater than self often return to active addiction. "Stinking thinking" will cause continued despair if we rely only on self-will. Honest and sincere attempts in active pursuit of a Higher Power will usually clear our confusion over time.

There are as many Higher Powers as there are addicts in recovery, and there are as many programs. Of course, there is only one N.A. program and probably only one Higher Power. But we all understand the program in our own way. We also have the same liberty in approaching our Higher Power. But ultimately we need to live a spiritual program of recovery. That's what keeps us clean and sober. Each of us must live his or her own spiritual program.

When we come to the program we want five years recovery over night. We want instant success. We are addicts and that is our way. We have to work out a program that works for us. Many of us tried to live someone else's program with someone else's Higher Power. This

did not work. Perhaps we did not get loaded, but we could not develop any serenity this way. We each need to work out a relationship with our own conception of a Higher Power. The relationship is important; the conception is not. We can have a relationship with a person and not understand them. We understand God to the best of our ability and trust that all will come out all right. We do our part, the Higher Power does the rest.

Many of us feel that Step Three is the key that opens our hearts and minds to let this Higher Power enter, and just as we work Steps One and Two on a daily basis, so we do Step Three. In this way, we are slowly fulfilling a spiritual need through trust and faith, be it blind or not, in something other than ourselves. It is through this spiritual fulfillment that a foundation or defense barrier against that next fix, pill, or drink is built.

Some of us could not work this step until we had tried prayer and meditation as described in Step 11. We prayed and we felt some relief. We meditated and grew calmer and more objective toward our worldly experience. Our ups and downs became less calamitous. We wanted to use, prayed about it, and the obsession was lifted for a while. We were uncomfortable in a situation and said the Serenity Prayer and were able to get through. Our understanding of God comes from this experience.

As addicts our condition was paramount. If we didn't feel right, we took something. We thought people knew we were loaded. Self-centeredness was our biggest problem. Our egos had grown way out of proportion. We were the center around which the world revolved. This is the measure of how childish we had become in our addiction.

When we stopped using drugs, this childish viewpoint did not disappear. But since we were drug-free, we could see that we had a problem and that there was a solution. Moving out of the center of

the universe took the pressure off us. Belief in a Higher Power and a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the Higher Power enabled us to move out of this pressure cooker. We were no longer "on". We could move off the stage and get on with our lives. This didn't happen all at once. It was a gradual process. Slowly we moved out of the spotlight. Since we were no longer on stage we had time to live. We did not have to act our drama, we had time and energy for real life. We found something to replace our obsession with drugs.

Working the Third Step makes it possible to work the remaining steps. Thoroughness here will affect our whole program. The extent to which we decide to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, will determine our willingness and ability to work the other steps. If we decide we want to turn our lives over to a Higher Power we can then approach Step Four with the assurance that we will be guided through it.

Submitted by:
Northern California Regional & Area Literature Subcommittees
San Francisco, CA.

STEP FOUR- "Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves".

The Fourth Step asks us to make an inventory. An inventory is just that and not the inventory to end all inventories.

In this Step we make a vigorous and painstaking effort at discovering what our true liabilities are. We must not be apprehensive when we begin this step as it will clearly relieve the years of pent-up guilt many addicts experience.

We do not have to be definitive. Too often we approach this step as if we are not good enough or clever enough to take an inventory. The job looks too big for us. We prepare ourselves for failure. We have become willing to work the first three steps; now we have faith in a Higher Power and this is enough to get us through this step. Our present faith can cast out the fear we lived with for so long and give us the courage to explore thoroughly the patterns of our behavior. This step applies to what we did after we stopped using as well as what we did in our active addiction.

If we are as honest as we can be, many of our previous fears will be cast aside. Our liabilities are tested if we don't put faith and trust in our Higher Power. With His help, we are guided through that maze of confusion that confronts many of us at first.

It is important to work the first three steps to establish a basic understanding of the significance of shedding the "wreckage of our past". Our sponsor should be consulted to prepare us to work our Fourth Step.

Sponsors or a friend whom you trust in the Fellowship can share their experience with you as you reach this all important phase of your recovery. We often find similarity with each other as we put to paper those things that caused us much grief in our lives.

Perhaps we are still too fearful to take a thorough inventory. We can take an inventory of our fears or we can make a smaller inventory of a limited extent. When we share this step with another person we can see that a larger and braver inventory is possible for us. If we have no experience of fearlessness, we need to learn that there is no real danger for us in this step.

We hear over and over about the importance of the Fourth Step. Most of us in the beginning had a hard time understanding how one step could be that much different than any of the others. There's no doubt about it, this step carries a lot of weight. Whatever defects of character the rest of the world may indulge in 'safely', we can not.

In our recovery we began to realize that our only real hope of staying clean and sober was in maintaining a comfortable state of mind. The time had come to look at how we felt about people, places and things in our lives. It was also time to look at our past, and because we made a decision to live in the now, we also made a decision to be fearless and thorough when assessing the wreckage.

When we say we make a 'moral inventory', what do we mean? To many of us this implies that we should accuse ourselves of every ethical lapse we can remember. It seems to apply particularly to money matters, to stealing, and to other illegal activities. These are the things that make us feel guilty. If we could get rid of these things, we think, everything would be fine with us. If all this were true, we would be discussing a general confession and not a moral inventory.

A moral inventory means an inventory of our character, our mind, or if you like, our will. We have rationalized every possible form of deviant behavior. Our problem is not the deviancy but the rationalization. Much of this behavior is unconscious. We go on doing

what we have always done. We need to bring our patterns of behavior out into the open so that we can examine them. They have led us only into trouble. Still, we will not give them up yet. We need to look at ourselves and our behavior to see what unproductive patterns we want to abandon.

We have found that fear or frustration played a big role underneath our moral defects like: self-pity, resentments, intolerance, criticism, anger or jealousy. If we can curb our emotional 'roller coaster' and ride on a more even keel, the peaks and valleys will become less extreme. Our experience will be more like 'sailing on a calm day' with an occasional wave to remind us where we are and where we have come from.

Human beings are social animals. In our active addiction we were both isolated and isolative. We had to be loaded no matter what the consequences to ourselves or others. The way we felt was all that mattered. In other words, we were entirely wrapped up in ourselves. If we are to live comfortably drug-free, we need to learn to live as human beings in society; we need to change our way of thinking and acting.

What are some of the old patterns that did not work for us? First was resentment or indignation. We kept our own mental grudge list. Everything annoyed us. We were mad about what happened in the past and we had no way of dealing with our anger. We regretted the clever things we had not said. We planned conversations that never took place. We were obsessed with the past and the future. We had no energy to devote to the present moment. There was no real satisfaction for us in any of this. Our resentments caused us discomfort and so we formed still more resentments. None of this was our fault.

Other people were doing these things to us. As long as it was the fault of other people, it was happening "out there". We were not responsible for what was happening and we could do nothing about it. We needed to write about these resentments in order to see what part we had played in forming them. We had turned our lives over to other people. They were controlling us. We need to gain control of our own lives and we can do this by writing about our resentments.

Dishonesty is another form of self-centeredness. It allows us to control situations to suit our requirements. Our resentments focused on our anger at others. What we want is so important to us that other people do not matter. With dishonesty again we are manifesting childish behavior. Our desires are more important than someone else's. We never considered expressing our desires openly and working for them. We were unable to set goals and reach them. Everything had to happen right away. And dishonesty is an easy way to do this. We did not need to accomplish anything; we merely said we had done it. We need to write about this so we can see exactly how it is working against us.

Pity means sympathetic sorrow or compassion. When we indulge in self-pity we are taking the sympathy and understanding that we owe to others and applying it to ourselves. This is just one example of the way we manipulated things for our "benefit". Self-pity creates a descending spiral on which we get to feel so bad, we have no choice but to get loaded. We must find a way out of this situation. When we see the havoc we wreak doing things our way, a Fourth Step begins to look more desirable.

We can list the many ways each of us has been intolerant; how we refused to allow others the privilege of voicing an opinion and the frequent episodes of indifference we expressed over "always being right". We were unnecessarily critical of friends, yet when construct-

ive criticism was directed towards we were less than receptive. We probably reacted with hostility. Every suggestion was met with irritation. Obviously, "they are insulting me". "I don't have to listen to this"! Most of the time, we only listened to ourselves anyway. This is another example of self-centered behavior.

Anger is an area we did not handle maturely. Someone would accidentally do something like bump us in a crowd, step on our feet on a busy bus, chew our last piece of gum, take "our" parking space, etc. We were displeased yes, but to react 'with rage' exemplified many an addict. Unrealistic expectations resulted in furious displays of childish behavior. We were full of contempt for the most minor of offenses.

All of us get depressed at times, but addicts can ill-afford to feel sorry for themselves. We have found positive alternatives to dwelling on "personal problems". When we didn't get "what we wanted when we wanted it", chose to whine to everyone about our tragedy.

On the other hand, very little sympathy would be afforded to one who had a 'real' reason to be upset ie: death in the family, poor or failing health, severe loss etc.

These are only examples of the things we need to consider for our inventory. We need to examine ourselves in detail and carefully so that we can change those things that did not work for us. We are trying to build a happy life in recovery.

Some of us have tried to make do with a simple self-examination. We have even tried to talk our problems out with another person. We have tried many ways to avoid a written inventory. Some of these methods have brought temporary relief from our more pressing problems. The written inventory suggested here is the only means we have found

to assure real self-honesty. Writing things down gives them a reality they can gain in no other way. When we wrote our inventory we pinned it down. We could not decide it was different from what it was. It was definite and clear. These are some of the advantages of a written inventory.

Honesty is a key word here. We can't be fearless and thorough without being first honest with ourselves. Many of us abused several areas of our lives with extreme imbalance. We did nothing in moderation. We'd like to blame many of our character defects on the fact that we "did this because we were loaded", or "so and so was supposed to take care of that". We, all the while felt our behavior was justified and reasonable. This self-justification causes many of us to make excuses for not getting started on this written inventory-taking process.

This step calls upon us to be searching and fearless and to look at the many deceptions we used to take drugs. We must be searching and fearless as if entering a dark room with a single candle to guide us with the intention of moving ahead and despite our resistance in the darkness. We need to be willing to illuminate every corner of our darkened minds as if our life depended upon it, for in fact it does. It makes no difference at this point in our recovery how small problems seem to be or how often we have thought or talked about them. What is important is to write down everything that comes to mind within the process of the Fourth Step without regard to apparent significance. Facts are all that we really need to begin to see our underlying motivations.

Many of us wondered why we had to make a written inventory. A sponsor explained it this way:

When I was growing up, I had no childhood at all. I was busy being the adult while my parents indulged their emotions. I learned to control that situation by not showing any emotion. They lived their fantasy so I had to face reality at an early age. I had no resources from my childhood to carry me through the crisis of becoming an adult. I guess you could say I stayed a child all my life. I used drugs and drank to cover up feelings of inadequacy. I felt like a child in an adult world. Everyone else seemed to know what they were doing. They seemed to know their parts in the play and I had to make up my part as I went along. Of course, I couldn't keep this up day in and day out. I had to use drugs to get away from this. I had to obliterate my consciousness and get some relaxation. Now, in my recovery I have to deal with all these problems. I need to change, grow up and learn to live with reality. The Fourth Step was a major tool in this process. I had to write it all down so I could see what was happening. I learned all the things I'm saying now as a result of writing inventories.

Businesses that don't keep accurate accounts can not make an accurate tax report. They will be penalized if their summary of past transactions isn't precise. This is normally recorded via a written statement or report to estimate value.

We too, must do a comparative estimate of our assets and liabilities and accurately appraise our lives. It's really a housecleaning of moral and character defects. We are as thorough as we can be in recollecting past thoughts, deeds and actions.

Once we have turned our will and lives over to the care of God as we understand Him, we are ready for Step Four. Some of us have approached this step with a lot of fear, so do not feel alone.

These fears are understandable as our thinking processes have been altered and we do not know what is true. We have become experts at rationalizing and analyzing everything. When we know we no longer want to get loaded and want some comfort in our new way of living we put our fears aside and start writing.

On our list we must avoid any further time spent on the wrongs others had done. We focus on our mistakes and concern ourselves with areas where self-centeredness seemed to prevail. We are not saying others weren't part of the blame; it's just not helping us to think too much about them. We must look within and honestly appraise our motives. This is 'our' inventory and if it is to succeed, we need to list 'our faults', not others! Our character defects can lead us to using; those of others can not.

Before sitting down to write we may want to talk to our sponsors and take our first three steps with them to help us feel at ease. We might want to look up the word 'moral' in the dictionary if we are unclear as to what it means in this context. Once we are ready to take pen in hand, we pray that God's will be done, not mine.

We want to be as thorough as possible so do not try to rush this. Once this process has been started you have unlocked your subconscious and your whole being will be involved. Do not be afraid, try to look at it as an adventure.

Submitted by Northern California Area & Regional Literature
Subcommittees

STEP FIVE-"Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs",

The first word of this step is "Admitted". The first time that word occurs in the Steps is in Step One, "We admitted we were powerless over our addiction". Here again we are basically asked to admit what all the world knows -- that we have done plenty of things that were not too hot. But we admit these things in order to help us in our recovery. We admitted to God and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs because it is the only we can continue our quest in spiritual recovery as well as prevent active drug use.

When we have made a moral inventory, what are we to do with it? We have listed our resentments, fears, dishonesties and other problems. We have brought all this material out of the private parts of our lives and put it down on paper. We now know ourselves better than we have ever known ourselves before. We probably feel both good and bad. We feel good that we have worked Step Four and we feel bad that there is so much material in our inventory. It is important to move on to Step Five quickly. We have gained much knowledge of ourselves and we feel alone with that knowledge.

When we begin to relate in a realistic way to other people, we find that just because they are looking at us from the outside, they can gather all kinds of things about us that we do not tell them. This information, of course, does not relate to specific acts but rather to our emotions. They can see in our faces how we feel when we speak about someone, for example. Or they can see that we are upset although we are trying to conceal it. We were not able to

admit how we were feeling; we needed to be secretive. Getting things out in the open is part of our recovery. We were emotionally sick in our using, and we need to work on our emotions in our recovery. Opening ourselves to others is a big step. Sharing our Fourth Step material with another human being is a safe place to begin.

If we do not go on with Step Five and reveal our new data to God and another human being it will fester in us. The process of self-justification will start. We will begin to think that it was all right for us to do what we did. Our rationalization will make us think that as addicts we ought to be loaded. In short, the process of our recovery will halt. Our egos will take over and our thinking will be insane. The longer we hold on to our Fourth Step the longer the insanity will go on. We need to take Step Five as soon as possible after Step Four is completed.

Naturally we wanted to be as complete as possible in our Fourth Step writing and we attempt to share our findings without reservation.

We have spent years in building walls around ourselves. Drugs were only part of the material we used to keep people out of our lives. If we admitted anyone into our lives, it was strictly on our terms. All our relationships were conditional. We could not trust people. We have years of practice at keeping out. We must make an enormous effort now to let someone in. We start with just one person.

When we are ready to take this step we look for that "special" person with whom we are willing to share our experience without reservation. This person need not be our sponsor unless we felt this to be best. We can choose a person who doesn't share in our Fellowship. We can select a person in whom we trust implicitly;

someone we could comfortably share all these areas of our lives we chose to keep secret. We should choose a person to whom the release of such information would not prove harmful. Oftentimes members of our immediate family would suffer needlessly, so we should exercise some caution here.

We chose carefully to present our experiences to someone whom we felt could be objective and non-judgemental in return. This person had to be someone we trusted completely. As addicts we have found it difficult to trust anyone, including ourselves. We now had the opportunity to develop a trusting attitude which had always been missing from our lives.

There are circumstances in which we cannot share everything with one person because they will not be able to understand our emotions and accept us afterward. We share as much as we can with the person we have chosen and look for someone with whom to share what we have left out. This is a rare and unusual situation. Most often we can share our entire Fourth Step with one person. The reward is as enormous as the risk. At last, someone knows all about us. We have told all we have to say for the present to one person. In return, we need their acceptance.

Now that we are ready to share, bring things to the surface with all the honesty that we can possibly muster, commence, relinquishing all pride, ego and fear.

It's hard to be humble, fearless and honest with ourselves let alone with another person, but if we release ego and fear our job's much easier. We need to relinquish our pride and refrain from anything short of complete and total honesty.

Many of us hang on to our inventories. We often don't let go of the items we listed and need to remember them when we verbalize our written input with our trusted 'friend'. "Hanging on" only makes

us uncomfortable. We can normally only do this for a short time. When we are tired of feeling guilty, perhaps we are then ready to commence Step Five.

Taking Step Five means that we become willing to share ourselves fully with another human being. We must be willing because no one can tell us whether we have done a good job. If we leave something out of our inventory because we are afraid to tell another person about it, we are the ones who suffer. The other person is not affected by our omissions.

We do our best in sharing ourselves in this Step. If we are able to start with a brief account of what is going on with us at the present, it will help to give depth and perspective to our Fifth Step. Again, we are not trying to make excuses for ourselves. We are trying to give the person we are talking to a chance to see us as human beings. It is all too easy to walk in, read the Fourth Step to someone, and walk out. We are preparing ourselves for the future. We are trying to break out of our isolation and move into the real world. The more thoroughly we prepare our listener to understand what we have written the more we will get out of this Step.

We share our inventory with God and with another person. To share means to distribute, apportion or divide. It is the process by which we end our isolation. We have been alone with our problems for too long. By sharing them with God and another person, we are dividing by three and that's a lot easier to handle than isolation. But we must be willing to release the problems we have spent our lives alone with.

Staying clean is the only way we as addicts can begin to function with fellow human beings. We removed ourselves from contact with anything higher than our next fix, but now we can enjoy clarity of

thought. New experiences will permit us the gradual privilege of saying at last "we had a spiritual experience or understanding". We protect our sobriety by admitting freely our "wreckage of the past". We bring into focus those events that transpired both in our using days and since we've been clean and sober. We can not expect the benefits of this process to unfold without doing the footwork. The 'footwork' is the willingness to overcome the fears of ridicule and potential humiliation that we felt would take place. But the recipient of our Fifth Step oftentimes expresses no judgement whatsoever and encourages us to go on with our story. Perhaps they will share some 'secret' of theirs to lighten the self-imposed pressure many of us were now feeling. We may say a prayer together to ease the tension.

Not holding back is an important part of our Fifth Step. By holding back we eliminate the flow of honesty required to satisfactorily complete this Step.

We admit to another person the exact nature of our wrongs because it lessens the overwhelming burden many of us feel upon getting here. We must first recognize our deficiencies in order to do anything to correct them. We can not wish them or will them away. We must be willing to take advice and accept direction to expect any change in our lives. When we are favorably disposed to asking for the guidance we soon gain clear recognition of what and who we are.

After release of these items we've carried far too long, we can take ourselves to a meeting and share how good we feel with the weight lifted from us. We carried this cargo to the depths of our active addiction and it makes little sense to drag it any further.

Every Fourth Step is perfect. It is what we have been able to do up to the present. We do not need to accept any criticism of it. If the recipient of our confidence chooses to say something negative about what we have done, we listen as patiently as we can. This is no excuse to be superficial in writing our inventory. But the Fourth and Fifth Steps can be worked more than once. Our Fifth Step will be perfect, too, if we share ourselves as honestly as we can for the present. We found that by sharing our deepest secrets nothing earth-shattering happened to us and thereby we gained a way to grow beyond our isolation and extreme self-centeredness.

Successful completion of our Fifth Step allows for continued growth in our program and permits us to experience a new spirituality that makes it easier for us to stay that much further from our next fix, drink or pill.

The Fifth Step is a good chance to practice other Steps. We are, of course, anxious about this Step. We are not used to being honest with ourselves about ourselves. Now we are asked to be honest about ourselves with another person. This is a good opportunity to turn our fear and anxiety over to our Higher Power. We can also talk about this with our sponsor. Of course, since we are sharing this Step with God as well as another human being, we need to pray before we work this Step.

Another important point that we should not overlook, is that we've satisfactorily completed the previous Four Steps to the best of our abilities. With this basic foundation towards our ongoing spiritual recovery process, we can look forward to the relief that completion of our Fifth Step brings. Years of pent-up guilt, hostility and anger lift from us and we experience 'forgiveness and 'being forgiven' at last.

Respectfully submitted by Northern California Area and Regional
Literature Subcommittees.

April 11, 1983
San Francisco, CA.

STEP SIX-"Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character".

We all have character defects; areas of our lives where we could stand some changes.

Sloth, envy and lust are just some of the defects many of us choose to maintain. We have obligations, "yet don't feel like doing it", or "someone else will handle it". We can be envious of one who has more than we do or is better at something than we are. Lust is an area where we as individuals must search for that fine line between love and lust, desire and obsession.

Our defects oftentimes don't appear to be defects at all. We don't consciously believe we are self-righteous, and yet we are. We don't believe we are full of pride, yet we defend what's close to us. Being proud of an accomplishment is one thing, but showing contempt to others because they assaulted this deed is ridiculous. After all, we learn a great deal from constructive criticism.

There is much support in the world to be negative and disagreeable. But if we do this, we will be left with only a small circle of friends. Self-will runs much of our lives already. If we delve in this negativity, it can only bring down those close to us. The modest support that we can offer can be an uplifting experience for individuals struggling for significance. We should strive to help each other with that occasional nudge of encouragement from time to time.

Addicts need to surround themselves with supportive and positive people. We are easily influenced by changes in our lives. It only makes sense that these changes are headed in the proper direction. It goes to show that affirmative action beats

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depressing news anytime.

All right. So what? We've written an inventory and we've shared it with someone else, as well as with God. Some of us got a big lift out of the Fifth Step. We felt lighter than air. Maybe we couldn't fly yet or walk on water but soon, if we kept this up ...

What goes up must come down. And we came crashing down with a thud. We felt relieved of our resentments and fears. But soon our fears came back and we had new resentments. If we stopped here we were very slightly better off than before. Our awareness of ourselves and our problems was heightened and that was a plus. Unless we find some way to rid ourselves of these problems our awareness will only make us uncomfortable. Our serenity depends on finding comfort in abstinence. If we are abstinent from drugs and acutely uncomfortable for long periods of time, we might as well get loaded.

Our first surrender was to N.A. We became aware that there was a group of addicts who had learned to stay clean and sober. We decided we wanted what they had and we tried to do what they suggested. This brought us some measure of comfort.

Our second surrender was to a Higher Power. After some time clean and sober we began to realize that we were not keeping ourselves abstinent. Many of us could not understand why we were clean and sober. It really didn't make any sense. Better people than us, and worse, too, were loaded. But somehow we weren't loaded. So we surrendered to a Higher Power and began to rely on that Higher Power. Again, we began to feel some degree of comfort.

Now we are asked to surrender to the steps.

We are starting to enjoy some freedom in our new way of life and we do not know how to handle it. We are also at a loss in handling success. What are we to do? If we return to our former isolation and "independence" we are little better off than before. We need to continue to work the steps and grow. This is our only means of continuing to move toward becoming comfortable in our recovery.

Step Six permits us to believe God can remove our defects of character. It is up to us to be willing to surrender our defects to Him. This is a big step. Many of us felt that we were our character defects. We feared that if we gave them up, there would be no person left afterward. The remedy for this fear is more faith.

After the depths of our misery had been reached, we decided to turn our lives and wills over to a Power that could help us stay clean. In Step Three we learned that the emphasis on willingness was paramount. We chose to be willing then, and we are asking again for the willingness to run our defects of character over to God who alone can remove them entirely. Tall order, yes! But necessary that we at least try. Many of us found release from the obsession to use by asking God for this release.

Let us consider what we did when we worked Step Three. We decided to turn our will and lives over to the care of a Higher Power. Were we harmed in this process? Did we lose our ability to function as human beings? If we had the faith to work Step Three, can we not use some of that faith to try Step Six?

Some of us reasoned at this point that if we had worked Step Three, that we would just pray to be willing to work Step Six. Whatever it takes, we need to move forward or else we will drift

backward.

We offer every facet of our personality where we know defects exist. Anything that fails to contribute to our overall well-being is considered. We can't blame our addiction on these defects of character but we must acknowledge their influence that led us to where we are today. We chose to use drugs, but few made a conscious choice to become addicted. This influence stems from our inability to see our own character defects.

Our faults manifested themselves in a variety of ways. We contributed much to our sickness. We were so driven by our impulses that little else was considered or thought about. Our innate overriding flaw is self-centeredness. We were propelled by our desires. Our natural impulses led us through all the avenues we explored in active addiction. The jails, emergency rooms, lousy hotels or boarding houses where many of us travelled. We failed to believe that this road to self-destruction would change. Why should it? We were hell-bent on destroying ourselves and any inkling of self-respect that remained up to now. The obsession to reach that ultimate high lay not in drugs as we previously thought, but in our ability to turn this madness over to a Higher Power.

We hold on to our character defects like treasures. But what have they gained for us? Only misery and addiction.

We have been so busy playing games with our character defects that we have begun to confuse them with reality. All we know is playing games. We are afraid to let go of these games. We are unaware that there is a person standing behind the scenes who will emerge when the games cease. We are not the games we play. We need faith in a Higher Power to carry us through this difficult transition. The change we are working on cannot happen all at once. But we must be willing to start the process.

It may take us some time to become willing to work this step, but once we acquire the willingness, we can move quickly to the Seventh Step.

Step Six tells us that God can remove our defects of character; while Step Seven permits us to have God remove our shortcomings. This leaves us with a new peace and serenity as restoration of spiritual health begins.

Respectfully submitted by Area and Regional Literature
Subcommittees:

April 14, 1983
San Francisco, CA.

STEP SEVEN

"Humbly as asked Him to remove our shortcomings."

Spirituality is the foundation of all our Steps. In Step Seven, we strive to move toward a closer, stronger relationship with our Higher Power.

When we ask God to remove our shortcomings, we are asking for freedom; freedom from fear and guilt and all of the other hang-ups which limit our recovery. We are asking Him to help us be better persons and to help us continue to live the compulsion to use. We ask for help from our loving Higher Power because we cannot do it alone. We tried and failed. "I can't, but we can" is a wonderful message.

Humility means, among other things, a realistic evaluation of ourselves. We have learned something of realism in the steps leading up to Step Seven. Admitting we were powerless over our addiction was a major move into reality. Step Three taught us still more about humility. When we realized that our lives were unmanageable and that we could turn them over to a Higher Power, we moved closer to our goal of humility or realism about ourselves. Our inventory showed us the many ways we had been acting against ourselves. Step Five, sharing our inventory with God and another human being, allowed us to see that we were not alone. Our character defects are ours, but they are not that different from anyone else's. Step Six is also a move in the right direction; we become willing to part with our character defects. Now we are asked to use the humility we have gained up to now in working this step.

Humility is a loaded word. Most of us do not want to learn about humility. We want to live a life free of drugs. We may be willing to say that we want to live a spiritual program, but humility? Is that part of the program? Most of us do not even know

what the word means. If it has any association for us it usually connotes being lowly, groveling, meek, or subservient.

Humility is being able to accept things as they are, and when we cannot change them, seeking God's help in changing the things we can.

Humility is obviously a key word in approaching Step Seven. Why don't we just ask our Higher Power to remove our defects of character? Why do we have to be humble? For one thing, we tried doing it ourselves once and we failed, remember? We ask our Higher Power humbly because we have to concede our powerlessness. In this respect, humility is self-honesty. Yes, we failed and it hurts to admit defeat, but we must give as much of our lives as we possibly can over to our Higher Power. If we can totally surrender, the healing will take place that much faster. Do your best, but remember you are human.

In this step, we ask God humbly. We are in need of what only God can supply. We cannot remove our character defects, and for our purposes in this step, character defects and shortcomings are the same thing. We need to be free of these shortcomings or we cannot develop spiritually. We ask God for what we need--the freedom that only God can provide.

Probably the greatest obstacle we face is ourselves. When we humbly ask God to remove our defects of character, we have to look at Step Six and be willing to let go before God can remove them. Letting go of defects is scary because there is a void and something must fill that void. It is in the fellowship that we learn new behavior. It's here that we practice new ways of dealing with difficulties and fears. It seems that pain accompanies this step, so take it easy and remember God will not put you through more than you can handle.

In many ways, we are standing in our own light. We are our character defects, to some extent. They are our friends; they determine the way we relate to others. We are afraid to change. We know our problems and our solutions. They may not work very well, but they're familiar. We prefer the familiar pain and dissatisfaction to the growth that could lead us out of our old pain. We may rationalize our shortcomings. Are we not merely human? Is it not only human to be as we are? Are we asking more from our friends than we are willing to give? We put up with them, can they not put up with us? Of course, this is not true. We are selfish and demanding and intolerant, but these arguments serve our purposes.

Of course, our shortcomings are human failings. We are only human. But we must be willing to work a spiritual program and move toward our goal of recovery. We must move forward or retreat. We cannot stand still. We must change our attitudes. We must accept ourselves as we are and try to develop spiritually. This means we will accept ideals that we cannot meet. We need to recognize our human needs and realize that we will never finish our process of spiritual growth. Only a well-grounded realistic view of the world will enable us to do this. That is humility.

Why do we ask our God to remove our shortcomings? If we tell Him, we're in control, and it's been our experience that it doesn't work when we start telling a Power greater than ourselves what to do. Though it may seem we are degrading ourselves by these admissions, the truth is we're letting go of painful and destructive obsessions and opening new doors. What this turns out to be is freedom and that's what we need in order to change. There is something paradoxical in this step; we are asked to be humble although pride is surely one of our shortcomings. Humility is the absence of pride. We must use as much humility as we can and become willing to work this

step. We are embarked on a spiritual path and the reconciliation of opposites such as pride and humility is the goal we are striving for. We do our best here knowing that God is with us.

This step is one that seems to be necessary every day. We need the freedom we get from this step if we truly desire a change in our character. It's an inside job and as our Higher Power takes our defects, we humbly ask Him to keep them. Once in a while we panic and grab the wheel and when we do, our shortcomings are handed back intact and ready to put us back in the ditch again.

Losing faith can be a danger. We may grow impatient with our growth and progress. Old defects seem to leave us slowly, and we see new ones far too often. If a shortcoming isn't removed, it simply means we have more work to do. We have not asked God humbly, or we aren't really willing to let them go. We aren't being punished, it just means we need to work a little harder on one or more of the previous steps. We change slowly, day by day, not all at once and not without help from our Higher Power and our friends in the fellowship. We will never be perfect, but we do change.

Humility is something we strive for, never fully achieving. Humility is recognizing that we are not perfect. Perfection is not one of the abundant traits of the addict. We do the best we can, always remembering who we are and where we came from.

Becoming humble is a gradual change in attitude. We learned through sometimes painful experiences that we could not make it alone. It has to do with letting go of our false pride and self-aggrandizement. It is changing from a life of self-centeredness and self-gratification toward a life of spiritual growth and progress.

We have learned from the previous steps how important it is to fearless and thorough, honest and humble in all our affairs. These traits do not come easy and tremendous effort must be exercised if we are to maintain a daily reprieve from that first fix, drink, pill, or joint.

Respectfully submitted by the Northern California Area & Regional Literature Committees, April 20, 1983
San Francisco, CA.

STEP EIGHT-"Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all".

Steps Eight and Nine clearly introduce us to the ways we handled our public relations. Many of us upon arriving to Narcotics Anonymous had difficulty seeing how we harmed anyone other than ourselves. This Step helps us to become willing to begin the process of rectifying all the people we had harmed both before and after our active addiction.

The preceding steps have been about us. We've used people for our own selfish gain for a long time in our addiction, allowing no room for spiritual growth or progress.

We made an inventory of ourselves and we became willing to part with these character defects. Many of us use our written inventory as a basis for the Eighth Step. When we made a searching and fearless moral inventory, it became apparent where we had done harm. One of the biggest benefits of the previous steps was in seeing and admitting our faults. Now we must admit them to others.

Many of us were so resentful when we reached this step that we were at first unwilling to write a list. We hated people so much that we could not bring ourselves to write their names, let alone be willing to make amends to them. We could list all the people we resented, feared, robbed, etc. This was only the start of our Eighth Step list. We needed to examine all our relations in the light of our new knowledge of ourselves. In our Fourth Step we saw some of the patterns we had followed in relating to others. We did not have to be exhaustive in making an inventory because we were looking for patterns. Now we are trying to assess the harm we have done. We can settle for nothing less than total thoroughness. We

need to search our memory for all of our relations and assess the harm we have done.

As we look at all the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual damage we have caused throughout our drug use, we can easily see a need to rid ourselves of this unpleasant history. It helps to make an accurate survey of our past and be as thorough as humanly possible.

Have we been, for instance, exploitive, cold, withholding of affection, judgemental? In our relations, have we taken advantage of others or abused the trust others have placed in us? Have we deceived others? We need to ask ourselves these questions as well as other questions like them. And we need to put down the names of the persons we have harmed.

These people were our friends, neighbors, family and employers. They were close to us. What have we done to them? Have we turned these people against us? Some have and with very good reason shut us totally out of their lives. One member put it this way:

"I had a lot of fear about working Steps Eight and Nine. When I was finally convinced to begin the Steps, my sponsor had to convince me that we would begin with Step One, proceed to Step Two, and so forth. And by the time I got to Step Eight I would be able to see the necessity for working this step. There were some concrete instances where I had harmed people and desired to make amends.

I had to face the fact honestly that I had hurt another human being in some way. Some of the ways I hurt people were obvious; stealing from them, not paying bills, insulting and belittling them, breaking promises and using people. Some of the more subtle ways in-

cluded going to work high and not doing my best, lying to people who loved me. But most importantly, I harmed myself. I shut myself off from God and the love of other people. I forced myself to do things I really didn't want to do in the name of drugs. I drove myself compulsively, always trying to make up for feeling inadequate".

In Step Eight we pray for the willingness to make amends to all we had harmed. Many of us express an overwhelming concern for confronting or facing these situations head on. But to receive the spiritual healing that we obtain through the completion of this Step, we need to be rigorously honest.

When we honestly look within, we recognize the value making amends to others can do for us. We commence this Step by first acknowledging the harm "we did to others". It helps very little to blame situations for our behavior. Our addictive personalities did much to initiate these events and now that we are clean and sober choose to make restitution for our past abuses.

The N.A. program is "one big amend divided into parts". We can draw from our previous experience in Steps Four through Seven. Remember our first difficulty in Step Three; turning our will and our lives over to a Higher Power? We soon discovered how to ask our Higher Power for the needed strength to carry us through this confusing period. In Step Four we learned the significance of being honest, fearless and thorough. We began our internal housecleaning. Steps Eight and Nine help us with our social housecleaning and grants us the added bonus of feeling free of guilt at last.

Respectfully submitted through the joint efforts of Northern and Southern California Regional Literature Committees,
April 24, 1983 San Francisco, CA.

STEP NINE-"Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others".

In Step Eight we made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all. Step Nine calls on us to take this list and get "into action". We pray for the willingness to begin this Step.

Many of us already started making amends upon arriving to the program. It is important to be more than "just sorry" though because sincerity is the key here.

As we make our amends, we need to place faith in our Higher Power to guide us. We agreed at the beginning to "go to any lengths" to stay clean and sober. We need not put this off any longer. We should not be evasive when making amends or delay because of fear. We asked God to remove our self-seeking behavior, sticking to the discussion of our own faults. We begin to take responsible action towards the well-being of others, realizing some wrongs just can't be corrected.

We make amends in many ways. Perhaps a physical apology isn't possible, so we can write a letter or call on the individuals we listed. Our families and loved ones usually head the list, but often-times being too direct can hurt them. We need to exercise utmost caution in making our amends to those close to us.

Exercising prudent judgement to all we have harmed is recommended. We approach these people carefully, realizing not everyone is as pleased as we are about getting clean.

Our employers, businesses and co-workers suffered as a result of our addiction also. We obviously didn't work up to par or efficiently handled our responsibilities loaded! Some of us stole not only productivity from our companies, but squandered recklessly expense

accounts and other privileges. We used the company for selfish pursuits with little regard for profits or losses as a result.

Financial amends are difficult for most of us who spent money foolishly. Instead of making car payments, handling credit cards passed their limit or paying the rent on time, chose to buy more drugs. We cared about little else as long as we could maintain that constant euphoria. Many excuses prevailed regarding our obligations. We lied about payments "in the mail" or neglected to answer the phone without a signal or code. For some creditors, it became necessary to repossess our belongings. We needed to reach this kind of humiliation and embarrassment to conclude just how dependent we were on that almighty high!

Many are willing to work with us once we make a commitment to change our old ways. Others will have difficulty understanding why we did these things. And that's okay. We need to face these people and be willing to accept their point of view. If we've been thorough about this to the best of our ability, we gain a clear conscience as a result. It's not important that we be forgiven, but that we are willing to change or rectify past wrongdoings. In recovery, we soon learn the distinction between right and wrong and just how important it is to come clean with God and to ourselves.

As long as we correct our past deficiencies and do our best not to repeat them, normally all will be well. After completion of this Step we experience renewed strength and the courage to do the next best thing. We maintain this recovery process by working closely with our sponsor and exercising these principles in all our affairs.

Respectfully submitted by Northern California Area and Regional Literature Committees, April 29, 1983
San Francisco, CA.

STEP TEN

1 "CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY, AND WHEN WE WERE WRONG,
2 PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT."

3 If we want to reap the benefits of staying clean, we find it
4 necessary to take continual inventories of ourselves. Hidden
5 fears and needs are still potential driving forces. Just because
6 we don't recognize fear or anger doesn't mean that it isn't influ-
7 encing our lives. We found it important to examine places where
8 we grew angry or our beliefs were tested. The areas we didn't want
9 to question were those that most needed to be looked at.

10 We addicts suffer from a problem deeper than the drugs we took.
11 Because of this, we must live by spiritual principles. Step Ten
12 and all the Steps are to be applied to every area.

13 There is no area that the disease does not affect. The truth
14 is that fear is present in every aspect of our lives. So, in our
15 experience, the program can and must be worked continuously. The
16 process of taking inventory of ourselves is essential. As addicts,
17 we are prone to fear, anger, vanity, complacency, and doing the
18 wrong thing at the wrong time. These manifestations of the disease
19 can drive us into a place where we fear that we cannot remain clean.

20 We do what the N.A. way of life suggests. It's the only way
21 we know for addicts such as ourselves to change. For us, we must
22 change or die. We learn to accept others because resentments or
23 impatience can kill us. The acceptance and working the program
24 are big changes from denial and fighting everything. As time goes
25 by, we grow in spiritual health. Our old ways of selfishness and
26 fear are being replaced with love and this Fellowship. Again, the
27 main event is to stay clean. We don't use drugs.

28 The effectiveness of an inventory depends on the willingness

1 to apply it. We used drugs every day without a qualm. It is neces-
2 sary to use the tools we have to stay clean and sober with the same
3 diligence. We look at our actions during the day and we practice
4 the art of looking at where we were wring, considering what we could
5 have done differently, and the amends we need to make. We find it
6 helpful and humbling to admit to another human being where we were
7 wrong.

8 Continuing to inventory each phase of recovery helps us monitor
9 what we're doing. It gives us a way to deal with any grief we bring
10 upon ourselves. It helps create stability in our lives becuase
11 regular inventory is a way to pay attention to the little things so
12 they don't get blown out of proportion or build up to a relapse into
13 drug abuse.

14 Are we doing our best? Are we staying honest? Are we still
15 growing, or are we slipping back into the old fears and resentments?
16 It is the purpose of the Tenth Step to answer these and similar
17 questions. Those defects of character which we found in the Fourth
18 Step are deeply ingrained in us. The thing we do is check for the
19 surfacing of defects early on by working Step Ten daily.

20 We also found it important to examine the other side of the
21 coin; the good qualities about ourselves. Often, we included in
22 our continuing inventories a "gratitude list." Someone once said
23 that it is impossible to be unhappy and grateful at the same time.
24 The point is that as we dwell upon resentment or upset in our lives,
25 so do we being to feel and act in disharmony with our surroundings.
26 Recognizing blessings for which we are grateful automatically gives
27 us a step towards spiritual fitness and freedom from guilt and self-
28 entered fear.

1 There is value in relating a daily inventory verbally to
2 another. We have found a sponsor or spiritual advisor to be
3 of great assistance when we needed guidance with our personal
4 inventory. Often we learned from sharing with this person that
5 we were not alone in our efforts to achieve a clean and serene
6 life.

7 A quick inventory taken as needed can benefit greatly in
8 quieting stormy emotions. This quick inventory is targeted at
9 our daily events, especially when people and new situations
10 arise, throwing us off balance.

11 This highlights the preventative part of the Tenth Step.
12 We can ask ourselves as we go through the day--especially when we
13 become upset or uncomfortable, "Am I slipping into an old pattern
14 of fear or resentment? Am I too tired? Too hungry? Is my think-
15 ing getting cloudy?

16 When these things arise, we now have a process by which we
17 can stay clean. We have the tools we need to get through the
18 present moment clean. We review our daily necessities: getting
19 food when hungry, resting when tired, and sharing with another
20 individual or in a meeting when we become angry, lonely or
21 obsessed with our own daily living "problems". We can call
22 another clean N.A. member before we use drugs, and we can begin
23 to get the kind of help we really need--the help of each other
24 while we learn how to help ourselves with the principles of this
25 program. The tools we have been given in this program give us
26 a way of avoiding grief before we bring it on ourselves. They're
27 a sort of vaccination against insanity--provided we use them on
28 a continuing daily basis.

1 Rigorous honesty is the most important tool we have in learn-
2 ing how to deal with the past and to live today. Although
3 honesty is a difficult tool to practice, it is a most rewarding
4 one. We practice honesty under all conditions because it is the
5 antidote to our diseased thinking. We lose the fear of being
6 cornered. Our lack of fear and our new found faith serves as a
7 firm foundation for courage in the future.

8 Being honest is not a natural thing for us to do. We don't
9 expect to practice total honesty in all things overnight. It is
10 a gradual process in our daily living.

11 The situations that have seemed the hardest in maintaining
12 our honesty have produced the most rewarding results. When we
13 are honest in really difficult situations, the feelings of happi-
14 ness and serenity are overwhelming.

15 Many of us have never before experienced gut-level honesty
16 because we covered up our feelings by using. We must learn to
17 get to the bottom of each emotion we have, and face it, so we can
18 become our true selves. Our lives are so much simpler when we
19 get to know ourselves.

20 "Cash register honesty" is a good beginning in developing
21 self-esteem. Self-esteem is based on facing and living by the
22 truth. When we honestly evaluate what we really have, we can
23 learn to appreciate it. The gifts of recovery are things that we
24 can carry with us everywhere.

25 We honestly chalk up our achievements and put our house in
26 order, giving ourselves room to grow. We begin to straighten
27 out our messes, and in doing so, we gain both strength and a
28 better knowledge of ourselves.

1 that it was a beginning to becoming more sensitive to God's will
2 for us. Yes, we continued to take personal inventory. We looked
3 at our assets and liabilities and we wought to achieve a balance
4 of comfort by admitting our wrongdoing when it was helpful to do
5 so, and by being willing to forgive when we thought others had
6 wronged us.

7 The results of continuing our personal inventory are shown
8 by our change to a more patient and tolerant human being; being
9 more willing to give than take from life, more able to love our
10 fellows.

11 Now that we are clean, we have recognized the advantage of
12 getting our own house in order. We can recognize ourselves as the
13 heart of the problem. Negativity has been our way for many years
14 and we are not able to change into complete saints overnight.
15 Any thought that we are going to be perfect has to be smashed.
16 We must remain teachable if we are going to stay clean in this
17 program. The "smart" ones who argue a lot usually die, while the
18 open-minded ones get a chance to live. We do not entertain the
19 thought of ever achieving perfection. However, we must strive
20 for stability in our lives so that we can live happily and be at
21 peace with ourselves.

22 It will become more evident as we go forward, that it is
23 pointless to become angry or get hurt by people who, like us,
24 may be suffering from the pains of growing and life.

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1 "SOUGHT THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION TO IMPROVE OUR CONSCIOUS
2 CONTACT WITH GOD, AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM, PRAYING ONLY FOR KNOW-
LEDGE OF HIS WILL FOR US AND THE POWER TO CARRY THAT OUT."

3 There are many forms of prayer to seek the guidance and
4 direction of God's will for us. We accept His power with
5 humility, acknowledgement, surrender and gratitude. We recognize
6 the selfishness and fear in our thoughts, motives and actions
7 and appeal to Him for help. Seeking God is an activity that
8 starts from searching within.

9 In beginning the day we ask God to direct our thoughts. We
10 may pray: "God grant me the honesty, open-mindedness and willing-
11 ness to seek Thy will, to accept Thy will and the power to carry
12 it out."

13 Spontaneous prayer throughout the day is just as important
14 as beginning and ending a day, if not of greater value in
15 functioning with peace of mind.

16 We find ourselves praying because it feels good, because it
17 brings us peace and restores our confidence and courage. It
18 helps us to live a life of love and stay away from that old life
19 of fear and distrust.

20 In the Eleventh Step the program we've been practicing so
21 that we could stay away from drugs suddenly begins to come alive,
22 to mean something.

23 We wouldn't pretend to be able to tell anyone how, when or
24 where to pray. There are some members whose way of life suggests
25 that many of their actions and even their attitudes are a form
26 of prayer. We're referring to their ability to give of them-
27 selves and their attitude of gratefulness. The moment we remember
28 not having taken time out for prayer can be used as a moment of

1 prayer. When we use the capacity to recognize compassion and
2 beauty in others, when accept the miracles in every form of life,
3 we begin to be aware of a Power greater than ourselves as we
4 understand Him.

5 The work of all the preceding steps clear the way for
6 meditation. In order to meditate, we must be able to be alone
7 with the reality of ourselves. As active addicts, our every
8 action was intent on avoidance of our real selves. Reality was
9 uncomfortable, our actions were unacceptable, so we sought to
10 alter and falsify any awareness and consciousness with any and
11 every substance available. When threatened with sober awareness
12 of ourselves, we were filled with a sick and fearful dread, al-
13 most a horror.

14 The quality of our meditation is in direct proportion to the
15 quality of self-awareness and self-acceptance. Utilizing quiet
16 time in whatever method we might choose, we can learn to journey
17 to that place inside where we can listen to the whispering of
18 spiritual wisdom that brings us the peace and comfort we need to
19 go on with faith and hope. We all have the capacity to practice
20 meditation; the key is to make the time to allow it to happen.

21 In the Third Step we tried to turn our will and our life over
22 to God. We renew this effort daily in the Eleventh Step.

23 Most of us rebel against this in the beginning. The old
24 fears cry out, "My will be done." The first time we hear some-
25 one say, "Let go and let God," it sounds idiotic. "No!" we say,
26 "If I let go, I'll disappear or someone will take advantage of
27 me." But it doesn't work out that way. What happens instead is
28 that the more we improve our conscious contact with God via

1 prayer and meditation, the more often we pause when doubtful and
2 say, "God, I don't know what to do. Please show me which way to
3 go," the better off we are.

4 It's a fact. When we finally get our own selfish motives
5 out of the way, even just once in a while, and pray for guidance--
6 really meaning it--we begin to find peace. We begin to feel a
7 calm joy. We begin to experience an awareness and an empathy
8 with other people that would never be possible under the influ-
9 ence of a drug.

10 After we accept that we created our own hell and that there
11 is a God who wants to help us, we begin to make progress in
12 solving our problems. Through open-minded effort, we "act our
13 way into right thinking", letting our Higher Power find us,
14 rather than searching for God with only our minds. We come to
15 rely on a growing daily relationship with a God of our under-
16 standing. Agnostics and atheists generally start out by just
17 talking to "Whatever's there."

18 One way to develop our conscious contact with God is to make
19 up a "gratitude" list, count our blessings and thank our Higher
20 Power for them. Another way is to practice accepting conditions
21 as they are, and trusting that they will improve if they're
22 supposed to. We do these exercises several times a day, until
23 they become a routine part of our lives. In this way, we begin
24 to face life on God's terms, and that gives us the necessary
25 sense of peace for us to live clean successfully.

26 As a result, we have a continuing conscious contact with a
27 personal God of "Love and Sobriety". We enjoy an increasing
28 assurance of God's will for us and the spiritual power necessary
to effectively live that will.

1 When we pray for knowledge of God's will for us and the
2 power to carry that out--a remarkable thing happens; we find
3 the means, the ways and the energies to perform tasks far beyond
4 what we believed possible. By the apparent surrender of our
5 own power, we gain a far mightier power that will see us through
6 every conceivable trial or trouble so long as we keep faith and
7 renew it through daily prayer.

8 These are not the false promises of drugs. You can step
9 into the meeting places of Narcotics Anonymous and observe these
10 promises as they unfold in everyday living.

11 The Eleventh Step has come to be an attitude of always
12 looking for God's will for us in the circumstances of our lives.
13 Instead of giving things a lot of thought about why did this
14 happen to us, or what could we have done differently, we now
15 ask to be shown what the lesson is.

16 In the course of our daily lives, we usually tend to for-
17 get to keep things simple, and we build our problems into
18 unmovable mountains. Patience is not exactly one of our strong
19 points either. We are experts at making ourselves so frustrated
20 that we lose perspective completely.

21 Being open-minded allows us to hear something that might
22 save our lives. It allows us to listen to opposing points of
23 view, and come to conclusions of our own. Open-mindedness leads
24 us to those very insights that have eluded us during our lives.
25 It is this principle, open-mindedness, that allows us to parti-
26 cipate in a discussion without jumping to conclusions or pre-
27 determining who is right and who is wrong. We no longer have
28 to make fools of ourselves by standing up for old ideas that

1 may not be applicable today. We have learned that it is okay
2 not to know everything, for then we are teachable and can learn
3 how to live our new life successfully.

4 We begin to see that God's love was there all the time,
5 just waiting for us to accept it. Life finally begins to get
6 better, even though we still face all the heartaches and tragedies
7 that are the lot of mankind. Few supposedly normal people are
8 able to face hardships with the strength and calm shown by N.A.s
9 who truly work this step.

10 The Eleventh Step is right where it should be; it took
11 working the other steps for us to arrive at the Eleventh Step
12 in spiritual shape to accept how good it enables us to feel.

STEP TWELVE - "Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps, we tried to carry the message to addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs".

This great step is to be preceded by the working of Steps One through Eleven. There are those of us who tried to stay clean without the benefit of "having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps," and they are no longer with us. The ones who continue to "practice these principles in all (their) affairs," tell us that this is the most wonderful thing one can know. The journey is a feeling of gratitude.

The idea of a spiritual awakening may seem like nonsense to a newcomer, but it is a most profound promise and prediction. Most of us come to the program full of resistance, defiance and an inner conviction that there is no way we can really become spiritual. This step becomes a goal. We were never much for accepting things on blind faith and this step helps us by letting us know how those who preceded us got that spiritual way of life and accompanying peace of mind that we so desperately wanted. Life takes on a new meaning, a new joy, and a quality of being and feeling worthwhile. We become spiritually refreshed and are glad to be alive. Our suffering has cleansed us of some of our illusions. In time we have been guided to a new life and place in the world and in our hearts.

The steps bring us closer to a Higher Power. They are goals and the 12th is the one that opens us up to living, to going beyond the world of our disease and cleaning up and facing its consequences. The steps seem to hold the only answers for us that we can really use. In living these steps, we first begin to let go of old egotism. We then open up to a Higher Power, so that we will

lose all fear of facing ourselves and of facing other people.

Eventually, when we sincerely use this program of action in our daily lives, we will be able to face our Higher Power, ourselves, our loves ones, and even the "cold, cruel world." We develop a solid base to work from, which assures us that we can go anywhere and do anything, with complete assurance that we can handle whatever we have at hand. With that kind of attitude, we have a real basis for living happily and we are able to be of help to the addict who is still suffering.

Usually, by the time we achieve this state of mind, no one has to tell us to share our new life with the still-suffering addict; we are more than eager to help that person, giving away that which has been given to us. We call it "carrying the message" and we do it in any number of ways.

The first way in which we carry the message is by staying clean and sober with the help of God and the N.A. program. Our new way of life speaks for itself better than our words ever could. People see us on the street. They remember us as furtive, frightened loners. They see us gradually come alive; see the grayness and fear leave our faces; see a spring come into our step and a twinkle in our eyes. The message is meaningless unless we live it. If we do it, we give it more meaning with our lives than our words ever can.

By sharing our experience of recovery with newcomers, both by sponsorship and at meetings, we help ourselves stay clean. We find ourselves being constantly reminded of things that help us want to stay clean. Being able to serve as an instrument of a loving God and participation in the recovery of others keeps a sense of wonder and gratitude in our lives. Giving comfort and encouragement to others encourages and comforts us. Today, we have

people in our lives who stand by us when it's rough and help us do what we can and not worry about what we can't. "Getting out of ourselves" gives us more perspective on life and makes it easier to live with reality. We no longer feel like we have to run from anything. This program has given us a sure way to explore ourselves, rooting out defects and learning to live. We do not shirk when called upon to carry the message. We know that helping others works. We do these things because they are the things that grant the new lives we are enjoying. A person who has worked the Twelve Steps is able to help a newcomer in his first few days by answering many questions. The more we work the steps in our lives, the more we are able to share with addicts who reach out for help.

Doing the twelvestep is putting love and commitment into action. We 12-steppers are seen by some as being unselfish, but that perception is not always accurate. There is no drug on earth that can give us the same good feeling as sharing our experience, strength, and hope and being able to watch some one choose the path of freedom. We happily and selfishly do 12-step work for the same reason that we did drugs...it makes us feel good.

When we share with someone, we may say, "Lord make me an instrument of Thy Will." To insure our own recovery, we should never go on a twelve step call alone. This also helps the addict who is seeking recovery because he has two persons' input. Whenever we talk to someone about the steps of the program we do it as one friend sharing their experience with another. We can ask newcomers at meetings if they have a sponsor and have considered doing the steps. If they show interest we can make ourselves available to them as a resource. We should always make it easy for someone to ask.

If there is someone in our family who we think needs help, we

get a recovering addict who is not as emotionally involved as we are to talk to him. Our feelings would probably get in the way and we could appear angry, or form resentments. We let someone else talk to him. We try to avoid the arrogance of self-righteousness, because it is one of the deadliest forms of self-deception. We avoid pushing any ideas on anyone, but we do suggest, strongly, that each person make an honest attempt to find a Power greater than themselves. We don't set ourselves up as God. That is why it is spiritual. We get to be an instrument of God's grace in action. It's a privilege and an honor to go on such a call. Those of us who do service work are the luckiest people on God's earth. Those who have been in the pits of despair, now strive to help other people to find a new and better way to live.

Someone said once that he had never made an unsuccessful 12-step call. This sounds pompous until we consider what success really means. Regardless of the outcome, we have planted the seed of recovery. Experience also shows that carrying the message ensures our own recovery. We bear in mind what our own limitations are and make no expectations for the other person to do or be anything. One twelve step call of this nature can make a life worthwhile. There are plenty of such calls for those of us in N.A. In the course of carrying the message, each of us comes to our own understanding of the Twelfth Step. If we have difficulties, we trust our groups and the principles of the program to guide us.

The Twelfth Step also suggests that we practice these principles in all of our affairs. As long as we stay clean and live these principles, we are doing twelfth step work. We are attracting people to us and the N.A. fellowship by our example of being clean. We no longer wish to participate in the problem. We now serve God. In this manner of service, we renew our vow to turn our will and

lives over to the care of God. Even if we have no such understanding, we will acquire it through seeing others recover. Fellow addicts show that God is loving and we will know a life free of drugs that we never dreamed possible. The Steps do not end here, they are a new beginning. All will be well as long as we remain abstinent and trust in a Higher Power of our understanding. Living just for today relieves the burden of the past and alleviates fear of the future. Clean We learned to take whatever actions were necessary and to leave the results in our Higher Power's hands. We learned to trust God with our fate and to let Him help us do our best each day. The most important thing we can do is stay clean today, through reliance upon a Higher Power.

We re-evaluate our old ideas, so that we can become acquainted with the new ideas that lead to a new way of life. We believe that the old self-destruction and self-centeredness can only be replaced with spiritual principles. The three basic spiritual principles are honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to try. We say that they are the "HOW" of our program. One of the principles of the program is an attitude of acceptance. working the basic tenets of being honest, openminded and willing to change our detrimental ways affords us the opportunity of never-ending growth and spiritual achievement. Among other attractive options, that gives us release from being stuck, helpless, bored and boring. We can't run the world or control our addiction. As often as we choose to work the steps on any problem we have, that is how often we will be successful in resolving that problem. The rewards of working the steps are ultimately realized in that rich feeling of completion that comes from working and continuing to work the twelfth step.

However, open-mindedness without willingness, will get us

nowhere. We must be willing to go to any lengths to get our recovery. We never know when the time will come when we must put forth all the effort and strength we have to stay clean. Honesty, openmindedness, and willingness to try, work hand in hand. The lack of one of these principles in our programs can kill us. Living a personal program without these principles, will make recovery difficult and painful for us when it should be beautifully simple.

The last part of the 12th step "to practice these principles in all our affairs" is to work the 12th step in our everyday lives. We find that by doing this we are able to cope, work and handle all the stuff in the real world outside of N.A. We have found that by doing the steps in order we are able to take the ones we need and apply them to our daily situations. If we try to practice these principles in all our affairs, we never have to use drugs again. Our lives will work as long as we practice the 12 steps in our daily affairs. This is like reaping what we sow. The old habit of using drugs is replaced by the new habit of not using, and helping others to get clean.

We attend the meetings and make ourselves visible and available to serve the fellowship. We give freely and gratefully of our time, our services, our resources, and our experience in the service of our fellows. There is a spirit or an energy that can be felt in the meetings, and it is sometimes the newcomer's first perception of God. This spirit, or whatever it is, relaxes and helps us to get honest with each other. We let go of our egos and learn from our fellow addicts. Honest sharing speeds our recovery and makes us believe that this Power is taking care of us, and working for our good. We no longer blame God and others for our problems, and see that our problems have been of our own making.

The Twelve Steps led us to a point of recovery that seemed to make the world change before our eyes, for the better. By practicing the N.A. principles in all our affairs, we attract other addicts to us, addicts we are now capable of helping.

What we have today is the wonderful fact of our recovery and all that it means to us. Each day we live clean awakens us to the freedom we had all along but failed to realize. We succeed now where we had known only failure before. Many of our dreams, forgotten and obscured by our addiction, return and help us regain the sense of wonder and excitement at the miracle of living clean. The old compulsions fade and the habits of mind associated with addiction weaken and are broken. A great many things become possible for us. Since we live clean and grow, we are able to take our place in the world.

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

3 Common welfare is at the top of the list in the 12 tradi-
4 tions, because if you can't believe in yourself as an individual,
5 who or what can you believe in? If we break down "common welfare"
6 to its simplest form it means shared happiness, well-being and
7 spiritual prosperity. Common welfare is what is best for the group,
8 not for one individual. Before voting on something, we can first
9 think, "would this hurt the group as a whole, or is it just to fit
10 the needs on one person?" To make sure that there is stability in
11 the group we should be able to disagree but not have to ^{be} disagreeable
12 We need to think about the welfare of N.A. first, not just the wel-
13 fare of ourselves. Coming to believe that we have a common welfare
14 is not always easy. We have come to this program with our personal
15 welfare foremost in our minds. Most of us had never experienced the
16 kind of attention and personal care that we find in the N.A. pro-
17 gram. We are accepted and loved for what we are; instead of "in
18 spite" of what we are. The individual is precious to the group,
19 and the group is precious to the individual. We seek out the people
20 in N.A. who have the most to offer. We try also to share what we
21 have with those who have nothing to offer. We get involved with
22 service committees in the program. We study ourselves through the
23 Steps, our sponsors and others in the program. We depend on Narco-
24 tics Anonymous for our very lives. If N.A. dies, we die. It is up
25 to us to preserve our fellowship so that we will have a place to re-
26 cover.

27 As addicts the self-centered nature we possess impairs
28 our ability to see beyond ourselves. Any collective consciousness
is threatening to us. Only through practicing some sort of "Blind

1 Faith" can we stay around long enough to have the scales of selfish-
2 ness lifted from our minds and eyes. What happens on a group level
3 usually precedes what happens on an individual level. Our personal
4 recovery, as it evolves, will slowly begin to take on the character-
5 istic of the group as a whole.

6 We all came to N.A. because we "knew so much," but we were
7 proved wrong through many painful experiences. Ego and self-will
8 placed us in the predicaments we found ourselves in. That is why
9 a group conscience is necessary. No one person has found all the
10 answers. That is why we must rely on a power greater than ourselves
11 and the group.

12 We addicts, when finally reaching the doors of N.A., are
13 very sick individuals. Even though full of anger, fear, self-pity
14 and self-loathing, we find ourselves in the midst of people who have
15 felt as we do.

16 We are asked to give up our old ideas, habits and ways
17 of life. It is often frightening to take risks and try new ideas
18 such as honesty, trust and acceptance. We lean on those who have
19 gone before us to share their experience; to give us hope that if
20 this new way of life worked for them, it will work for us too.

21 There is much to learn and it is a long road to recovery.
22 For an addict to stop using drugs and live clean and sober with any
23 measure of happiness or productivity requires a major upheaval in
24 that person's psychic, emotional and spiritual make-up. The 12
25 steps and the fellowship offer us the keys we need to make that
26 great change.

27 Recovery is different for everyone. But for all of us,
28 it means growth and a new way of life. It is the process which

1 leads to a spiritual awakening, to happiness and serenity.

2 The N.A. fellowship is a priceless gift for its seemingly
3 endless supply of answers to our daily living problems. We get
4 these answers in countless forms: members sharing at meetings, talk-
5 ing with our sponsors, sharing with a newcomer or another addict,
6 praying and meditating, or reading our N.A. literature. They are
7 all vital parts of the program.

8 Once we have taken the first step and admitted to our
9 innermost selves that we are indeed addicts, we then sense that our
10 very survival depends on the unity of N.A. Unity means we are all
11 working toward the same goal: abstinence from drugs. As individual
12 members, we need never compete with one another. We are there to
13 lend support and to help one another. We compare ourselves only
14 with ourselves, never against one another. By combining efforts,
15 our fellowship thrives and becomes stronger. By working against
16 each other, our fellowship could be torn apart.

17 We need to always remember our failures in kicking drugs
18 alone. But somehow when we all help each other, it works. As
19 addicts, we know the truth in the statement, "If we don't hang to-
20 gether, we'll all hang separately." The common welfare of the group
21 is based upon helping ourselves by helping others. Sharing and car-
22 ing is the lifeblood of our program.

23 To follow the traditions of the program strengthens the
24 unity of the group. This insures that the fellowship stays alive
25 and free. Those who keep coming back to meetings notice a tie that
26 binds us together. If unity is strong and stable, the addict has
27 a chance to recover.

28 Stability is vitally necessary for us because where we

1 come from instability was our way of life. We are able to do things
2 as a group that we were unable to do for ourselves, mainly stay
3 clean and sober.

4 We cherish our fellowship for the mental, emotional and
5 spiritual support we receive from one another and the genuine caring
6 we feel for each other. Whether or not we like individual members is
7 irrelevant, when we consider the deep concern we have for every
8 addict because we know what it's like. We've all been through the
9 same pain and humiliation and we rejoice in each other's recovery.

10 If you have no unity you have no personal recovery. Unity
11 comes from sticking together for the common welfare of the group.
12 Without unity there is no group. Unity keeps the ties of the group
13 together. Unity comes through N.A. members staying in the positive.

14 We must keep N.A. together, to keep it strong for our own
15 sake. We work for the common good so that the decisions we make
16 and the actions we take may help all of N.A., not just one member
17 or one group.

18 These are the bonds of N.A. unity that hold us together.
19 Without this unity few or none of us could or would recover from
20 the devastating effects of our personal addictions.

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TRADITION TWO

1 "FOR OUR GROUP PURPOSE THERE IS BUT ONE ULTIMATE
2 AUTHORITY -- A LOVING GOD AS HE MAY EXPRESS HIMSELF IN OUR GROUP
3 CONSCIENCE; OUR LEADERS OUR BUT TRUSTED SERVANTS, THEY DO NOT
4 GOVERN."

5 Many of us addicts come to N.A. full of rage in the
6 areas of authority and authority figures. Some of us have reacted
7 adversely to authority most of our lives and usually come out on
8 the short end of these encounters. Being self-willed persons
9 caused us many heartaches and miseries that drove us frantically
10 through the doors of Narcotics Anonymous.

11 The 2nd Tradition's main theme is to quiet this struggle
12 within ourselves and with each other. Group conscience is a
13 collective will. It is the hope of God's will being adhered to
14 and practiced. We must cease and desist with our reactionary
15 behavior and join together under God's grace.

16 Our groups consist of newcomers and those who've been
17 around for awhile. Even when we didn't know what we were voting
18 on, we were given the privilege to vote, keeping in line with this
19 Tradition. New addicts are coming in daily and the heart of our
20 loving program grows -- each group that meets is the expression of
21 a loving God.

22 God reveals His will through each of us. If we stop
23 long enough to listen, we will hear that small voice within. When
24 we first come to the program, we find it difficult to be still and
25 listen. In groups we have seen confusion, but then in the middle
26 of it one anonymous voice might say, "Maybe we should do this."
27 A big sigh of relief comes over the group and everything settles
28 down again. This insight comes from God and He makes it real

1 simple so that we can understand.

2 Anyone who is willing may involve themselves in service.
3 If by chance, they find themselves trying to control the group or
4 attempting to conform the group to their will, they will receive
5 a rude awakening. The beauty of the group conscience is that any-
6 one may voice feelings and/or opinions, but in the final analysis,
7 the group as a whole will vote and that vote is final. No one
8 person or group of persons can control N.A. The group conscience
9 would stifle them before they got up any steam.

10 Occasionally we have seen individuals, often with the
11 best intentions, sway the group into voting a certain way. This
12 is understandable since many of us are so enthusiastic about stay-
13 ing clean and about N.A. We feel the surge of new life and we
14 rightfully credit N.A. Some of us feel a desire to eveangelize
15 and further our cause as we see fit. We feel the temptation of
16 power and self-importance and ask God to direct us in carrying
17 His message of recovery. We will want to make every effort to be
18 unbiased in presenting issues to our groups; simply present the
19 pros and cons of the matter and leave it at that. The group vote
20 will be best for all, if we ask God to show us His will and direct
21 our group's conscience.

22 When we arrive at the fellowship we may be overwhelmed
23 by things which are beyond our comprehension. Things like posi-
24 tions (secretaries, leaders of meetings, etc.) and lengths of
25 sobriety. Each meeting is led by someone. Groups have secretarie
26 and group service representatives. Areas have committees with
27 Chairs, Treasurers, Secretaries, etc. The service structure of
28 N.A. can look quite complex if we forget to keep it simple. The
uniqueness lies in the fact that it is all based on the individual

1 member.

2 We may not have a concept of a Higher Power. Therefore,
3 we place a lot of faith in individuals who we consistently see as
4 practicing examples of the program. It is only after we come in
5 contact with a belief in some Higher Power that we finally realize
6 that what is transpiring withing the Fellowship and groups is not
7 always pre-ordained by the members but by the authority of a lovin
8 God as He expresses Himself in our group conscience.

9 All the committees, officers, and representativrs serve
10 the Fellowship. No chairperson or any other officer may dictate
11 to the Fellowship. The committees suggest only; they don't make
12 laws or enforce rules. There are many positions open to those who
13 cherish service, from the group's coffeemakers to the trustees.

14 The term trusted servant is self-explanatory. The
15 group elects him or her to a position within our structure, and
16 that position is one of service, or defined in another way, some-
17 one who carries out the group conscience, often without recogni-
18 tion. These elected representatives are not the leaders or
19 standard bearers of the group.

20 Leaders don't govern. This is a very important aspect
21 of the Twelve Traditions. This is a spiritual program, not poli-
22 tical or social. Leaders are but trusted servants. They help to
23 keep our group running smoothly, and they are given the ability
24 to do that by God. They are no better or worse than the newcomer
25 or the member with 20 years of sobriety. They are given positions
26 of responsibility by a group conscience and we can have faith in
27 our representatives because we have faith in our Higher Power.

28 Because we choose to believe in His loving authority in
our lives, every day clean and sober is a gift of life. A loving

1 God, group conscience, and trusted servants all add up to freedom
2 for the group. Coming from a bondage of self-will, we are lifted
3 to a higher place of graditude for our new freedom today.

4 We come to realize that when we are entrusted with
5 positions of commitment within our group and within our Fellow-
6 ship, we are trusted to perform these positions through love and
7 within the bounds of our common welfare. Once we are of service
8 in any capacity, we are touched by the overwhelming trust our
9 fellow members place in us. It should be an honor to serve our
10 fellowship. Though it is often misconstrued, it is never mis-
11 placed, because everything that happens occurs for a higher pur-
12 pose than we as individuals are aware of. As long as we place
13 God's will ahead of our will, all will be well!

TRADITION THREE

1 "THE ONLY REQUIREMENT FOR MEMBERSHIP IS A DESIRE TO
2 STOP USING."

3 The words membership and desire are the highlighted
4 words in this tradition. What is membership in Narcotics Anony-
5 mous? Membership is belonging. We have a saying, "You are a
6 member when you say you are." This is one of the only organi-
7 zations where membership does not require some type of accomplish-
8 ment or payment. You don't have to do anything to attain member-
9 ship. You have only to desire abstinence from drugs. The fact
10 that a desire to stop using was all that was required opened the
11 doors for many of us. There is no long list of requirements.

12 What would become of N.A. if we were to place terms and
13 conditions on membership? Without Tradition Three, we would fight
14 to keep our beloved program from being diluted by those we think
15 don't belong. If we had been barred from these doors, we may well
16 have died. There are no dues or fees in N.A.

17 We are made up of all different kinds of people. Any-
18 one may join, no matter what their background if they have a
19 desire to stop using. No matter what drug of choice, simply
20 enter the doors with a desire to stop using and you're a member.
21 This gives us the choice of allowing ourselves and others to
22 remain here. No one knows where we have all come from, the dark
23 and lonely paths we have walked; yet we all share what we find
24 here through this tradition.

25 At first it may be difficult for us to relate to people
26 who used differently than we did, but we are told to "look for
27 the similarities rather than the differences." If we keep an
28 open mind, we see that the feelings we experienced while using,

1 and in our sobriety, are very much the same.

2 Some members of our fellowship have been able to see
3 and face their own addiction only after pursuing a cure for a
4 spouse, child or other loved one. Whatever road we took to find
5 our way to N.A. we believe that it was our own personal Higher
6 Power leading us there. The saying is: "No one comes through
7 these doors by mistake." We are welcomed into the heart of
8 Narcotics Anonymous simply because we have a desire. No one asks
9 for our credentials. `We have paid our dues "out there" but that is
10 our business and we don't have to prove it. Many of us wondered if
11 this was the right place for us; had we shot enough dope?
12 Would we be accepted if all we did was smoke pot or take pre-
13 scription pills? Did we have to have a police record? These
14 questions were quickly answered through the love and acceptance
15 of the fellowship. When this tradition registered in our brains,
16 it gave us the freedom to belong and stay if we chose to.

17 We are all in the meeting for the same reason; we don't
18 want to use drugs anymore and we need help in living clean and
19 sober.

20 Although Narcotics Anonymous is a program of total
21 abstinence, our doors are still open to those individuals still
22 clinging to "old ideas." Our brothers and sisters who for in-
23 stance, give up shooting narcotics, but hold to marijuana in a
24 last-ditch effort to keep getting high. There are some too, God
25 bless them, who must go "back out" over and over again. There is
26 hope, however, in that they are never barred from the fellowship
27 and someday they too may recover. No one can be kicked out of
28 our fellowship. If we closed our doors to those who aren't able

1 yet to say clean or may not be ready, we would be aiding in their
2 death and preventing their recovery.

3 When we see people return to using, it hurts us deeply.
4 The pain and the lies will be obvious to us and we know we don't
5 have to live that way ever again if we don't want to. If we find
6 ourselves judging them, perhaps it is because we're secretly
7 jealous that they can still use and we can't. We may get frus-
8 trated at the perpetual newcomers, not realizing that the only
9 requirement is a desire to stop using.

10 An honest desire is not a thinking process, it's a
11 feeling process that requires fulfillment of its own. It is not
12 a want or a need, it is a longing. Most everyone has felt a
13 longing for something or someone in his/her life. Many of us have
14 felt a desperate need to belong, but
15 usually our lack of self-worth and fear of failure prevented us.
16 But even when we didn't think we could meet the demands of a gang
17 or other groups, we found we could live up to N.A.'s membership
18 requirement: a desire to stop using.

19 When we first arrived at Narcotics Anonymous, all we
20 knew was that we were sick and had to do something different.
21 We were longly; we had no self-worth and knew nothing of being
22 clean and sober. All we knew was that we needed help, and had
23 nowhere else to go. Most of us had already tried everything else.
24 And when we first heard this tradition, it brought relief. We
25 didn't know what would be expected of us or what we would have to
26 do to achieve happiness. Truthfully, many of us didn't want to
27 stop using drugs; addiction was all we knew. But it is not re-
28 quired to be clean to attend N.A. meetings; we found that all we

1 needed to keep coming back was a desire to stop using. Some of
 2 us didn't think drugs were our problem anyway. We had tried to
 3 blame our using on life and situations but we soon found that
 4 this was not the case. In our hearts we eventually realized that
 5 drugs just didn't work anymore.

6 Our desires may be obscure and buried deep beneath our
 7 defenses and fears. But the longer we stay clean, the more in-
 8 tense our desire for sobriety becomes. We choose the 12-step
 9 program as our philosophy for life because it shows us, a day at
 10 a time, how to live in this world without using or abusing our-
 11 selves or others.

12 Most of us come to N.A. to escape the suffering of
 13 using. We stay to experience the joy of living. We pray that
 14 the doors of Narcotics Anonymous will remain open to anyone and
 15 everyone who stumbles in. Our primary concern is that the new-
 16 comer have a safe haven to come and get well through the Twelve
 17 steps, and Twelve Traditions.

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TRADITION FOUR

1 " EACH GROUP SHOULD BE AUTONOMOUS, EXCEPT IN MATTERS
2 AFFECTING OTHER GROUPS, OR N.A., AS A WHOLE."

3 The autonomy of our groups is one of our most precious
4 possessions. This sounds great but what does it mean? What is it
5 to be autonomous? The dictionary defines autonomous as "existing
6 or capable of existing independently", "responding, reacting or
7 developing independently of the whole." Autonomy is all these
8 things to us and more. Our groups are truly self-governing and are
9 not subject to outside control. Each group can exist on its own
10 if it must. Each group has had to grow on its own and stand on its
11 own two feet.

12 While autonomy is a very good thing, it can also become
13 a potential danger if we use it as an excuse to violate our Twelve
14 Traditions or cut ourselves off from communication with other
15 groups. We follow this tradition and all the others for the
16 protection of N.A. on a group level and on all levels.

17 This tradition encourages us to be self-governing as a
18 group. Electing our own trusted servants and carrying the message
19 to the addict who still suffers.

20 Each group has the right to pick the time, place, type
21 of meeting, format, its own secretary, treasurer, GSR, leaders and
22 other things directly affecting that group, through a group con-
23 science. Each group must follow the Twelve Traditions of Narcotics
24 Anonymous in order to be considered an N.A. group.

25 Without our autonomy we'd be just another organization
26 with a stringent structure like the corporate ladder. If this
27 happened, then followers would follow blindly, leaders would lead
28 (to who knows where) and the power brokers would manipulate. Our

1 Fourth Tradition will not allow this to happen.

2 As addicts, for most of us it's pretty easy to be self-
3 governed or self-directed. We are fond of "doing our own thing",
4 and sometimes resent anyone telling us what to do. We carry this
5 attitude into our group and insist our group be self-governed. This
6 can be a very good thing because we then have the freedom to be
7 creative. Our groups, individually, come up with new and different
8 ideas about how they can most effectively carry the message to the
9 addict who still suffers. If N.A. enforced some kind of regulation
10 wherein all the groups had to follow a certain format, we would
11 lose our individuality and our creativity along with it. This
12 would not be practical anyway, since different groups serve different
13 kinds of people with different needs.

14 Our communities may be in different parts of the world.
15 We may speak different languages. We may meet in different facilities.
16 Because of these differences, we may have a need to structure
17 our meetings in different ways. What is important is that we
18 adhere to our traditions and keep in line with the purpose of N.A.
19 as a whole. Because recovery is our goal we need to follow the
20 fellowship's past experiences in regard to our traditions. We cannot
21 do anything in our individual meeting that may tear down other
22 groups or N.A. as a whole.

23 Without sacrificing our individuality, we can meet with
24 representatives of other N.A. groups. In this way we can exchange
25 ideas and perhaps improve our effectiveness in carrying the message
26 which is what a group is all about. Communication serves another
27 purpose in that many of us are inexperienced in such principles as
28 the Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous. Just as we use a

1 sponsor to guide us in practicing the Twelve Steps and Traditions
2 in our personal recovery programs, so can we benefit from the ex-
3 perience of other members and groups in practicing the Traditions.
4 In our lack of knowledge, it's possible we could inadvertently
5 break traditions and other groups and members will help us by mak-
6 ing us aware of it so we don't bring harm to our group or to other
7 groups.

8 Group members who are dissatisfied with a particular
9 group or groups may start new meetings. Because of this, many
10 meetings have become unstable for a time or have had to close al-
11 together. On the other hand, groups that practice the traditions
12 tend to grow.

13 Group autonomy should always be high on the list of pri-
14 orities. But how the group may affect N.A. as a whole needs to be
15 held above what the group may wish in a given situation. The way
16 we use our autonomy is just as important as autonomy itself. In
17 the past, group autonomy has been used to justify the violation of
18 other traditions. This should never be allowed to happen because
19 spiritual principles are never in conflict with other spiritual
20 principles.

21 An example of a matter affecting N.A. as a whole happened
22 when N.A. was just getting started in a particular area. A group
23 was formed to discuss the Steps. N.A. had no book or literature
24 on the steps at the time, so well-meaning members adapted the book
25 of another twelve step program. This was not only in violation of
26 N.A.'s Twelve Traditions, it also put Narcotics Anonymous in the
27 position for a possible lawsuit for reproducing copyrighted materia
28 without permission. When the severity of the situation was compre-

1 hended, the group voted to stop using the book. But it was a
2 difficult decision and a hard time for struggling N.A. groups in
3 areas where there weren't many members or much long-term sobriety.
4 At times it has been tempting to compromise our principles; it
5 seemed to be the easier way. We had had to hold true to our
6 Twelve Traditions, trusting that the storm would pass and our
7 fellowship would survive, if God meant it to, without compromise
8 or violation of principles. Our history is the proof of this faith.
9 N.A. has certainly gone through trials and tribulations in its
10 growth throughout this country and others, but it has survived.
11 And it has flourished and become stronger because of the integrity
12 gained through holding fast to our Twelve Traditions.

13 Another thing affecting N.A. as a whole is: people
14 attending N.A. meetings who are presently in other drug rehabili-
15 tation programs. Many of these people are forced into these pro-
16 grams to keep out of institutions or to keep their job, family, etc.,
17 and are not sure or don't feel they're addicts. Since many of
18 these people are not serious about staying clean and sober, their
19 attitude may affect other members who do want to stay clean and
20 sober, or may hinder the group's conscience toward positive absti-
21 nence and sobriety. If this is the case, obviously the "drug rehab"
22 candidates threaten the group conscience. Can the group handle it?
23 After some growing pains, will the group be stronger than before?

24 These are tough questions to answer at the time. But the
25 answer will come provided the group approaches the problem with
26 group inventory. It is up to the group conscience on what to do
27 about this.

28 Some of these situations have been handled successfully

1 by doing the following: 1) requesting that those who aren't sure
2 they're addicts to please refrain from participating; 2) reminding
3 those people from other programs that they're in an N.A. meeting
4 and telling them "how it works."

5 Some resentments have been felt by those people attending
6 meetings from other programs, but those who really want to be clean
7 and sober keep coming back.

8 When we use our autonomy for the good of the group we must
9 be careful that our actions do not hurt other groups of the fellow-
10 ship of Narcotics Anonymous. Again we are given a simple rule of
11 thumb. If we check to make sure that our actions are clearly with-
12 in the bounds of our Traditions, if we don't represent anyone but
13 ourselves, if we don't dictate to other groups or force anything
14 upon them, and if we take the time to consider the consequences of
15 our actions ahead of time, then all will be well.

16 In spite of all the conflicts we've experienced, our
17 fellowship has continued to grow and our message has been delivered
18 The proof of N.A.'s validity is in the fact that our members are
19 staying clean. We do recover!

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TRADITION FIVE

1 "EACH GROUP HAS BUT ONE PRIMARY PURPOSE, TO CARRY THE MESSAGE TO
2 THE ADDICT WHO STILL SUFFERS."

3 An N.A. Group is any meeting which meets regularly at a
4 specified place and time, providing that it follows the Twelve
5 Steps and Twelve Traditions(having no outside affiliations and
6 receiving no outside financial support).

7 Very simply, a group is two or more addicts who get together
8 to share their experience, strength and hope about recovery from
9 addiction. The primary purpose of an N.A. Group is to carry the
10 message to the addict who still suffers. However, it also provides
11 to each member the chance to express ourselves and to hear the ex-
12 periences of other members who are learning how to live a better
13 life.

14 A meeting gives us a place to start to give and share this
15 beautiful message of recovery. We share our past feelings and the
16 feelings that we go through each day clean and sober. Our N.A.
17 groups and meetings provide a place to congregate without fear of
18 outside pressures or controversies from those who still view us as
19 the dredges of society. For the newcomer man or woman, a meeting
20 may be the only place they feel safe during any 24-hour period.

21 Each group is made up of addicts from a variety of different
22 backgrounds and experiences. Groups provide the nurturing most of
23 us aren't able to give ourselves. We find unconditional acceptance
24 and we gradually learn to cease our destructive, addictive behavior .
25 The purpose of a group is to let other suffering addicts know that
26 we have a message of recovery.

27 Groups hold two basic types of meetings: those which are
28 open to the general public and those closed to the public (For

1 Addicts Only). Meetings vary widely in format from group to group.
2 Some are participation meetings, some speaker, some question and
3 answer, some topic discussion, and some have a combination of these
4 formats. Despite the type of format a Group uses in its meetings,
5 the function of a Group is always the same: to provide a suitable
6 and reliable environment for personal recovery and to promote such
7 recovery.

8 Each Narcotics Anonymous group has a responsibility to carry
9 the message of recovery to the newcomers who walk through the doors.
10 We cannot keep what we have unless we give it away freely. Through
11 honest sharing in meetings, we carry a message of life without
12 drugs. We share when we are in a bad place or a good place, but
13 we do share for the sole purpose of showing the newcomer that we
14 can live in today's society and face all of the problems and joys
15 of life without the use of drugs.

16 This is a stunning statement and hard to grasp. How many
17 of us can explain just what happens at a meeting? Why someone who
18 comes in hurting leaves with some peace? Or someone who doesn't
19 have much to say suddenly breaks down in tears? These are spiri-
20 tual events beyond our human comprehension.

21 Carrying the message of recovery is what a meeting is all
22 about; talking about and hearing about living without reliance upon
23 drugs. We find that by "giving away" what we have, we receive more
24 of it. It sounds like a paradox, but in N.A. we have found that
25 logic isn't always the rule. The rule is what works. And the
26 record has shown that by sharing the recovery we've found, we seem
27 to gather strength and commitment in our new way of life. We can
28 share ourselves honestly and talk about how we are dealing with

1 life. This is the message -- a new way of coping with old fears
2 and reactions. This can reassure other members of the group who
3 may share similar feelings and keep our minds on the track of re-
4 covery and sobriety. We share the difficulties, the good times and
5 the principles we've come to know that make sobriety a relief.

6 There is no time requirement for sharing. Each of us can
7 learn from one another. It is important that we walk through our
8 fear of sharing regardless of whether or not we sound "good." We
9 are the ones who carry the message of recovery and some addict may
10 need to hear what is being said -- good or bad. We trust in our
11 Higher Power to guide us when we share. We go to groups to share
12 our good times and our difficulties in the hope of helping others
13 like us. We listen to new people too, and remember when we were
14 new.

15 Being complex human beings, with a multitude of feelings,
16 each one of us can benefit as long as we keep an open mind. If we
17 haven't been in the same place as another, that doesn't mean we'll
18 never be there. Each one of us has the potential to suffer, no
19 matter how long we've been clean. If we share our feelings and
20 experiences, and how we use the principles of N.A. to deal with
21 them, then we are fulfilling the principle of this tradition.

22 A Group has proven to be the most successful vehicle for
23 Twelve Step work. There are different ways to carry the message--
24 as many as there are groups in N.A., but there is only one message
25 and that is "RECOVERY." The group carries the message by offering
26 us a place to meet. Some of the group's needs are fulfilled by
27 trusted servants who are responsible for certain activities. These
28 include setting up the meeting, accounting for and dispersing the

money collected at a meeting by a group conscience, providing coffee and literature, cleaning up after the meeting and by communicating with others groups in the area. The members carry the message by sharing, welcoming newcomers, and staying clean.

Some of us come in and out of the doors of N.A. and some don't return. We may hear of them in hospitals, in jails, or dead. These people carry the message to the utmost. They die for us and show us that addiction doesn't work. The people in the program who do "go out" also carry the message to us who stay in the groups. These people carry the message that only in the rooms of N.A. do we find freedom. The people in N.A. are chosen by a greater power to show that there is life; a fruitful and happy life without drugs, and we need to take our responsibility of carrying the message seriously. If we let personality conflicts or petty power trips cheat the newcomer of his/her rightful place on sobriety's path, we are defeating our primary purpose - that of carrying the message. In each meeting we attend, we see Tradition Five in action.

The heart of the program is sharing - you can't keep it if you don't give it away.

The addicts in Narcotics Anonymous vary, from the gutter hype to the marijuana abuser, but all of us have feelings that are remarkably similar. Each one of us is on a roller coaster ride referred to as recovery. We want to believe that there is a way we might be able to live normal lives. We listen at meetings and eventually come to an understanding of what's being said. Each person who shares or even listens carries the message because they're at the meeting. Each person has admitted defeat and is an example of sobriety,

1 especially to the newcomer.

2 Sometimes when we get a few months or a few years of
3 clean time together, we start feeling "well" and think we no longer
4 have to listen or share at meetings. We must put aside our pride
5 and ego. When we have been blessed with some sobriety and seren-
6 ity, it's easy to forget where we came from and why we are at
7 the meeting in the first place; because we are addicts and we don't
8 have the capacity to live clean and sober without working some
9 kind of a spiritual program. It's our strength, experience and
10 hope of a new way of life that attracts the addict who still suf-
11 fers.

12 When addicts suffer, whether . . . on an emotional,
13 physical or spiritual level, . . . they need . . . hope. We get the
14 courage and strength to continue this endeavor from attending
15 meetings and hearing the "message" that addicts no longer have to
16 die, that there is a way out of addiction. We can do together what
17 we cannot do alone.

18 There are times when a group becomes sidetracked from its
19 primary purpose. For example, business matters can cause a group
20 to get bogged down. Especially when a group starts to collect a
21 sizeable amount of money, it can be very tempting to divert our
22 attention towards financial matters and material gains. The tra-
23 gedy is that some addict might not hear the message of hope and
24 therefore die, because we neglected our main goal - carrying the
25 message.

26 Even though we might be feeling low and full of self-
27 centered fears about our own problems, we have to put our problems
28 aside, and let the newcomers know that they can recover if they

1 want to. Even though we still have bad days and problems sometimes,
2 it's a whole world better than when we were using and most of us
3 wouldn't trade the sobriety and new life we've been given for all
4 the dope in the world today. The miraculous thing that happens
5 is that we become grateful for all that's been given to us through
6 the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, the Twelve Steps, and most
7 importantly, our Higher Power. We seem to forget how low we were
8 feeling and are able to leave the self-pity and self-centeredness
9 behind and rejoice with the newcomers that together we've found
10 recovery from addiction.

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."

This tradition sets up some guidelines to protect N.A. as a whole, the individual members and to preserve and insure our primary purpose, "helping the addict who still suffers." Controversy arises when members endorse or announce outside enterprises and damages the atmosphere of recovery in our meetings. Financing, endorsing or lending our name to outside facilities or enterprises open N.A. to legal and financial obligations. We must always remember it's our program -addicts helping addicts- not facilities treating addicts for money or prestige. Our purpose is not to become rich or influential, but to stay clean and help "the addict who still suffers."

The 6th Tradition tells us to forget about the power struggles associated with endorsement and to embrace the simplicity of a spiritual program which has no governors or directors, no dues or fees and no professionals. The underlying principle is letting go of our old ideas (money, property and prestige) and grasping new standards (spiritual and emotional growth).

The 6th Tradition has been one of those just sort of read and let go at that. It's hard to understand. But when we really take a look, when we really try to understand, it's simplicity amazes us. We can see the danger of endorsement, financial support and letting others use our name; we can see how easily things can lead to abuse of money, property and prestige; and we can foresee the results of this abuse and the heartache it can bring.

Let's take a closer look at what this Tradition really says. First thing, a group ought never to endorse. To endorse is to sanction, approve, or recommend. Endorsements can either be direct or implied. We see direct endorsements every day. A direct endorsement is often used to persuade someone to do something. An implied endorsement is one that is not stated. Although we don't usually recognize it as such, implied endorsements occur in our 12 step work. The recommendation of facilities for detoxification, withdrawal or private counseling may sometimes be indicated. However, it should be graphically defined as the individual's own recommendation and is in no way connected with N.A.

Related facilities are facilities that deal with recovery from addiction, such as hospitals, detoxes, recovery homes, drug treatment centers, etc. Narcotics Anonymous does not own any of these facilities, nor does N.A. back financial enterprises of any nature. Ownership of anything creates influence, which in turn fosters self-serving instincts which are contradictory to the philosophy of the N.A. program. When money or property are involved, people tend to become greedy. The suffering addict may not seem as important anymore. When prestige is involved, people's egos and hurt pride cause problems. We don't want to get prestigious in N.A. because we want to reach out to everyone who needs help. To strive for prestige would also be disastrous because it would stray us from our primary purpose, which is to carry the message to the suffering addict. After all, we're trying to stay sober and clean, not trying to be the richest or the best.

Only an extreme violation of the Traditions would warrant alarm in neighboring groups, areas or regions. Group attendance

and participation can remedy most all Tradition problems. Extreme 6th Tradition problems seldom occur and when they do they are only examples of how it doesn't work.

It's not difficult to see how the N.A. program could rapidly become diversified, our unity diluted and misrepresented to fit the needs of related facilities or enterprises. An example is provided by a group which had been meeting in a recovery home. The recovery home was experiencing financial difficulty, and asked the secretary of the N.A. group to write a letter of recommendation for the recovery home. The secretary, inexperienced in the principles of the 12 Traditions, was concerned about the house folding and naturally wanted to help out. He wrote a letter, endorsing the recovery house, and represented himself as secretary of an N.A. group. Regardless of the fact that the house received funding and did very well after that, this member violated the 6th Tradition by lending the N.A. name to an outside enterprise. It is imperative, if one must make recommendations, to do so as an individual only.

It is best for N.A. not to be involved with outside functions, because many problems can arise. We have seen that the best way to avoid these problems is to steer clear of any situations that may distract us from our primary purpose. We choose not participate in conflicts for power and influence. We can let others struggle for control, and concentrate on our own priority of recovery. Endorsing or lending our name to any related facility or outside enterprise relinquishes some of our responsibility for our recovery. We've tried "easier softer ways" and that's how we got to N.A..

Some members even stay away from our meetings to avoid this controversy. Standing firmly for beliefs, yet surrendering self-will to group conscience becomes a valuable recovery experience. This cannot be learned by running away. We are solely responsible for our recovery and our actions. We practice the traditions for our own welfare and the protection of N.A.

We pray for an end to these controversies. For recovery, for unity, for us all. N.A. needs to remain separate entity. To allow lending of the N.A. name or financing of other organizations would defeat us in our main purpose, sap our energy and divide us. N.A. is a place where an addict can go to be with other addicts and learn the process of recovery. We want to keep our program as simple as possible, and the 6th Tradition ensures this. By keeping financial matters simple, our freedom will not be impeded.

Let us never lose sight of this goal. Let's strive to keep the principles of the program foremost in mind so that the many addicts who need and want this new way of life will have a chance to recover.

TRADITION SEVEN

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

The 7th tradition addresses the N.A. group. Most people take the principle of this tradition one step further, and apply it to Narcotics Anonymous as a whole.

To be self-supporting financially is also to keep in line with the other traditions. In following this tradition, we are maintaining our autonomy, independent of outside influences. At the same time we are interdependent on our fellowship as a whole. It frees us from the temptation to become caught up in personal power, property and prestige, and at the same time frees us from being financially blackmailed or compromised from the outside. The fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous is supported by itself. The members support the groups who support the areas who support the regions who support the WSC. This is true not only in terms of financial donations, but also in terms of people.

Each group in N.A. has certain monetary responsibilities to fulfill which enables the group to meet. Some of these are rent for the meeting site, refreshments, and literature to provide for all members. It is apparent that in order for the group to survive, money has to be obtained. Where does it come from? It comes from the members of the group. We, as members of our individual groups, donate what we can financially to help the group meet its monetary commitments. As members of Narcotics Anonymous, we need to remember what was given to us freely, so we too shall give freely. It is the donations of each member that

allow N.A. business to function smoothly and efficiently.

It is not mandatory for everyone to "chip-in"; some of us don't have the money to help pay for our needs and some do. The members can provide for the needs of the group by volunteering to make coffee, setting up the chairs, etc. If we, as members, contribute to our group, it makes us feel more a part of the group. We know that when others give us something we don't care as much about it as if we gave it to ourselves. Taking care of our group makes our fellowship even more precious to each one of us. The group must be self-sufficient, doing things for itself and making things happen (fund raisers, etc.) when money is needed. As addicts we donate to our group and area services, to support a program that gives us a clean, drug-free life. If we didn't want this way of life we wouldn't be here.

The reason we choose to decline donations from any source outside the N.A. fellowship is because we can't function with anyone exercising control over us. Dependence upon outside contributions carries the danger of stripping away incentive and self-sufficiency. No matter how altruistic an outside "benefactor" might be, it is a crippling "aid" that removes the self-worth developed by self support. Accepting outside contributions takes away more than self-worth. When we become dependent on outside support, there is always the possibility that the support may be withdrawn at any time, for any reason. It makes no difference whether the financial withdrawal would be because of actual lack of funds or philosophical differences, if suddenly for reasons we may or may not understand or accept, that support ceases. We cannot afford to depend on outside contributions. We could be left with panic, frustration, confusion and despair. We could be left without even the basic necessities that allow us to continue to share our message of recovery.

Our strengths would become scattered and chaotic. When our financial existence is independent of outside contributions, it allows us the motivation, caring and pride to be self-supporting. We realize that each time we contribute to N.A., whether by supporting our local meetings or assisting in an N.A. sponsored fundraiser, we are also contributing to our own personal recovery.

Some members of N.A. feel it's alright to accept small monetary donations, gifts of food, Christmas trees and raffle prizes from outside (the N.A. community) sources. This clearly violates the 7th tradition. The tradition states "declining outside contributions." It does not say "declining outside contributions except in the case of some free food for our Christmas dance/pot-luck, and except if we are having a raffle and we need good prizes to raffle off." No, it says "declining outside contributions," period. When we accept donations from outside organizations we open the door to the possibility of outside influence. For example, consider a group meeting in a facility which cannot accept monetary compensation for rent. Our experience has shown that some facilities may influence a group by restricting who may attend or what can or cannot be discussed at the meeting. A possible solution to this problem might be donating N.A. literature as rent. In other instances when total payment is not required or possible, a token compensation should be made to stay within the principle of the 7th tradition. By this means, the group maintains its independence.

When an N.A. group allows itself to accept donations from someone who is not an addict, it can set the group up for outside pressures from the donor. It is a well known fact that money represents power. If a person contributes to the support of another they sometimes wish to control the actions of the other. N.A. is such a beautifully simple organization, we really don't want it disrupted by power struggles and outside control. We acknowledge

that funding from the government or other endowments would be nice, but we must maintain our freedom to help addicts the way that only we can. We don't accept outside contributions because we want to hold on to the freedom we have - the freedom to recover any way we can and to live any way we choose.

There always seems to be a need for money in the fellowship. Even so, grants and gratuities from grateful families and friends must be declined. It is apparent that when money or things are donated to anyone, it can cause misunderstanding or resentment. How many of us donate to anything without expecting something in return? Reliance on outside contributions will never make the group unified in its goals.

N.A. isn't a program which is trying to get rich. It is a program of helpful, loving and caring people who just want to stay clean. For N.A. as a whole to grow our individual groups depend on contributions from their members. Supporting our group makes us more responsible persons and insures us of our new life's goals without the influence of persons who haven't been where we've been or who don't understand our illness.

Breaking Tradition 7 may seem harmless at times. We want to make money to better be able to carry the message , BUT, not by violating our traditions. It is better to struggle and wait for God's time for our fellowship to grow and expand, than to violate one of our most important traditions so that we may temporarily excel.

TRADITION EIGHT

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

The N. A. program of recovery is based on the concept of one addict helping another. By sharing our experience, strength and hope with the addict who still suffers, we offer a program of recovery in which we ourselves are the living proof. Our recovery isn't based in theory or in clinical formulas but in God working daily in our lives. We are recovering addicts who, by the grace of God, have been given a daily reprieve from our disease. The function of Narcotics Anonymous is to provide an atmosphere of recovery from addiction. None of the members are paid.

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

Addicts sharing their own experience and knowledge about the steps and recovery seems to be more effective than many of our dealings with "professionals". The professional has no place in our Fellowship; our very nature prohibits this. Professionalism as such is not the problem. We recognize and admire the professional and his sphere. Many of our members in the endeavors outside the Fellowship have become professionals in their own right. It's just that there's no place for professionalism in N. A.; for our purpose we have learned the therapeutic value of one addict helping another

is truly without parallel.

Very often members wish to use what "they have learned" for their own pursuits. N. A. is supportive of individual growth (whether it be in the helping professions, the business world or the arts). However the program of Narcotics Anonymous does not lend itself to professional application: it is not to be sold. We freely give what was freely given to us.

Many times N. A. members earn their living by working at hospitals or recovery homes. Is this violating Tradition Eight ? Narcotics Anonymous does not have the right to tell individual members what they may or may not do to earn their living. As long as they do not use their membership in Narcotics Anonymous to lure patients into the facility and thereby use the name of Narcotics Anonymous to make money, and as long as it is clearly the hospital or institution that is "professional" and not Narcotics Anonymous itself, all will be well.

How do we define an N. A. service center? A service center may be at the area, regional or world level. These "service centers" serve the groups in the area that supports them. Their function is that of a business office; a central point for referral of twelve step calls, distribution of public information, etc.

Volunteer work is the backbone of our service, but volunteers work only to the best of their abilities. Some of our services require skills or abilities we are unable to supply as volunteers. Most of us do not have the training to fulfill these functions. Our Eighth Tradition also recognizes this and tells us that we may employ special workers in our service centers. Without their help, we might

1 be unable to respond to many of those who reach out to us for
2 help.

3 Sometimes, in "carrying the message," many tasks, some
4 skilled and some unskilled, need to be done. Some of us offer
5 our services to N.A. as committee members, coffee makers,
6 etc. We donate our talents to benefit Narcotics Anonymous.
7 If we have the ability to type, or keep track of funds, or
8 some other ability that would be useful to the fellowship,
9 we gratefully try to pay back a little of the debt we feel
10 we owe N.A. We give only what we are able. We don't try to
11 be something we're not. If no one in our area has the ability
12 to type, it may be necessary for us to hire a typist so we
13 can keep minutes of our business meetings. The 8th Tradition
14 deals with the use of paid "professional" help in our service
15 centers. In our infancy, we have used volunteers to staff these
16 service centers. But as we grow, we will most likely require
17 the services of professionals. Answering services, typists,
18 clerical workers to carry on the administrative needs of the
19 fellowship. But serving in the capacity of sponsor, mentor or
20 spiritual advisor is strictly a nonprofessional job.

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TRADITION NINE

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

The ninth tradition explains how we, as a fellowship, structure services in order to nurture our program. What is N.A., as such? To us that means the ideas and the people. The program and those who use the program as a means to stop using drugs, lose the desire to use them and find a new way to live. N.A., as such, is the Twelve Steps of N.A. and the people who work them. The basic unit of N.A. is the member. The largest aspect is the group meeting. The member and the group's meeting of members should never be organized. This is really quite a logical consideration that coincides with the basic spiritual principle of acceptance that our lives have become unmanageable. Something very special happens when an addict works our program. A spirit, a greater power, makes the impossible happen: addicts recover. Individually and together in group meetings we share this miracle. Spiritual principles and people who live them is N.A., as such.

"For the purpose of this Tradition, organized means having management and control."

If N.A., as such, was organized in a corporate sense with an administrative structure, the people who were in charge would see themselves as a governing body. N.A. members would lose the freedom to make decisions for themselves. It would stifle growth and the feeling of usefulness to ourselves and the community. If we were organized the responsibility of recovery would be lifted. We wouldn't have to make decisions. They would be

1 made for us. If this was to happen then we would not be able
2 to recover. By having no governing bodies we gain the freedom
3 to choose in our recovery.

4 Any attempt to organize recovering addicts personally or
5 meeting together would probably be futile and seems to contradict
6 the fact that we are powerless over addiction. Individually,
7 we surrender our illusion of management and control of our
8 lives to the God of our understanding. Meeting together we
9 share spiritually in the guidance of our fellowship as part
10 of the group conscience. In order to meet together regularly
11 we form a structure. The group steering committee, composed of
12 members and led by trusted servants, is the primary example of
13 a directly responsible service board or committee. The group
14 has structure. Trusted servants of the group do business for
15 N.A., as such. Members are elected or volunteer to serve.
16 Those that we entrust to lead us are guided by our ultimate
17 authority through the collective conscience of the group;s
18 members. Our trusted servants do the business required by the
19 group to help N.A. survive and grow. They pay rent, buy and
20 distribute literature and perform other duties according to
21 the group's desire to provide a suitable atmosphere of recovery.
22 Sometimes the simplicity of this concept eludes us.

23 Our traditions are really quite simple and clear. We have
24 on one hand "N.A., as such,"--the spiritual principles that
25 make recovery possible and member addicts who use those principles
26 to recover from addiction. On the other hand are N.A. services;
27 boards and committees directly responsible to those they serve,
28 including the group officers or steering committee, Area Service
Committee's, Regional Service Committee's, the World Service

1 Conference, the World Service Board, The World Service Office, and
2 all other sub-committees, convention committees, etc. This
3 provides for us a clear division within which our principles
4 may remain pure.

5 As a fellowship we must do some business to nurture our
6 program. Doing business for N.A. is a real necessity. All of
7 the business we do as servants entrusted with the responsibility
8 to lead is guided by the same principle: direct responsibility
9 to the group conscience. No matter what the scope or size
10 of the services offered the same principle applies. Our
11 W.S.C. does not differ substantially in spirit with a business
12 meeting of a group. The conduct of business transacted by our
13 W.S.C. should not differ substantially from the group renting
14 a meeting place and buying, distributing literature and com-
15 municating concerns to group members. Our W.S.B. implements
16 the group conscience of N.A. fellowship-wide between W.S.C.
17 meetings just as the groups steering committee implements group
18 conscience between group business meetings. Trusted servants
19 act on the collective decision of the members; the group con-
20 science . The group is autonomous; the trusted servant is not
21 and neither are the service boards or committees we may create.
22 Our service committees and boards differ in nature and action
23 according to the special needs of those they serve. Service
24 boards and committees are never autonomous. They may not act
25 on their own. They must always be directly responsible. At
26 no time do they govern us.

27 Our service boards and committees only exist because we
28 create them to provide services according to our needs. Unless
our service boards and committees are directly responsible they
do not in reality serve N.A. and are not in reality part of
our structure. We as a fellowship violate our first, second,

1 our service boards and committees are directly responsible
2 they do not in reality serve N.A. and are not in reality part
3 of our structure. We as a fellowship violate our first, second,
4 fourth, sixth and ninth traditions by allowing a service board
5 or committee to exist that is not directly responsible to us.
6 Our 5th tradition is therefore compromised and addicts die who
7 might have found recovery. This concept illustrates itself
8 well in our history.

9 Directly responsible services nurture growth and unity for
10 Narcotics Anonymous. They help us carry our message. These
11 services succeed and flourish. Services not directly respon-
12 sible fail. They contribute to confusion and disunity, seldom
13 achieve their goals and make good examples of how it doesn't '
14 work. We as a fellowship may only create service boards or committee
15 directly responsible to us. It is our spiritual duty to see
16 to it that all service done in the name of N.A., all business
17 conducted for N.A., remains directly responsible. Our lives
18 depend on it.

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TRADITION TEN

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

Our common welfare is essential to personal recovery. The only authority is a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. No one individual has the authority to speak for N.A. Our personal opinions reflect our own experience. The opinions of Narcotics Anonymous are stated only in our traditions and are the result of our common experience.

What does it mean that N.A. should have no opinion on outside issues? The tradition explains itself: "the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy." There are many examples where the potential exists for our groups or service boards and committees to be drawn into such controversy. An example of how this could occur would be the case when an N.A. member engaged in public speaking for N.A. and then expressed opinions on issues outside the principles of N.A. and his own addiction. We have seen members use such a platform to state their own views on some "pet" issue with which they have become involved, and that can be a source of confusion for those unfamiliar with this tradition. It is suggested that it be clarified that no member of N.A. speaks for Narcotics Anonymous. Narcotics Anonymous speaks for itself.

Therefore, our experience suggests that we must sacrifice our personal opinions when speaking publicly as N.A. members and place N.A. as a whole before them. This is anonymity in action. We do this by expressing no opinions as N.A. members on outside issues that could be implicated as the opinion of Narcotics Anonymous. N.A. has no one person or group representing the fellowship as a whole.

1 The group conscience of the fellowship is our only voice. Our
2 group conscience is sought only on issues pertaining to N.A.

3 To state outright that we as a fellowship have "no opinions
4 on outside issues", leaves little or no doubt where we stand.
5 Quite frankly, we stand aside or separate, when political, edu-
6 cational, medical, psychological, social or religious issues
7 are being discussed. If an N.A. member were to make public state-
8 ments on any of these, the fellowship could be catapulted to fame.
9 Most of us feel, however, this notoriety holds more potential for
10 harm than for benefit.

11 It is a fairly well accepted fact that addiction is a disease.
12 Many of us have problems with ego and pride. Some of us are not
13 entirely logical or rational at all times. Imagine how some of
14 us would react to the sudden label of "expert" after years of being
15 society's outcasts. Most of our egos couldn't handle it. It
16 would contradict the humility we require for recovery. Addicts
17 might end up fighting amongst themselves for the position of N.A.
18 spokesman and lose sight of the goal of recovering and helping the
19 another addict. For this reason, the fellowship of Narcotics
20 Anonymous chooses not to participate in controversy. We don't call
21 ourselves experts at anything. We claim only the ability to stay
22 clean and sober and help other addicts to do the same.

23 Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who
24 still suffers, not to serve special interest groups. By our very
25 nature, we are too diverse to have unity and strength on any issue
26 other than recovery. Opinions on other issues serve only to splinter
27 the fellowship, create controversy and cause disunity among recovering
28 addicts. The survival of Narcotics Anonymous depends on not jeop-
ardizing the very freedom that is our strength. We have no opinions
on outside issues.

1 This tradition seems to deal mostly with those things beyond
2 the scope of our fellowship. In fact, it protects us from ourselves.
3 If strong personalities, whether acting alone or in unison, took it
4 upon themselves to express personal ideas or views at the public level
5 in the name of Narcotics Anonymous, it would severely affect our
6 unity of purpose.

7 This tradition is vital for the survival and growth of Narcotics
8 Anonymous. The N.A. fellowship must concentrate its efforts on
9 recovery from addiction. That priority does not leave room for
10 discussions or controversy about anything other than recovery. Getting
11 and staying clean is the hardest thing most important thing any of us
12 have ever done. We have to keep "first things first." The addicts
13 recovering in the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous must be free
14 to go through the process of exchanging old ways for new ways.
15 If we were tied up in press conferences and or public harassment,
16 addicts would not be able to recover. Breaking this tradition would
17 reverse our progress as well as sever the ties that bind.

18 To most of us it has been obvious if we did take any stand on
19 any issue, some people would always disagree with us. Expressing
20 opinions on any of the heated, emotional and divisive social, political
21 and religious issues of our time would surely alienate some addicts
22 who still suffer. Addiction can happen to anyone. Addiction does
23 not discriminate. Furthermore, the growth of Narcotics Anonymous
24 depends on the reputation we have with the general public. We
25 would alienate people in the healing professions and society at
26 large who all refer many suffering addicts to us.

27 The maintenance of unity within our groups and of Narcotics
28 Anonymous as a whole is a prime function of these traditions.

To this end, the maintenance of unity is a life and death matter for

1 the individual members of N.A. Recognizing the critical importance
2 of this tradition insures the unity of our groups and Narcotics
3 Anonymous as a whole.

4 The violation of this tradition creates internal dossemsopm as
5 well as outside pressure. Controversy limits our credibility and
6 ability to further our primary purpose. The spiritual principles
7 which attracted us to a new way of life would be diluted and the
8 addict may die seeking recovery.

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

12 TENTH TRADITION PERSONAL STORY

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14 When I was about four years clean, I recieved a phone call from
15 the District Attorney of Los Angeles. I had come home from work,
16 and my wife said that I had a phone call from Mr. ----- from
17 the D.A.'s office. I was to return his call. I ignored this
18 message for a few days. I received three more calls from this
19 person. I started to worry about the stature of limitations
20 in relation to some of my past crimes. It looked as though
21 I was not going to ignore this matter any more. I had a friend
22 who worked in the legal community. He was an Appellate Court Judge.
23 So I called him and explained my situation. My friend laughed and
24 reminded me that in the past the authorities never called me when
25 I was wanted for any crimes. They just came and got me. I laughed
26 too, and so he encouraged me to return the call. I did.

27 The reason this person was calling me was that apparently an
28 Assistant D.A. had made a public statement regarding the danger of
alcohol as opposed to marijuana. What the D.A. wanted from me was

1 my opinion regarding marijuana being more dangerous than alcohol. He
2 knew that I was an addict/alcoholic and a member of N.A. He needed
3 a repudiation from some organization, and he wanted me as a member of
4 N.A. and an expert to publicly repudiate the Assistant D.A.'s state-
5 ment. I explained to him that I could not give him a repudiation as
6 a member of N.A. because no one speaks for N.A. on outside issues; N.A.
7 has traditions that govern our fellowship, and that our 10th tradition
8 states that "N.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A.
9 name ought never be drawn into public controversy." And based on
10 what he had explained to me this fell in that public controversy.
11 then asked me for my personal opinion. I again explained to
12 him that my personal opinion would have to be silenced for fear
13 that it could be misconstrued as an opinion of N.A. and therefor
14 I would not be able to help him. Thank God I had some understanding
15 of the 12 traditions of N.A. or I could have put us right in the
16 middle of a public controversy."

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TRADITION ELEVEN

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

This Tradition illustrates how Narcotics Anonymous can offer recovery to the suffering addict through means of attraction. What is it about our fellowship and its members that is attractive to the suffering addict? There are many aspects of our program that are attractive, but most importantly, we are living drug-free lives. Once we enter the doors and are exposed to clean addicts something magical takes place! We are somehow made aware of the love, caring and concern of the members. We hear and see things with which we, as addicts, can identify. The awareness generated through unity and care creates a desire for total abstinence, thereby developing self-worth, esteem, reliance and the desire to become a respectful, contributing member of society.

There is no substitute for the adage "one addict helping another is without parallel". One of the key emotions that is aroused by the attraction we often experience is HOPE!!

As we go through life we are attracted by many things. If they have something to offer us we are attracted. This is the means by which N. A. attracts its members. What we have to offer is a clean and sober way of life and a fellowship that provides an atmosphere of love and concern for all members. What need do we have of promoting our program of recovery? Members of Narcotics Anonymous are living breathing examples of recovery from addiction. In effect, this tradition insures publicly the spiritual condition of our fellowship. In our dealings with the public, our spiritual condition will show.

Promotion of N. A. would take away the apiritual aspects of the program. Promotion is pressure. It is the glorification of

a product. It announces only features of a program, not the spirit of it. Promotion is pushing, getting something across regardless of the price in terms of human dignity or spiritual values. Promoting often is an end in itself, and its use in NA usually reflects self-glorification. We should never misrepresent what we offer even if by doing so we might be able to get a few more addicts to attend our meetings. It is easy to make promises. We can tell an addict that we offer all kinds of things other than recovery. Addicts would flock to our doors; they would come for a free meal, housing, money, a job, a lover or any kind of free ride. But how many would have a desire to stop using, and how many would leave as soon as they found out we couldn't keep our promise? How many would never come back? How many would die without ever having a chance to find recovery? Promotion is representing ourselves as something we are not. In order to accomplish something we want, we don't use promotion to encourage addicts to come to us, and we don't use promotions to make ourselves more acceptable. Our successes speak for themselves.

Tradition Eleven illustrates that we as a fellowship have and will continue to have a relationship with society. If we are to carry the message and a precious one at that, this relationship must be maintained in a sane and loving fashion. Perhaps in no other area does the need for anonymity become so crucial. The message can be carried in many ways. If we are to reach the addict who still suffers, we must make our presence known to the general public. To broaden the scope of those we reach, many groups have turned to the use of various media (radio, press, television). Such media interface with the general public and can reach a larger segment of society. This is best done with a quiet dignity - offering the hope of a drug-free

life. The use of "glitter" is best avoided.

At the level of press, radio and films, the NA Public Information Committee or trustees should be consulted as to who and how the message should be carried. This protects the fellowship and the person chosen to give the message. This person should have knowledge and experience applying the Traditions, thereby eliminating embarrassment and retraction of statements made by well-meaning individuals, for and about Narcotics Anonymous. There is no need to recruit new members, but in order to let the community know that NA exists and that help is available, there must be some media exposure. There is a public relations pamphlet available as to how to accomplish this task.

The maintenance of anonymity serves a two-fold function. It protects the individual member from the pressure or temptation to speak for NA as whole. It also protects the fellowship as a whole from being judged by the words or actions of a recovering individual. Addicts might seek fame just so they could see their name in the paper. It would be very damaging if a member broke anonymity and then relapsed and word got out that this person went to NA and didn't stay clean. People might assume the program doesn't work.

Breaking anonymity is asking for trouble. The last thing an addict needs is a spotlight on his life. We come to this program and learn that we are not the center of the universe. We come to NA to recover and carry the message that recovery is possible; anything else can only detract from what we have to offer. If we can help an addict stop using and find a new way of life we will all benefit.

Personal anonymity is a point of freedom, and personal recovery. No member of NA should ever place themselves in a position where

they have to make a statement for NA as a whole. No one member is NA and no one member can speak for us. We have no elite class nor special members. Each of us has our own story, and our own recovery. Individually, we are powerless but as a Fellowship we can achieve great things.

TRADITION TWELVE

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

Anonymity is the whole basis of the program; it is truly the foundation. In order to survive, we must set aside the differences we live by and become a part of a greater whole.

The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous compliment each other and are bound together by the principle of anonymity. What is anonymity? The principle of anonymity is based in humility. 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. Anonymity tells us to listen to the message, not the messenger. It is an opportunity to give without recognition.

All of us have egos and it's normal to seek our "strokes" for a job well done. However, most of us got here because we had problems with our egos and constant praise and recognition do nothing for humility, which we seek and require for our very existence. In recovery, we have found that humility is a spiritual tool to be nourished and cherished. We have experienced great personal reward in giving of ourselves without need of expectations of recognition. Anonymity is the principle whereby we become willing to place our egos and personalities secondary to both recovery and group unity. This principle helps us to set our priorities and view recovery in its proper perspective.

Anonymity within the Fellowship is important. Gossip and criticism of our fellow addicts destroys the unity of our Fellowship. Have you ever been told a fellow addict had relapsed, only to find them still clean? Or worse yet, have you ever sat down for coffee after a meeting

only to hear a fellow addict's inventory being taken for them? N. A. is a Fellowship of recovering addicts. We are all growing and we all have character defects. Acceptance of our fellow addicts, including their character defects, is love. As recovering addicts we need an atmosphere of love and support to grow in. Members, especially newcomers, need to feel safe within our Fellowship. An atmosphere of trust allows the member to openly share. We can help each other by keeping what is shared in a group, or on a one-to-one basis to ourself. In this program of change, a desire for recovery helps us keep principles before personalities.

The principle of anonymity is a key to understanding the meaning of the 12th Tradition and how it is the foundation of all our Traditions. The First Tradition talks about common welfare and N.A. unity. The placing of common welfare before personal welfare in the group setting is a direct application of anonymity. We surrender our own self-will and place the welfare of Narcotics Anonymous first, because our lives depend on it.

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

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

Anonymity makes possible the autonomy of our Fourth Tradition. Without the principle of anonymity, each group would set itself up as something different from the rest--- something special. Our groups

would begin competing with each other for members and for recognition. The resulting loss of unity would eventually destroy N.A.

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

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

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

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

The service boards and committees made possible by our Ninth Tradition are directly responsible to the groups and the members. They are not responsible to any particular person.

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

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

Anonymity is everywhere in our Traditions and in our Fellowship. It is one of the basics of recovery. The principle of anonymity protects us from our defects of personality and character. Where anonymity exists, personalities and differences have no power.

