

Narcotics Anonymous

**It Works:**  
How and Why

Part Two  
**Traditions Input**

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For Input Only  
Input due October 31, 1989

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## THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS.

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or N.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. N.A., as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

VOLUME TWO

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**It Works: How and Why  
Traditions Input**  
*Input Form, 1988*

**Narcotics Anonymous  
It Works: How and Why  
Traditions Input**



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TRADITION REVIEW MATERIAL BOOK - 1988**

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1                    **WORLD LITERATURE COMMITTEE**  
2                    **TRADITION REVIEW MATERIAL BOOK - 1988**  
3                    **TRADITION ONE**

4  
5                    *"Our common welfare should come first; personal*  
6                    *recovery depends on N.A. unity."*  
7  
8

9    I.    **What Common Welfare Means in NA.**

10          A.    **Common Themes.**

11                  1.    **In Our Disease - (personal degradation is one).**

12                  2.    **In our Personal Recovery.**

13          B.    **Individual Welfare/Group Welfare.**

14                  1.    **I can't; we can.**

15          C.    **Commitment to welfare.**

16          D.    **Selfless service/Selfishness.**

17          E.    **Freedom from Active Addiction.**

18    II.   **Our need for unity.**

19          A.    **Recovery goes beyond survival.**

20          B.    **Points of unity.**

21          C.    **Unity is a pivotal principle of recovery.**

22          D.    **Group Unity - (to include concept of spiritual center in every**  
23                    **meeting within the Traditions).**

24          E.    **Unity is a practical foundation of Traditions.**

25          F.    **Anonymity.**

26    III. **Learning about Unity.**

27          A.    **Giving up old ideas.**

28          B.    **Recognizing when actions subvert NA unity.**

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- 1           C.    Cooperation, not competition - (disagreement without  
2                    disunity and without being disagreeable).  
3           D.    Willingness to commit to NA unity.  
4    IV.    Building Unity - (By practicing our common purpose we support  
5                    our common welfare).  
6           A.    Applying the Steps and Traditions.  
7           B.    Participation.  
8           C.    Follow through and Consistency.  
9           D.    Patience and Tolerance.  
10          E.    Service Efforts.  
11          F.    Faith and Trust.  
12    V.    How the Tradition applies to and affects members, group and the  
13                    NA service structure as a whole.  
14    VI.    Cherishing Unity.  
15    VII.  Application of Tradition 1 to members, groups, and N.A. as a  
16                    whole.  
17    VIII. Conclusion and lead in to Tradition 2.  
18

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Blue Review Book Draft

Our common welfare is at the top of the list in the Twelve Traditions because as long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well. If we break down "common welfare" to its simplest form, it means shared happiness, well-being, and spiritual prosperity. Common welfare is that which is best for the group, not just for one individual.

Before deciding on something, we can first think, "would this help the group as a whole, or is it just to fit the needs of one person?" To make sure that there is stability in the group, we should be able to disagree, but not have to be disagreeable. We need to think about the welfare of N.A. first, not just the welfare of ourselves.

Believing that we have a common welfare is not always easy. As suffering addicts, we came to this program thinking only of our personal welfare. Most of us had never experienced the kind of attention and personal care that we found in the N.A. Fellowship. But in N.A. we learn that by helping each other, abstinence and ongoing recovery are possible. There is a spiritual center in the midst of every N.A. meeting held in accord with the Twelve Traditions. It lies in the fact that we are people who literally depend on one another for our lives.

In N.A., we are accepted and loved for who we are. The individual is precious to the group, and the group is precious to the individual. In order to recover, we seek out the people in N.A. who live by spiritual principles. We try to share what we have with newcomers. Some of us get involved with service committees in the Fellowship. When we travel, we visit N.A. members in other places and share with them. We study ourselves through the Steps, our sponsors, and others in

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1 the program. We depend on Narcotics Anonymous for our lives. We  
2 know that if N.A. dies, we will die. It is up to us to preserve our  
3 Fellowship so that we will have a place for the recovering addict.

4       Upon reaching the doors of N.A., we found that we were  
5 destructive, desperate individuals. Full of anger, fear, self-pity, and self-  
6 loathing, we found ourselves in the midst of people who once felt as we  
7 did. We asked them how to recover and we were told to give up our old  
8 ideas, habits, and ways of life. It is often frightening to take risks and  
9 try new ideas such as honesty, trust, and acceptance, but we leaned on  
10 those who went before us to share their strength. They gave us hope  
11 that if this new way of life worked for them, then it would work for us  
12 too.

13       A great deal of energy comes from the realization that every N.A.  
14 member is important. Together, any good thing is possible. Through  
15 N.A., we reach out the hand of recovery. We do whatever is called for to  
16 stand on our feet and reach out to others who would die without N.A.  
17 Today we have the spirit and enthusiasm to help others.

18       There is much to learn in recovery. In order for an addict to stop  
19 using drugs and live clean with any measure of happiness or  
20 productivity, a major upheaval in the person's physical, mental, and  
21 spiritual make-up is required. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions  
22 offer the keys we need to make the great change from active addiction to  
23 total abstinence and ongoing recovery.

24       Self-centeredness, a symptom of addiction, impairs our ability to  
25 see beyond ourselves. Only by practicing what seems at first "blind  
26 faith" can we stay clean long enough to have the scales of selfishness  
27 lifted from our minds and eyes. As our personal recovery evolves, it may  
28 slowly begin to take on the positive characteristics of the group. For all

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1 of us, it means drastic change, growth, and a new way of life. It is the  
2 process which leads to a spiritual awakening, to happiness and serenity.

3 The N.A. Fellowship is a priceless gift with its seemingly endless  
4 supply of answers to our daily living problems. We get these answers in  
5 countless forms: the Twelve Steps, sharing at meetings, talking with our  
6 sponsors, sharing with newcomers or other addicts, praying, meditating,  
7 and reading our N.A. literature. These are all vital parts of the  
8 program.

9 Once we have taken the First Step and admitted to ourselves that  
10 we are addicts, we then sense that our very survival depends on the  
11 unity and strength of N.A. Unity means we are all working toward a  
12 common goal: recovery from addiction. As individual members, we need  
13 never compete with one another. We are there to lend support and to  
14 help each other. We compare ourselves only to ourselves, never against  
15 one another. By combining efforts, our Fellowship thrives and becomes  
16 stronger. By working against each other, our Fellowship could be torn  
17 apart. "True spiritual principles are never in conflict."

18 In recovery, we need always remember that we cannot do it alone.  
19 But somehow when we help each other, it works. As addicts, we know  
20 the truth in the statement, "If we don't hang together, we'll all hang  
21 separately." The common welfare of the groups is based upon helping  
22 ourselves by helping others. Sharing and caring for each other are some  
23 of the tools we use in helping to create unity.

24 Following the Traditions of the program strengthens the unity of  
25 the group and N.A. as a whole. This ensures that the Fellowship stays  
26 alive and free. Those who keep coming back notice the bonds that tie us  
27 together. If unity is strong and stable, addicts have a chance of recovery.  
28 Stability is vitally necessary for us because where we came from,  
29 instability was our way of life. We are now able to do things as a group

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1 that we were unable to do alone. We learn the value of the principle of  
2 unity when we consider other Traditions.

3 If we have no unity, we have no personal recovery. Unity comes  
4 from communicating and working together for the common welfare of the  
5 group. Without unity, there is no group; without the groups there is no  
6 N.A. We must ensure the unity of N.A. for the common good of our  
7 Fellowship so that the decisions we make and the actions we take may  
8 help all of N.A., not just one member or one group. These are the bonds  
9 of N.A. unity which hold us together. Without this unity, none of us  
10 could recover from the devastating effects of our addiction.

11 Unity is the function and the result of the Twelve Traditions of  
12 Narcotics Anonymous. The principle of unity is expressed in each of the  
13 Traditions.

14 Our Traditions state the experience of those who come before us,  
15 and voice what we should always do and what we ought never do. It is  
16 no accident that the words "should," "ought," and "never" reoccur  
17 throughout the Twelve Traditions. The fact that unity is the function of  
18 the Traditions is an aspect of their design and origin.

19 The word "we" appears throughout this book and all of the N.A.  
20 literature. "We" is the first word of the first Eleven Steps. The "we"  
21 that we find in the principles of Narcotics Anonymous is the basis of our  
22 recovery, and is an integral part of our unity. Some of us never felt "a  
23 part of" anything in our lives before coming to N.A. We felt alone even  
24 in a crowd of familiar people. We had built walls of false self-sufficiency  
25 and distrust of others that made us feel "apart from" everyone.  
26 Gradually, we found that as a part of N.A. we could find an alternative  
27 to the misery of our disease. We therefore understand the importance of  
28 "common welfare" and "unity." They are two of the ties that bind us  
29 together. This is the "we" of our program.

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1           The First Tradition expresses a powerful spiritual principle. The  
2 spirituality of the Traditions is the truth behind the statement:  
3 "Personal recovery depends on N.A. unity." Another way of saying this  
4 is that for us, the Twelve Traditions are a matter of life and death.  
5 Living clean would not be possible for us without each other. Because  
6 we could never remain clean by ourselves, our individual recovery  
7 depends on N.A. unity.

8

9

1986/1987 Unpublished Draft

10

11           It's no accident that the first of the Twelve Traditions emphasizes  
12 our common welfare and our unity. They are the most powerful  
13 principles our program has, and they fit as hand-in-hand. We need to be  
14 united in order to work for our common welfare, and working for our  
15 common welfare reinforces our unity.

16           Unity is literally a matter of life and death. We tried to stop  
17 using without N.A. and could not. We need other addicts' help, support  
18 and understanding, all of which come from a united Fellowship. We  
19 bring about unity by communicating and working together for the  
20 common welfare of the group. Without unity there is no group; without  
21 the groups there is no N.A.; without N.A. we die. Thus we must always  
22 ensure the unity of N.A. for the common good of our Fellowship so that  
23 the decisions we make and the actions we take may help all of N.A., not  
24 just one member or one group. These are the bonds that hold us  
25 together. Without them, none of us could recover from the devastating  
26 effects of our addiction. They enable us to change our lives from  
27 suffering to happiness and serenity.

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1           As we slowly come to understand such things, they make perfect  
2 sense. But when we first stepped through N.A.'s doors, the idea of  
3 "unity" hardly grabbed our imaginations. Self-centeredness was one  
4 reason. The other had to do with our feelings of alienation. Many of us  
5 had basically felt so disconnected from other people for so long, we didn't  
6 know how to connect with anybody. We sat at meetings just wanting to  
7 bolt. Some of us did bolt right in the middle of a meeting; we couldn't  
8 stand it anymore. Unfortunately, a few who bolted never returned.  
9 Some kept running but kept returning. Coming back was a powerful  
10 expression of our need for each other, our thirst for the benefits of N.A.  
11 unity, our strong urge to survive.

12           Even so, early on many of us felt like outsiders. Even when  
13 members smiled warmly at us, and reached out welcoming hands, we  
14 kept feeling that way. We held ourselves back. So many relatives and  
15 friends had been driven away by our crazy, drug-dominated ways of  
16 living, we'd come to pretend we didn't need other people. For a while,  
17 then, we also kept on pretending we didn't need N.A. or its members  
18 either. We insisted upon telling ourselves that the N.A. group, the N.A.  
19 Fellowship, meant nothing much to us.

20           Yet, no matter how much of an armor we put on, we couldn't keep  
21 wearing it forever. How could we take the First Step, and admit to our  
22 powerlessness over addiction, without also admitting that we needed  
23 N.A.'s fellowship, its strength? That would have been too much of a  
24 contradiction for us, who were so prone to lie to ourselves. Yet it was  
25 the sense of hope and caring we found in N.A. that got us through those  
26 agonizing first weeks and months of recovery. It had been a long time  
27 since many of us had experienced the kind of attention we received in  
28 N.A. Some of us had never received it.

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1           So, despite ourselves, we began to respond to the spiritual core  
2 that's at the heart of every meeting run in accord with the Twelve  
3 Traditions. "How do I recover?" was our desperate question to members  
4 who once had been as self-destructive as we. They told us how they did  
5 it--by giving up their old ideas, habits and ways of life. We heard them  
6 discuss topics strange to us in our condition--topics like honesty, trust,  
7 acceptance and hope. All this frightened us. We were used to  
8 dishonesty, we trusted no one, we'd made a habit of rejecting not  
9 accepting others--yet, we admitted, we hadn't fully given up on hope.  
10 and members who had fought their addiction successfully gave us hope  
11 that if this new way of life worked for them, it would also work for us.

12           As one older member told a newcomer, "We love you and need  
13 you; we know what you're going through; above all, we care." One way  
14 or another we were told, "Always remember that none of us can do it  
15 alone. In unity, in helping each other, the Program works. 'I can't--we  
16 can'"

17           Such powerful messages, coming from a group, make surrendering  
18 to the group a lot easier. Surrendering means more than being a part of,  
19 rather than apart from, our N.A. groups. It brings us to a spiritual  
20 recognition about our relationship to N.A.: "This is where I belong; this  
21 will work for me." Many of us took a long time in coming to that  
22 recognition. We edged towards it; retreated; tried to surrender and  
23 backed off. Only after a lot of tries did we finally--truly--surrender.

24           When it happened we found ourselves happier--and much less  
25 lonely. We found ourselves beginning to stop thinking in terms of "I,"  
26 and we began to start thinking in terms of "we." When we use "we"  
27 we're thinking or speaking in the spirit of unity. That's why the word  
28 "we" appears throughout this book, in all N.A. literature, and is the first  
29 word of the first eleven steps. When our thinking changed to "we," our

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1 wall of false self-sufficiency and distrust of others started to crumble.  
2 We began to trust.

3       Having learned that addicts in isolation have a hard time  
4 surviving, we even started to believe a little in the importance of a  
5 common welfare. This wasn't always easy. One reason had to do with  
6 spiritual anonymity. Many older members emphasized the importance of  
7 spiritual anonymity in the context of working for our common welfare.  
8 They explained that if we tried to get credit for the work we did on  
9 behalf of the Fellowship, we were intent on feeding our egos. But if we  
10 did our good works anonymously, we escaped the dangers of an ego trip  
11 and operated under the principle of spiritual anonymity. Even though  
12 we weren't as alienated or self-centered as we'd been, this was  
13 unexpectedly tough. We'd done so much we were ashamed of. Now that  
14 we were doing things we were proud of, we were told not to expect credit  
15 for them!

16       There was another reason why working for the common welfare  
17 was hard for many of us at first. N.A. is made up of many different  
18 kinds of members--members who come from radically different kinds of  
19 backgrounds. Newcomers may walk into a meeting and rub shoulders  
20 with some members who are totally "foreign" to them. These newcomers  
21 may wonder: "Do we really share a common welfare?" One long-time  
22 member recalls his first N.A. meeting; it was at a time when there were  
23 very few such meetings in his part of the United States. He was quiet,  
24 gentle, bookish--a teacher. The rest of the group was composed of about  
25 fifteen street-hardened men. He quickly discovered that he was the only  
26 one there who'd gone to college instead of jail. He was the only one who  
27 didn't sport a tattoo. He was the only one who didn't have a needle  
28 story.

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1            "They were like something out of Mars to me and I was like  
2 something out of Mars to them," he recalled long afterward. "But I  
3 stayed around, for reasons I couldn't articulate then but which became  
4 clear to me later on. I stayed because the idea of recovery from  
5 addiction had become very attractive to me. I also stayed because on  
6 some very deep level, despite the differences between us, I was able to  
7 relate to these men, and they to me, as addicts. I know I was thinking--  
8 and maybe even saying--some hateful things about these men. But at  
9 the same time I instinctively identified with them and recognized that  
10 they had something to offer. They'd all been clean for a year or so and  
11 they offered me a measure of hope."

12            We learned, as this member did, that it didn't make any difference  
13 if others were uptown professionals and we were not. Or living in slum  
14 neighborhoods and we were not. We might have used different drugs,  
15 might use different language to express ourselves--but, at the bottom, we  
16 all say pretty much the same things. We were all addicts under the sun.  
17 We were all people with the disease of addiction who hadn't been able to  
18 stop using on our own and needed each other for recovery. We were all  
19 wanting to be clean or stay clean and seeking N.A.'s help for that.

20            The upshot of it is that while we might have started out in a  
21 group listening for the differences, we wound up listening for the  
22 similarities. That's the "we" again. It's why a hip, cool 20-year-old can  
23 wind up identifying with a 74-year-old grandmother--herself an addict--  
24 at an N.A. meeting. They're there for the same reasons, ones that boil  
25 down to becoming clean, staying clean. It's those reasons that unite us  
26 in N.A., no matter how different we might seem on the surface. Often  
27 the right words, the words of hope or support we need to hear just then,  
28 come from a member we least expected to utter them.

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1           Witnessing such scenes, many of us were both attracted and put  
2 off by them at first. For so long our self-concern had been monumental.  
3 We'd lived, plotted, stolen from everybody we knew and people we didn't  
4 know--all for the sake of our drugs. Now here we were, amidst a bunch  
5 of recovering addicts who weren't conning anybody--who genuinely  
6 wanted other people to stop using and start living. Witnessing those  
7 caring, sharing scenes made us uncomfortable, maybe, because we'd  
8 behaved so selfishly so long. Maybe we were uncomfortable, too, because  
9 we were scared we wouldn't get to where those addicts were in their  
10 recovery.

11           Addicts caring about addicts, addicts helping each other recover, is  
12 what the First Tradition's emphasis on unity and common welfare is all  
13 about. When addicts drive a couple of hundred miles to offer to support  
14 an N.A. group just starting out, it's a measure of that caring. It is, as  
15 well, when a member misses a meeting and other members call him up  
16 afterwards to make sure he's all right. When we help each other it's an  
17 unselfish act. But it's also in our own interests because when we help  
18 others we strengthen and grow ourselves. If treatment centers,  
19 psychiatrists and hospitals didn't work for us, it was because they lacked  
20 the qualities--the Steps and Traditions, the spiritual principles--that  
21 make N.A. different.

22           When we first joined N.A., some of us didn't really know what to  
23 expect. We knew we'd be in a group of addicts, but we thought maybe  
24 they'd give us a set of instructions for staying clean. A kind of user's  
25 manual of recovery. It was one of the reasons we were skeptical about  
26 N.A. at first. We'd been through the I'll-tell-you-how-to-stop-using trip  
27 with everyone from family to doctors and it hadn't worked. What we  
28 found in N.A., however, was an emphasis on example rather than  
29 direction. When we thought about it, we could see that it made sense.

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1 We had never listened to advice or counsel, no matter how wise it was.  
2 We always knew better. We could always say, "They don't know what  
3 they're talking about." But when we see suffering addicts stop using and  
4 lead happy lives, that's different. That gives us no out, because those  
5 addicts once were like us in one way or another. No example can be  
6 more shining than that.

7 With the emphasis on unity as strong as it is, it's open to  
8 misinterpretation. Unity doesn't mean uniformity. It doesn't mean  
9 every N.A. member has to agree with every other member on  
10 everything. It doesn't mean all members have to feel the same way  
11 about what's best for N.A., or have exactly the same experiences in their  
12 recovery. Some of us have a hard time coming to terms with this. We  
13 start off not being at all sure we want anything to do with Narcotics  
14 Anonymous. Then we go through a stage of loving N.A. so much we  
15 think the slightest hint of controversy threatens N.A.'s existence.

16 Actually, a lively give-and-take is healthy. It's the springboard for  
17 new ideas on how to improve our Program. Even though the N.A.  
18 Program is God-inspired, we have been given the responsibility of  
19 carrying it out on a day-to-day basis. We can always find more effective  
20 ways to reach and help addicts who still suffer.

21 Differences of opinion are healthy when we disagree with each  
22 other without being disagreeable. We do this by stating our opinions  
23 calmly and by making an honest effort to consider views contrary to  
24 ours. Even people who don't think the way we do often have something  
25 valuable to offer. However, for quite a few of us, this is a real learning  
26 experience. When we did our moral inventory we discovered that our  
27 ways of dealing with the world were marked by stubbornness and  
28 rigidity. Ours was a know-it-all attitude; we had all the answers. Or  
29 some person we considered a guru had all the answers. This lack of

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1 open-mindedness made us extremely impatient with people who didn't  
2 share our views, and we carried this impatience into N.A. Those of us  
3 who were so impatient shouted at other members, cursed them or  
4 insulted them. We tried to ram our ideas down other people's throats.  
5 We threatened them or said ugly things about them behind their backs.  
6 A few of us even tried to break up the groups we were in when votes  
7 went against our point of view.

8         When we disrupt meetings in any way we do damage to N.A. and  
9 its principles of compassion and cooperation. We do great damage to our  
10 unity. We drive away newcomers who look to our program for survival--  
11 and we lose some long-term members, too, quite possibly placing their  
12 recovery at risk. However, only in extreme instances is some kind of  
13 action taken against very difficult, disruptive members. Mostly we try to  
14 understand them, try to love them, try to help them with their recovery.  
15 We remind ourselves that they haven't yet found the serenity we all  
16 seek, and we express gratitude that games of manipulation and control  
17 are no longer a way of life with us. We do speak up, though, when the  
18 actions of very difficult members threaten the stability of our groups.  
19 Carrying the message of recovery is our first order of business.

20         Eruptions can occur over something as important as how most  
21 effectively to use a sum of money collected by the group--or about  
22 something as relatively trivial as when meetings should start. A group  
23 was badly disrupted when some members wanted the meeting to start at  
24 8:00 p.m., while others wanted it to start at 8:30 p.m. Each camp  
25 accused the other of not loving N.A. as much as it did.

26         At times two members fight passionately about which aspect of  
27 the N.A. Program is most helpful to recovery, not realizing that all  
28 aspects are helpful and important. Different backgrounds and  
29 experiences might prompt them to fight about something seemingly

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1 trivial--for instance, whether or not the Fourth Step should be written in  
2 ink. Both try to convince a newcomer, "My way is best"--which may  
3 only serve to scare off the newcomer and threaten his survival.

4 It's only natural for us to make a deep commitment to something  
5 we credit with our recovery. We have bet our lives on it, and won. So  
6 when someone else comes up with a different approach we have a  
7 tendency to scoff, "That didn't work for me, so it doesn't work, period!"  
8 But what we're really engaged in is an I'm-right-you're-wrong power  
9 struggle. We're concentrating on the differences when it's the  
10 similarities that bind us together. For the sake of our common welfare  
11 and our unity we must strive for a spirit of open-mindedness and  
12 cooperation.

13 Sometimes, too, when we go wild with anger, we aren't fighting  
14 about anything that really matters very much to us. What drives us  
15 isn't a fight for principle or even power but plain old excitement. Many  
16 of us had clung to our addiction at least partly because we loved the  
17 excitement of using. Using carries heavy risks--serious health problems,  
18 prison sentences, even death. We delighted in the daredevil things we  
19 had to do to get our drugs, the dangers associated with buying and  
20 selling. For a time, some of us carry that need for excitement into our  
21 N.A. meetings. Generating controversy, yelling, screaming, shaking our  
22 fists at someone, gives us a tremendous amount of stimulation. It's a  
23 real high. But it keeps us from a spiritual awakening and plays havoc  
24 with our common welfare.

25 Upon first hearing about "common welfare" we were confused.  
26 Did that mean the groups whose meetings we attended? Other groups in  
27 town? In our state? Addicts in N.A. groups everywhere on earth?  
28 When we learned that common welfare meant all of the above, we were  
29 even more confused. It was hard enough to be concerned about members

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1 in the groups we went to--how could we think of the welfare of addicts in  
2 N.A. groups thousands of miles away?

3 The seeming enormity of it all lessened as we continued to attend  
4 meetings. We were like tiny children--tots whose first experience in  
5 relating takes place at home, with their folks. Gradually, they see more  
6 and more of the world, and form relationships with more and more  
7 people. Similarly, the group we regularly attended was "home." It's in  
8 our home group that we learned to show caring and concern for our  
9 fellow addicts, to work together for common goals, to get acquainted with  
10 other members socially. The people we saw at every meeting became  
11 "family."

12 We learned much in our home groups. We learned that we  
13 weren't alone. We learned the concept of service, beginning with the  
14 emptying of ashtrays and going on from there. We learned that we could  
15 count on others to look out for us. They reached out to us even when we  
16 thought we wanted to hide. They gave us a sense of continuity, because  
17 seeing us week after week they could tell by our faces alone whether or  
18 not things were okay with us. In turn, we learned to see the signs of  
19 ease or distress in the faces of other members. It's in our home groups  
20 that we established roots of any kind--often for the first time in years.  
21 Showing up week after week in our home groups, celebrating clean time  
22 with other members, thinking about and voting on issues, becoming  
23 involved, is what did it.

24 Once we had established this strong feeling of belongingness we  
25 could explore other meetings, other groups. Many of us found it helpful  
26 to go to a variety of meetings in our respective areas after a while. Each  
27 had something different to offer, each gave us a different perspective of  
28 what it means to be an addict and survive. Starting with our home  
29 groups and going on to others really helped us to appreciate the

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1 connectedness of all N.A. groups everywhere. We saw the ways  
2 members all over the world work together for our unity and our common  
3 welfare.

4 As we went to more and more N.A. meetings of all kinds, we  
5 repeatedly saw how important and powerful the principle of unity is.  
6 We N.A. members call upon it in all kinds of situations, and it  
7 strengthens the bonds between us. It saves us from wrenching conflict.  
8 It has a healing influence when clashes between members or among  
9 groups do occur.

10 One area, for instance, was nearly out of funds. A motorcycle  
11 club--a subgroup in the area--wanted to throw a fundraiser to help out.  
12 But when the club's offer was presented to the various groups, there was  
13 great divisiveness. Some loved the idea, others were convinced it  
14 involved a violation of the Traditions. Eventually, as the angry debate  
15 continued, the area realized that so much conflict could mean just one  
16 thing--that the motorcycle club's offer truly wasn't in accord with N.A.'s  
17 spiritual principles. If it had been so much heat wouldn't have been  
18 generated, for spiritual principles aren't in conflict and don't spawn so  
19 much conflict. So, in the interest of unity, the club's offer wasn't  
20 accepted. Instead, the area became more vigorous in increasing  
21 donations from its groups.

22 While it's directly mentioned only in the First Tradition, the  
23 principle of unity is expressed in all of our Traditions. Only in unity can  
24 we give meaning to the Second Tradition, accepting a loving God as our  
25 ultimate authority. Only in unity can we open our doors to all suffering  
26 addicts regardless of who they are or where they come from, as described  
27 in the Third Tradition. Only in unity can we all work together for our  
28 shared goal, recovery from addiction.

29

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1

Newline Articles

2

3           *This article was written by a member of the Board of Trustees in*  
4 *1984. It represents views at the time of writing.*

5

6           The Twelve Traditions sections of the White Booklet and our Basic  
7 Text contain lines about vigilance and the ties which bind us together.  
8 We have been discovering a great deal about these things in the last few  
9 years as individuals and as a Fellowship.

10           We are finding that it is easier to avoid a Tradition violation than  
11 it is to do anything much about it once such a violation has occurred.  
12 The reason for this lies in the spiritual nature of our program. The  
13 Traditions aren't laws with jail sentences or legal penalties for violations.  
14 They are every bit as spiritual as our Steps. What happens when we  
15 violate the principles of one of our Twelve Steps? We hurt! And so do  
16 those around us. Following the principles in our Traditions is a way to  
17 stop hurting. Being a part of our local Fellowship and N.A. as a whole,  
18 something we say before we address an N.A. meeting, gives us a sense of  
19 identity and security we have usually done without for a long time when  
20 we get here. As we grow in recovery, live our Steps and increasingly  
21 function as a part of the N.A. Fellowship, our unity gives us peace.

22           The Twelve Traditions could well be called the "Twelve  
23 Essentials" because it would be impossible to imagine N.A. without  
24 them. We would quickly become involved in issues which have nothing  
25 to do with recovery, and in place of our primary purpose being to help  
26 the suffering addict, we would have a bureaucratic nightmare. The  
27 reason this will never happen is that you can't have the controls on a  
28 spiritual Fellowship of recovering addicts they won't stand for that type

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1 of control. While the parts may suffer, the whole will survive and live to  
2 better days. To violate a Tradition is to take a step away from N.A.,  
3 and for any of our members pain and misery follow quickly. The only  
4 thing we can do is to turn around and come back. There will always be  
5 those who understand and want to help. We have to stay in touch with  
6 the whole.

7       We're all in this together and each of us is as important as the  
8 rest. We need to remember that we are involved with the process of  
9 learning to live without drugs. Our difficulties are compounded when we  
10 get sidetracked on issues which make us forget our personal need for  
11 help or our ability to help others. We addicts are great ones for getting  
12 caught up in problems which don't directly concern us, and we seem to  
13 have a characteristic fascination with taking sides.

14       Our First Step in recovery gives us a chance to get in touch with  
15 the fact that we lack the power to manage our lives, and our First  
16 Tradition points to the fact that our best chance for survival lies with the  
17 group and not by going it alone. When we are critical of others or get  
18 our feelings hurt, we rebel and forget that we can give our very best to  
19 any situation before us by applying the principles of the Twelve Steps of  
20 N.A. We can surrender, ask for help, take our own inventory, allow  
21 defects to be removed, make amends, admit fault, pray, meditate and  
22 enjoy a spiritual awakening complete with principles and a renewed  
23 interest in the welfare of others who suffer like we do. Our criticisms  
24 and hurt feelings make us imagine that we are greater or lesser than  
25 someone. The pain which comes from these feelings requires us to make  
26 peace with our group in some way so that we can get on with our  
27 recovery.

28       Because of the nature of our program, we often have to accept  
29 things which seem to go against common sense. Only through conscious

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1 contact with a Power greater than ourselves can we hope to accept some  
2 of these things. Many living problems, group problems and problems  
3 affecting our unity seem to have no solution until we can accept them as  
4 a reality over which we have no control whatsoever. Then, at last, we  
5 can truly ask for help with an open mind. Because of the love we have  
6 for one another, we sometimes have to let a member who is causing  
7 problems go on in their difficulty in hopes that they will in time come to  
8 see their inability to manage the affairs of N.A. at any level. Only in  
9 extreme cases is some sort of group action taken. None of us are perfect  
10 people so it is generally thought best to stay well back from games of  
11 manipulation or control. Some of the changes we go through as groups  
12 or members take a while for us to become able to see a remedy. During  
13 these periods, our feelings of unity may suffer. We can get so caught up  
14 in things that it seems irrelevant to take the simplest viewpoint. We can  
15 feel powerful and fall to error that way, or feel that we are the only ones  
16 experiencing difficulty coming to terms with things the way they are and  
17 fall prey to the same error: namely, we stop communicating our real  
18 feelings. We build a house of cards which always falls in on us. Cut off  
19 from the relief we should be finding at meetings, we seek to reinforce our  
20 own sick position by persuading others to our point of view. We seem to  
21 forget the effects we may be having on others. Meanwhile, N.A. goes on.  
22 Just as there can be no conflict between spiritual principles, there can be  
23 no real conflict between spiritual people. Appearances to the side, all we  
24 can engage in as members of N.A. is lovers' quarrels and most of the  
25 suffering comes from different viewpoints or differences of information.  
26 It is natural to want to side with our friends. We can also, for the sake  
27 of unity, examine the other person's point of view and achieve some  
28 benefit. We can learn to hold our tongues when we would speak badly of  
29 another member. The old saying "love will find a way" seems to apply

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1 here, but for our purposes our love must be very real to carry us  
2 through.

3 It is impossible to address unity without addressing feelings. Too  
4 often we have seen members shroud themselves in mystery and evasive  
5 action, when they could be enjoying themselves. Going against any one  
6 of the Traditions affects the way members feel about their program.  
7 When any of our members feel that N.A. is not "for real" their surrender  
8 is threatened and they may be cut off from the help they need to stay  
9 clean, stay happy, and stay alive. These members are often on the  
10 sidelines and hear disturbing accusations and justifications which make  
11 them question the spiritual nature of our basic message of recovery from  
12 addiction. They may not stay around to see the problems resolved. If  
13 they are involved with the participants, they may get in over their heads  
14 and flounder amid heated debates or waste away during the cold war  
15 periods, when members are giving the other side a chance to cool off or  
16 growing through a process of self-examination.

17 We have a right to be happy today and feel good about N.A.  
18 Sooner or later we all make mistakes, especially when something we love  
19 is at stake. Without spiritual principles to guide us, we will take  
20 measures to insure against loss of what we love and this generally leads  
21 to a real mess. It is not the purpose or function of our service  
22 committees or service structure to keep N.A. alive. Thank God! No  
23 service committee in the world can keep even one addict clean. Only  
24 another member who cares can do that. The most important and only  
25 essential service we can perform is that of personal service, directly  
26 filling the need of another addict who needs our help. It has been said  
27 that we don't even need a service structure. This might seem to be true  
28 for some rugged individualists at times in their recovery, but where  
29 would they be if there had been no hotline, no H&I meeting, no

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1 literature, no meeting directory, no meeting or no member willing to talk  
2 to them when they first came in. We have needs as members and as  
3 groups which we would have to go to some trouble to meet without our  
4 N.A. service structure. Through N.A. we each pay a part of the price it  
5 takes to get our service needs met. We can all feel good about our  
6 service effort. Our trusted servants take the emotional and financial  
7 support we give them and transform it into something wonderful.  
8 During crises it might help to comment on the fact that without the  
9 resources of the Fellowship of N.A., our servants would be on the street  
10 again. This makes them truly our servants. It is our trust which makes  
11 them trusted. During difficult periods, it can be difficult to figure out  
12 who is on the power trip, the group or the individuals. Certainly without  
13 the group, the individual doesn't stand a chance but how about the  
14 group? A group which doesn't support good servants may have to go a  
15 while without the things which help other groups, areas and regions  
16 prosper until they figure out how badly they need the individual's talents  
17 and energy. The group can't have servants beyond what they are able to  
18 encourage and support.

19 This article has dealt with the feelings of our members and some  
20 of the interactions which affect our N.A. unity. As long as we can  
21 remember who we are, what we are, and where we came from, just that  
22 long will we be able to be grateful for what we have today through N.A.  
23 We are facing many changes today in N.A. but the Twelve Steps haven't  
24 changed and neither have the Traditions. None of us has to face our  
25 problems alone. In a sense, we are still doing what we recovering  
26 addicts have always done: learning to use the resources available to us  
27 in N.A. to help ourselves and others live a better life clean. The  
28 Traditions allow us to maintain the spiritual nature of our program and  
29 focus our energies on recovery from addiction. They keep us from being

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1 troubled by things which have nothing to do with N.A. The source of our  
2 unity is the feeling within each of us reflected at the group level. This  
3 feeling reflects our gratitude and spiritual growth. It is the knowledge  
4 within that everything is going to be okay; no matter what this one does  
5 or that one, however any particular item is voted on, who gets elected,  
6 whatever trouble we may be having, there will still be some N.A.  
7 members to sit around with and say "Let's get on with the meeting."  
8 Recovery and the good feelings inside we get to share in meetings and  
9 with each other will always be the keys to N.A. and our sense of unity.

10 Reprinted from: Newsline Vol. 1, No. 6A

11  
12  
13 **General Input**

14  
15 Imagine what it would be like if N.A. broke into different sects  
16 such as orthodox, liberal, new and old, etc. Where would that leave us,  
17 and the addicts who are still practicing? How would one choose which  
18 sect to join? How would anybody become or stay clean?

19 The program is based on mutual need, give and take. Personal  
20 ambition or stubbornness can easily get in the way of the group's  
21 common good and what is best for the group usually works out to be best  
22 for the individual members.

23 For example, picture us all in a row boat out on a lake. There we  
24 are and each one of us thinks she or he knows which direction we should  
25 be headed in. So each person rows in the direction she or he favours.  
26 You know the result. At best we'd end up going in circles. However, if  
27 we took a vote and all rowed together in the same direction, we'd get

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1 somewhere. Even if it turned out to be the wrong way, we'd find that  
2 out and be able to correct our course accordingly.

3       Ultimately, unity depends on how willing I am to agree with what  
4 appears to be the group's best interest. If each one of us tries his/her  
5 best, we will have unity.

6       It is worth remembering, too, that to disagree you do not have to  
7 be disagreeable.

8       Using only N.A. approved literature keeps it simple and ensures  
9 that newcomers receive the program in its purest form, undiluted by  
10 personal prejudice.

11       Meetings require both talking and listening--an overabundance of  
12 either by any member may deprive someone of needed help. To listen  
13 with an open mind makes for a free and tolerant exchange of ideas.

14       N.A. must stay whole or it will die, and if N.A. dies we will too.

15       An addict alone is in bad company.

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19       "Our First Tradition concerns unity and our common  
20 welfare"(Basic Text p.57), and "unity depends on how well we follow our  
21 Traditions" (Basic Text p.56). Direct quotes from our book tell us unity  
22 of purpose can only be achieved when we become willing to surrender to  
23 the group principle. Personal recovery is what is at stake.

24       Our addiction makes the temptation to go it alone seem very  
25 inviting. Even with the best of intentions, doing radio talk shows,  
26 newspaper interviews, accepting invitations to go back and speak at our  
27 old school, or help out an old friend who is a social worker, are not in  
28 keeping with our unity. This type of opportunity needs to be taken to  
29 our P.I. subcommittees. It strengthens our unity and the surrender

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1 benefits our personal recovery. By supporting our subcommittee we  
2 personally assure our common welfare coming first.

3 This principle is important to our recovery and tells us of it  
4 directly. Our work and our works can be benefitted by the same  
5 approach. They should directly reflect the principles and good works of  
6 N.A. as a whole.

7 When the Traditions are applied to our subcommittees or  
8 committee, unity of purpose will be achieved with the Fellowship and we  
9 will have a united public relations policy. "Our Traditions are the  
10 guidelines that protect us from ourselves. They are our unity" (Basic  
11 Text p. 58).

12 Communication is very important. Areas, regions and the WSC  
13 Committee are dependent on it to insure a united effort. "With faith in  
14 a power greater than ourselves, hard work, and unity, we will survive  
15 and continue to carry the message to the addict who still suffers."

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18 Example:

19 Newcomer at an N.A. meeting. The meeting is dominated by  
20 arguments over service structure or literature, etc. Newcomer says, "I  
21 came to see how to stay clean, I don't care about this stuff!"

22 The point is the "unity" in this case would reflect agreement to  
23 keep the meeting to its purpose (Tradition Five) and keep the arguments  
24 to their proper setting. The personal recovery of this newcomer

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1 depended on this type of unity, and therefore "our common welfare"  
2 became priority.

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6 It is no accident that the term "common welfare" is stated at the  
7 very beginning of our Twelve Traditions. "Common welfare" implies  
8 shared happiness, well-being and spiritual prosperity. Common welfare  
9 is that which is best for the group, not just for one individual. When we  
10 think in terms of common welfare we ask ourselves, "Would this benefit  
11 the group, or the Fellowship as a whole?"

12 Coming to believe that we have a common welfare is not always  
13 easy. We came to this program with our personal welfare foremost in  
14 our minds. Most of us had not previously experienced the kind of  
15 unconditional love and support that we find in the N.A. Fellowship.

16 There is a spiritual core to every N.A. meeting which practices the  
17 principles of these Twelve Traditions, the basis of which is the fact that  
18 we are people who literally depend on each other for our lives.

19 We come to accept and love ourselves for who and what we are.  
20 We find out that the individual is precious to the group, and the group is  
21 precious to the individual. We both seek out the people in N.A. who  
22 have the most to offer to our recovery and growth, and we in turn offer  
23 what we have learned to others. We depend on Narcotics Anonymous  
24 for our lives; if N.A. dies we die. It is up to us to preserve our  
25 Fellowship for the addict seeking recovery.

26 Many of us reach the doors of N.A. only to discover that we were  
27 destructive, desperate individuals. Although we are filled with anger,  
28 fear, self-pity, and loathing, we find ourselves listening to people who tell  
29 us that they once felt exactly the same way, and that we don't have to

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1 feel that despair ever again, if we choose not to. We are asked to give  
2 up our old ideas, habits, and ways of life. We find support from those  
3 who have gone before us, and their experience gives us hope that if this  
4 new way of life worked for them, it might work also for us.

5 As our personal recovery evolves, it may slowly take on the  
6 positive characteristics of the group. For each of us recovery means  
7 drastic change. It means taking the risk to try new ideas such as  
8 honesty, trust, and acceptance. This willingness to change and grow is  
9 the process which leads to a spiritual awakening, to a peace and serenity  
10 within ourselves. Once we have taken the First Step, admitting to  
11 ourselves that we are indeed addicts, we then sense that our very  
12 survival depends on the unity of the N.A. Fellowship.

13 Unity to us means that we are all working toward the same goal:  
14 recovery from addiction one day at a time. We need always remember  
15 that we cannot do it alone. Somehow when we all help each other, it  
16 works. As addicts, we know the painful truth of the statement, "if we  
17 don't hang together, we'll all hang separately." The common welfare of  
18 the groups is based upon helping ourselves by helping others, which in  
19 turn creates unity.

20 Practicing the Traditions of this program strengthens the unity of  
21 the group. It ensures that the Fellowship stays alive. Unity is  
22 expressed through the gifts of experience, strength and hope from those  
23 who came before us, and from the hope that we can offer to those who  
24 come after us.

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27 This First Tradition embodies a powerful spiritual principle: for  
28 us, staying clean would not be possible without the support of each other.

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1           The "we-they" phenomenon in N.A. service is, I believe, between  
2 members and administrators. The members have a general knowledge  
3 and the administrators have specific knowledge and this is the basis for a  
4 variance of perspective.

5           In the first instance, members have a focus on what they believe  
6 to be good and possible in terms of current needs and resources, and  
7 empower certain other members to do a job for them. Those entrusted to  
8 do the work set about planning, evaluating and initiating actions  
9 designed to bring about the desired result. Along the way, they gather  
10 information about how best to proceed in carrying out the will of the  
11 members, and in time often see other possible and desirable goals. Also,  
12 they may see problems which would result from the achievement of the  
13 original goals. Their perceptions may or may not be accurate. The  
14 important thing here is that they develop a viewpoint separate from the  
15 viewpoint which put them in the position of trust to begin with. This is  
16 where the fun begins.

17           If they fail to communicate their views to those who originally set  
18 the effort in motion, it is easy for them to proceed on their own  
19 recognizance. In this way, they can easily appear to be acting on self-  
20 will and not group conscience, even though their motives may be  
21 absolutely true to the N.A. spirit in all respects but one.

22           To solve this, we need to create within our structural service units  
23 a recognized and routine approach designed to bring together the  
24 viewpoints of all members concerned with any particular project and  
25 keep it together for the duration of the project.

26           Obviously, the typical report from any administrator has been  
27 attempting to do this. All that may be lacking is a special format to  
28 present information which is considered important enough to modify the  
29 plan of action, and give the members committed to the project an

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1 opportunity to respond with their viewpoints, which are evaluated in as  
2 open and interactive a manner as is possible before actually modifying  
3 the original plan.

4       Where this is not done, those who support the effort gradually stop  
5 writing, calling or giving any support at all. They may feel betrayed or  
6 simply confused by changes which occur beyond their field of vision and  
7 often drop out because they can no longer see the plan of action. They  
8 may continue to support the effort on major items out of faith or trust,  
9 but the further the actual plan of action shifts from what is known to  
10 them, the less they can effectively support something they cannot  
11 understand.

12       While all this is going on, the administrators may be going along,  
13 imagining everything is fine. It usually comes as a shock to them when  
14 they reach for emotional or financial support which is no longer there.  
15 In this moment, they feel betrayed and confused, just like the members  
16 in the first instance and for the same reason in reverse.

17       To bring together fragmented elements within the Fellowship is  
18 always difficult and usually impossible, except on major projects where  
19 the need is so overwhelming that members will go to extraordinary  
20 lengths emotionally and spiritually to find a way to achieve the goal and  
21 meet the Fellowship's need. Perhaps it is good to emphasize that it is  
22 ONLY the Fellowship's need which is strong enough to focus substantial  
23 attention, effort and resource on a desired goal, not only in the early  
24 stages, but throughout the procession of developments necessary to  
25 attain the goal. This is true of our ad-hoc committees but terrifically  
26 more important where an ongoing service effort is the goal. Generally,  
27 the further from the original stated goal, the less it will appear relevant  
28 to the average member who is in a position to support or deny the call  
29 for support.

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1           We are going to see the positive results we have gained from our  
2 experience in the last several years. A lot of new things have been  
3 undertaken which we have never been in a position to even attempt  
4 before. A tremendous wave of experience has been gained and shared  
5 among the Fellowship which will form the basis for Fellowship  
6 consensus to formulate new goals while completing others.

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9           Taking this tradition piece by piece we see that "personal recovery  
10 depends on N.A. unity" and N.A. unity can only be achieved through the  
11 personal recovery of the N.A. members. We achieve the personal  
12 recovery necessary, through working the Twelve Steps and applying  
13 those principles to our daily lives. The steps provide the purification  
14 process that allows a loving God to intercede in our lives and make  
15 personal recovery possible. We do this by letting go of selfish motives,  
16 ego, and self-concern of how everything affects "me." In Steps One-  
17 Three we gain a measure of humility by admitting that "I can't, but WE  
18 can." Steps Four-Six show us how much we need to change in order to  
19 become ready to surrender to a life of spiritual growth. Steps Seven-  
20 Nine begin this process of change and allow us to clear away some of the  
21 wreckage of the past so we can focus on how to become a better servant  
22 of God's will. Steps Ten-Twelve are the final preparatory steps to our  
23 surrender to a greater conscience. Having made this surrender, we  
24 realize that by placing our common welfare first we open the door to  
25 personal recovery.

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- 1           C.    Problems determining group conscience.
- 2           D.    All group conscience is geared toward the purpose of
- 3                 carrying the message.
- 4    V.    Leaders/Trusted Servants.
- 5           A.    Group conscience selection of trusted servants.
- 6           B.    Members, groups and trusted servants are tools/instruments
- 7                 of a loving God.
- 8           C.    Define the nature of leadership.
- 9           D.    Define responsibility of T.S./leaders.
- 10                 1.    Define `to serve`.
- 11                 2.    Define `trusted`.
- 12
- 13           E.    Define responsibility of group for its trusted
- 14                 servants/leaders.
- 15    VI.   Summary.
- 16           A.    Group conscience is self enforced.
- 17    VII.  Conclusion and lead in to Tradition 3.
- 18



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1 clear solution. An awareness then comes over the group and things  
2 settle down again. We realize that this insight comes from a Power  
3 greater than ourselves, who makes it very simple so that we can accept  
4 it.

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

12 The important matters in any group conscience are our common  
13 welfare, the good of each group, and Narcotics Anonymous as a whole.  
14 Occasionally, we have seen individuals, often with the best intentions,  
15 sway the group with their opinion. This is understandable since many of  
16 us are so enthusiastic about staying clean and about N.A. We feel the  
17 surge of new life and we rightfully credit N.A. Some of us feel a desire  
18 to evangelize and further our own individual causes as we see fit. When  
19 we exhibit these periodic rampages of self-will, the Fellowship may be  
20 blatantly affected. When we feel the temptation of power and self-  
21 importance, it is best to ask God to direct us in carrying the N.A.  
22 message of recovery.

23 The word "may" is a key one in the Second Tradition. It does not  
24 say: "God's will is always expressed in our group conscience," but that  
25 God's will may be expressed there. Since we are cautious of group  
26 opinion, we see that it is only through constant vigilance of the principles  
27 of the program that God's will may be expressed. We can trust that God  
28 will provide guidance, through the group conscience, if we truly seek  
29 spiritual answers.

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1           In order for N.A. to function efficiently, we delegate authority and  
2 responsibility, trusting our members to serve us well. These members,  
3 entrusted with certain jobs, make decisions based on research,  
4 experience, and the N.A. principles. When we first arrive at N.A., we  
5 may be overwhelmed by the organization we see. There are group  
6 secretaries, treasurers, leaders, etc. We see many trusted servants at  
7 the group, area, regional, and world levels. The service structure of N.A.  
8 can look quite complex if we forget to keep it simple. However, N.A. is  
9 different from other organizations because it is all geared towards  
10 helping the members. We trust our leaders to apply the N.A. principles  
11 in their work, seeking the best information available, considering the  
12 consequences of their actions, considering minority opinions, and working  
13 for N.A.'s common welfare.

14           Some addicts react suspiciously to our service boards and  
15 committees, as if they had the power to govern our groups. They do not.  
16 Other people interpret the Second Tradition as if it said, "We have no  
17 leaders." But this tradition does not say that we have no leaders; it  
18 describes what our leaders are: they are trusted servants who do not  
19 govern. Without responsible leadership and guidance, we would be lost  
20 in chaos and self-will. In N.A., we are led by example and suggested  
21 direction, never governed by mandate. We willingly follow the example  
22 of those whose lives demonstrate the application of spiritual principles:  
23 service to God, N.A., and still-suffering addicts; service gladly rendered  
24 and obligations willingly met; God-centered rather than self-centered.  
25 The word "trusted" implies integrity, responsibility, knowledge, and  
26 leadership.

27           If we have been entrusted with a position of service, we need to  
28 make every effort to be unbiased in presenting issues to our groups. We  
29 present the pros and cons of each question simply and objectively. The

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1 group conscience will be best for all, if we ask a Power greater than  
2 ourselves to direct our group's conscience.

3 After being part of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous and  
4 experiencing the ongoing miracle of recovery, we conclude that either  
5 God does or does not direct Narcotics Anonymous through the group  
6 conscience. As we witness this principle in action, we surrender to the  
7 fact that God is expressed in our group conscience. When we surrender  
8 our will, we are better able to accept God's will as expressed through the  
9 group conscience.

10 If we are new in the program, we may not have a concept of a  
11 Higher Power. We may therefore place our faith in individuals whom we  
12 see exemplifying the principles of the program. It is only after we come  
13 in contact with a belief in a Higher Power that we finally realize that  
14 what transpires within the Fellowship and groups is not always  
15 preordained by the members themselves, but by the authority of a loving  
16 God as expressed in our group conscience.

17 All the committees, officers, and representatives serve the  
18 Fellowship. No one of them may dictate to the Fellowship. The  
19 committees suggest; they don't make laws or enforce rules. There are  
20 many positions open to those who desire service, from the group's  
21 coffeemakers to the trustees.

22 The term "trusted servant" is self-explanatory. These individuals  
23 are selected for service positions by the group conscience. They carry out  
24 the group conscience and serve-often without recognition. Although  
25 these elected representatives are not the standard-bearers of the group,  
26 they are entrusted to serve.

27 Our leaders do not govern. This is a very important aspect of the  
28 Twelve Traditions. Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual program, not a  
29 political or social club. Leaders are only trusted servants who help to

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1 keep each group or the Fellowship running smoothly. They serve to the  
2 best of their ability in sharing the message of recovery. They are given  
3 positions of trust by a group conscience. We can have faith in our  
4 trusted servants because we have faith in the Higher Power who directed  
5 us to choose them.

6 Because we trust in God's loving authority in our lives, every day  
7 clean is a gift of life. A loving God, group conscience, and trusted  
8 servants all add up to freedom for the group. Coming from a bondage of  
9 self-will, we are lifted to a higher place of gratitude for our new freedom  
10 today.

11 We come to realize that when we are entrusted with positions of  
12 commitment within our group and Fellowship, we are entrusted to  
13 perform these positions through love to further our common welfare. As  
14 individual members, our spiritual foundation is very important in our  
15 involvement with service. When we do service in any capacity, we are  
16 often touched by the overwhelming trust our fellow member place in us.  
17 We are careful not to violate their trust because we realize that service  
18 to the Fellowship is a necessary part of recovery. We cannot afford to  
19 neglect the principles of the program when participating in service work.

20 Though sometimes misconstrued, the privilege of service is never  
21 misplaced. Every attempt to share the message of recovery is  
22 appropriate because it is directed towards a purpose more than just we,  
23 as individuals, may comprehend. As long as we place God's will ahead of  
24 our will, all will be well.

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It may appear that God works in mysterious and sometimes  
ironical ways. As addicts, we thumbed our noses at authority. Many of  
us rebelled against parents, teachers, employers, cops--whoever had some  
power over us. We hated being told what to do. We hated rules and  
scoffed at laws. Spiritual principles meant nothing to many of us and  
even if we'd once believed in God, we may have lost that belief long ago.  
Drugs were the only thing we worshiped. Yet here we were, seeking  
recovery in a program that asked us to believe in all kinds of things  
foreign to an addict's way of life--a loving God, the conscience of a group,  
our own consciences.

14

The Second Tradition asked us, in even stronger terms than the  
First, to put our egos aside. We, who in our arrogance considered  
ourselves the ultimate authorities, were told to surrender to a higher  
one. We, who had blind faith in our drugs, were asked to give our faith  
to the God of our understanding. At first some of us scoffed, dodged,  
refused to take this tradition seriously. But then a funny thing  
happened. The more we thought about the Second Tradition, the more  
we studied it, the more sense it made. It helped us surrender our need  
for control. It helped us make better, sounder decisions. It helped clear  
up our confusion about what's right and wrong. It helped us to  
understand how best we could work for our recovery and that of other  
addicts. The Second Tradition recognizes that we're driven by a strong  
self-will, that we've made poor decisions in the conduct of our lives.  
Because this tradition concerns itself with N.A. members who serve the  
membership, who become trusted servants, it strives to set limits on our  
human failings so that these will not harm N.A.

29

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1           The Second Tradition is the only one in which specific reference is  
2 made to God. The connection between God and service to N.A. is  
3 deliberate. If we serve N.A. with our character defects unmoved and our  
4 amends unmade, we're very prone to misuse our service positions--to use  
5 them as instruments of power and control. We're prone to make  
6 ourselves the ultimate authorities and require those under us to do our  
7 bidding. But if we surrender to an ultimate authority beyond ourselves--  
8 to a loving God of our understanding--we eliminate that risk. Then we  
9 don't rule, we don't govern; regardless of what service positions we hold,  
10 we allow ourselves instead to be guided by the conscience of our groups.  
11 We're all equal, and God's will is revealed through each of us.

12           When we were new to N.A., service of any kind was the last thing  
13 on the minds of most of us. The wretchedness of our lives, which  
14 brought us to N.A.'s doors, was the only thing that concerned us. We  
15 were barely able to get through those doors, barely able to keep our lives  
16 together enough to eat, sleep and breathe. It may never have occurred  
17 to us that the meetings started on time, that somebody had made the  
18 coffee, that speakers came, that the day's or evening's meeting was  
19 organized. We took everything for granted.

20           After a while we could see more clearly that the world didn't just  
21 revolve around ourselves and our own misery. Like infants who initially  
22 are intent only on satisfying their own needs, but gradually become  
23 aware of other people in their lives, we grew. We came to see that it  
24 was addicts who volunteered to come in early to set up the meeting that  
25 night, for example, to open the doors, switch on the lights, arrange the  
26 chairs, put the coffee on and chair the meetings. It was addicts who  
27 sponsored recovering addicts and represented the group at other levels.

28           Soon the therapeutic basis of N.A. service also became known to  
29 us, for they were often repeated: "Service is giving back that which you

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1 receive." "You can't help yourself unless you help others." And the  
2 favorite one, regarding recovery: "You can't keep it unless you give it  
3 away."

4 We learned that service and an atmosphere of recovery go hand in  
5 hand. We learned that this atmosphere of recovery is created by  
6 welcoming newcomers and giving them hope for their future. By  
7 sharing, living in recovery, staying clean. And by the practical work  
8 that keeps the meetings, the groups, and the Fellowship going. Our rent  
9 must be paid, our meetings run in orderly fashion, our committees  
10 staffed and chaired, our regional, national and world conferences  
11 represented.

12 When N.A. was young and there were very few meetings  
13 anywhere, N.A.'s service structure was minimal and life was simpler. To  
14 some oldtimers those were the good old days. But in those good old days  
15 only a relative handful of addicts was being helped. Now N.A.'s  
16 organization may at first glance seem overwhelming. There are group  
17 secretaries, treasurers, leaders and so on. There are many trusted  
18 servants at the group, area, regional and world categories.

19 However, some complexity is inevitable when there are thousands  
20 of N.A. groups operating both nationally and internationally. Unlike a  
21 corporation, though, our bottom line is not measured in terms of profit  
22 and loss. Where N.A. used to help that relative handful of addicts to  
23 recover, now it's helping hundreds of thousands of addicts lead drug-free,  
24 happy lives. And no matter how many N.A. committees are formed or  
25 N.A. conferences run, at bottom it's still simple: addicts putting their  
26 self-centeredness, their egos, aside; addicts helping addicts.

27 Simple things also help maintain the atmosphere of recovery.  
28 When we walk into a meeting room where the coffee is slopped over and  
29 the cookies just thrown on the table and nobody swept the place for

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1 weeks, it puts us off. It reminds us of the way we lived when we were  
2 using. As one member put it, "I didn't come into Narcotics Anonymous  
3 to be in a dump again."

4         Conversely, when we attend a meeting in a room that's bright and  
5 clean, and the coffee and cake are nicely served, it makes just the  
6 opposite impression. This is a place where we want to be. It symbolizes  
7 our wish for a bright, clean, comfortable life. The point is, somebody has  
8 to make sure that the meeting room really is presentable. Somebody has  
9 to do the actual work. There are many ways to serve N.A., and the  
10 most seemingly menial task is no more or less important than the one  
11 that involves travel to a world conference.

12         In fact, those "menial" tasks carry great weight in furthering our  
13 program. The reason is that they have the most impact on newcomers.  
14 A pleasant, welcoming atmosphere invites newcomers to come to the  
15 meeting room early and stay late. When they do so, they have more of  
16 an opportunity to talk with other members. And the more contact they  
17 have with other members, the likelier it is that they will stay in the  
18 program.

19         Our Second Tradition concerns itself greatly with the nature of  
20 leadership in N.A. At first some of us were dismayed to find out that  
21 N.A. too has "leaders" as everywhere else; some of us continue to be  
22 dismayed. It's largely our knee-jerk reaction to authority. We hear the  
23 word "leader" and we immediately get nervous. Somebody wants to tell  
24 us what to do. Somebody wants to lead us around by the nose.  
25 Somebody wants to put something over on us.

26         In order to function efficiently and effectively, though, we must  
27 delegate authority and responsibility. We must have people who see to  
28 it that things get done. We must have people who represent us in a  
29 variety of circumstances. Otherwise, we'd be less effective in carrying

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1 the message. Yet, because our leaders don't govern, we have no  
2 presidents, no masters or managers. Instead, we have secretaries,  
3 treasurers and representatives. These titles emphasize service rather  
4 than control.

5 We call our leaders trusted servants because we trust them. We  
6 trust them not only to carry out their responsibilities effectively but to be  
7 guided by the conscience of the groups they represent. We trust them to  
8 operate on the basis of integrity, responsibility and knowledge. We trust  
9 them to further N.A.'s spiritual program of recovery. Whether they're  
10 group secretary, or Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, they know they  
11 hold office only because the Fellowship and God have made that possible.  
12 In that sense, though, they may be empowered to make some decisions  
13 in our behalf.

14 That's the ideal--and it happens far more often than anybody  
15 might assume. That a bunch of recovering addicts all over the world  
16 could get together to build a strong spiritual Fellowship is proof that this  
17 is truly a God-inspired program.

18 Because our program is God-inspired but humanly administered,  
19 however, the ideal doesn't always work out. We don't always live up to  
20 the principles of the Second Tradition. As addicts, many of us were  
21 impatient and impulsive, we craved power and approval and excitement.  
22 We bring these qualities with us when we come to N.A., of course. All  
23 who are willing may involve themselves in service, but some of us aren't  
24 interested in anything but formal committee work and other leadership  
25 roles that sound especially important. When we do so, it usually turns  
26 out that we're not at all ready for them. None of us should accept a  
27 position of that kind before we've had our spiritual awakening--before  
28 we've taken our inventories or honestly faced our character defects and  
29 humbly asked God to remove them.

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1           It's good to remember that service work encompasses a wide range  
2 of activities, all useful and necessary. Service should begin very quickly.  
3 Even newcomers with less than a week in N.A. can be extremely helpful  
4 in furthering our program. A newcomer with two day's worth of clean  
5 time can urge another newcomer who's one day clean, "Keep coming  
6 back!" A newcomer with a car can give someone a ride to or from a  
7 meeting. Folding mailing lists and setting up the chairs for a meeting  
8 are important contributions. No matter what the reaching out or  
9 volunteering consists of, it strengthens the bonds between us. It  
10 strengthens the Fellowship.

11           Trusted servants don't volunteer to be trusted servants--they don't  
12 elect themselves. It's we, in our groups, who do so. We select our  
13 candidates and vote them into office. It's a democratic process that can  
14 work wonderfully well--when we make our selections in a thoughtful,  
15 responsible manner. We should never vote members into trusted servant  
16 positions simply because they have lots of charisma, or are take-charge  
17 types, yet still at the beginning of their spiritual journey of recovery. We  
18 should not vote into such positions members who are newly-clean. We  
19 should never vote for members simply because they're our friends,  
20 without regard to their actual qualifications.

21           Our oft-used saying, "You can only keep it by giving it away" has  
22 a flip side--"You can't give it away until you've got it." Service is a vital  
23 tool for recovery designed to help us all--the members who do service  
24 work and the members who are on the receiving end. But when we're  
25 driven by ego needs--pride, a hunger for praise, a lust for power--we put  
26 personality above principle. It's self-will above God's will. The results  
27 are usually destructive. For instance, there are occasional trusted  
28 servants who forget they are led by God and the Fellowship. They  
29 become caught up in their service positions and fancy themselves gurus.

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1 As such, they listen only to themselves and to those members who agree  
2 with them. Their groups come to be known as "Joe's group" or "Mary's  
3 group"--whatever their names--rather than as what they really are,  
4 Narcotics Anonymous groups. Then cliques form. Members become  
5 envious, resentful. Dissension grows. The spiritual program is forgotten  
6 amidst all the in-fighting. After a period of chaos, such groups often fall  
7 apart or split into rival ones.

8 The problem is our disease of addiction. Our disease affects our  
9 service performance in various negative ways. It prompts us to see  
10 service as power. We're not able to accept the fact that service doesn't  
11 pay except in spiritual terms. Generally, therefore, the stronger our  
12 foundation in applying the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions the  
13 less apt we are to fall prey to the temptations service in leadership  
14 positions offers.

15 Dissension sometimes occurs when trusted servants hang on to  
16 positions for which they weren't suited, or when members react angrily  
17 after losing elections. The more tightly we're still bound to our egos, the  
18 harder it becomes to help others with their recovery or to further our  
19 own spiritual program. Pride and power mar--and sometimes destroy--  
20 relationships with family, friends, employers and others. They trouble  
21 our relationships within N.A., as well.

22 When we're entrusted with positions of commitment within our  
23 group and Fellowship, we're actually entrusted with the responsibility of  
24 performing the tasks involved in a loving way to further our common  
25 welfare. We should always be careful not to violate members' trust  
26 because we realize that service to the Fellowship is a necessary aspect of  
27 recovery. We can't ever afford to neglect the principles of the program  
28 when participating in service work. As long as we place God's will ahead  
29 of our own, all will be well.

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1           When we violate the trust placed in us as trusted servants, it can  
2 cause much pain, much strain--but it's never the end of the world. We  
3 can choose, we can change. We can choose to ask the God of our  
4 understanding to redirect us in carrying the message of recovery.

5           It takes lots of courage to face ourselves and ask, "Am I really  
6 ready for this responsibility?" or, "Am I really measuring up to the trust  
7 that's been placed in me?" It takes lots of honesty. It can be  
8 anguishing. But those who have done just that often come out of their  
9 ordeal spiritually refreshed and strengthened. Some say afterwards the  
10 crisis was like a shock of cold water, waking them up to the work they  
11 still had to do in their struggle with the disease of addiction.

12           One woman was in terrible shape when she attended her first  
13 N.A. meetings--she was hallucinating, she had neurological problems  
14 from all the drugs she took. The meeting room was filled with women  
15 with much longer clean time than she had. They took her under their  
16 wing and, thinking they were going to make her feel better about herself,  
17 asked her to keep the group's birthday book. She was thrilled--but three  
18 days later she lost that book. She wasn't ready for any kind of  
19 responsibility. And losing the birthday book made her feel worse than  
20 ever about herself.

21           She realized that staying in N.A. was literally a matter of life and  
22 death for her, but she couldn't face those ladies who had, in a sense,  
23 adopted her. She went on to another group in her area, and once she'd  
24 made some progress there forced herself to go back to the first group and  
25 apologize. That act made her realize she was really getting better. In  
26 time she went on to become one of the most active of trusted servants in  
27 her area.

28           Another member, a man, loved doing service. He was a dynamo  
29 at meetings and in committee work, and he felt everybody should be

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1 happy with the way he was running things. But the members weren't  
2 and often voted him down. It took a long time before it occurred to him  
3 that "running things" wasn't exactly a trusted servant's function--that  
4 he was acting on self-will, not God's will. Once he did face up to that, he  
5 reworked the Sixth and Seventh Steps; he wanted his character defects  
6 removed so he could do a really good job as a trusted servant.

7 It didn't work. He went on being the same old person needing to  
8 run things his way. Fortunately, he spoke of his plight to an older, far  
9 more experienced member. This man told him he was going about it the  
10 wrong way--trying to change himself when the steps clearly talk about  
11 letting God do the changing of our lives.

12 Eventually, this man went through a profound change. He  
13 stopped taking leadership service responsibilities for a long while. When  
14 he resumed them he had an entirely different view of what it meant to  
15 be a trusted servant. He no longer tried to push his views on people, no  
16 longer governed. In fact, he expressed an entirely different philosophy:  
17 "Service is for those we serve. We may have special skills and develop  
18 special abilities that we can share with the membership, but we're not  
19 special in and of ourselves. And perhaps the greatest skill we can have  
20 is also one that seems the simplest--to reach out and welcome  
21 newcomers."

22 When leadership is self-centered, not God-centered, it does special  
23 harm to newcomers. They sense conflict instead of harmony, discord and  
24 estrangement instead of unity. This kind of atmosphere allows them to  
25 give vent fully to their own self-destructive tendencies. Or it pushes  
26 them away forever. For many newcomers, N.A. is their very last  
27 attempt at survival. When leadership is self-centered, rather than God-  
28 centered, it literally jeopardizes lives.

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1           When we first heard references to "God-centered" groups, some of  
2 us wondered about that. Did it mean God had to be right there, in the  
3 middle of things, listening to the back and forth, being the Director?  
4 And what if a lot of us in a meeting room didn't believe in God in a  
5 specific religious sense--did that mean we didn't have a prayer of a  
6 chance of having a spiritually-centered group? Working the Third Step  
7 again cleared things up for us. We could give ourselves over to God's  
8 will--whatever our understanding of God happens to be--but we're His  
9 delegates. We're still responsible for our actions, individually and  
10 collectively. What happens in our groups is our responsibility,  
11 individually and collectively. The Second Tradition makes that clear. It  
12 says God's will "may" be expressed in our group conscience. It doesn't  
13 say God's will is always expressed in our group conscience, just that it  
14 "may" be expressed there. So it's up to us to deliver.

15           For a long time we also had trouble with "group conscience." At  
16 first we couldn't understand what people were talking about. We were  
17 told that when an N.A. group has to decide on something, when a course  
18 of action has to be taken, we try to get a group conscience instead of a  
19 group opinion or vote.

20           Even so, we still had trouble with this one. We sat in meetings  
21 where decisions had to be made and votes taken, we listened to our  
22 trusted servants, and we still felt stuck. Some of our trusted servants  
23 were wonderful speakers, and they presented issues forcefully, but when  
24 we voted we weren't really sure whether we were putting our faith in  
25 them or in our Higher Power. The newer we were in N.A., the more  
26 prone we were to put our faith in them; we didn't yet have faith in our  
27 connection with a Higher Power.

28           Even after we'd been in N.A. for a while, we were often unsure  
29 whether the decisions that came out of our groups were the result of

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1 group opinion or group conscience. We learned that we weren't the only  
2 ones; even oldtimers have trouble with that one. It's often a struggle to  
3 separate our wills from God's. It's often difficult to know when a  
4 charismatic trusted servant sways us to a particular opinion or whether  
5 we're voting with our own conscience.

6 Strange things can happen in the name of "group conscience." At  
7 times two opposing factions will both use "group conscience" to push  
8 through whatever it is they want pushed through. One faction says,  
9 "We represent group conscience," and the other faction says, "No, we're  
10 the ones who represent group conscience." Or one faction says, "We  
11 represent group conscience because we have 1,500 votes," and the other  
12 says, "No, we represent group conscience because we have 1,000 more  
13 votes than you do."

14 Situations like that confused us even more. How could two blocks  
15 both represent group conscience when their views were diametrically  
16 opposed? Is group conscience really nothing more than a show of hands?  
17 That didn't sound right--and isn't. As we gained more experience in  
18 N.A. we saw that you could have ninety percent of the membership in a  
19 group vote one way, and still not have it be an expression of God's will.  
20 You could have two opposing factions claim to represent group  
21 conscience--yet not just one but both could be fooling themselves.

22 "True spiritual principles are never in conflict," we were told.  
23 They may be complementary but never in direct opposition. When two  
24 warring camps each claim to have the group conscience, one or both are  
25 so caught up in self-will, they're blinded to God's will. A good question  
26 to pose is, "Are we following in the spiritual essence of the Tradition?"  
27 If we're caught up in self-will, even without realizing it, it's a good bet  
28 we aren't.

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1           Numbers aren't the key to group conscience, our common welfare  
2 is. An individual member can express a point of view different from  
3 anybody else's in the room--and actually embody the group conscience,  
4 transforming attitudes all around. At one annual N.A. convention there  
5 was a great deal of tension between two factions over the issue of where  
6 to hold the next convention. Both factions came from the same state,  
7 but one wanted it in their town, the other in theirs. Lots of lobbying  
8 went on; the vote was very close. Neither side would budge.

9           At this point a member who belonged to neither faction arrived at  
10 the meeting late. He listened to the arguments and allowed himself a  
11 little quiet time to tap into his Higher Power. Then he asked everybody  
12 there to do something they obviously hadn't--namely, to examine both  
13 proposals carefully from a practical point of view. When they did that it  
14 was no contest. It turned out that the first town didn't have facilities  
15 large enough to accommodate the convention. At this point the  
16 atmosphere in the room changed from one charged with conflict to one of  
17 cooperation. The participants voted overwhelmingly for the other city,  
18 the one with adequate facilities.

19           To at least a few of the members present it almost seemed as if  
20 God had sent that late member to the meeting just to straighten things  
21 out at the right moment, when nobody else knew how to resolve the  
22 issue. Maybe God did. Or maybe it was just a coincidence. But plenty  
23 of such coincidences occur in N.A.

24           No magic formula exists that will ensure group conscience taking  
25 place. But long experience with the process shows that it's most likely to  
26 happen when conditions are most favorable. That means we all really  
27 work towards the solution of a problem or issue, not just leave it to the  
28 activists in the group. It means we all become fully informed about  
29 what's going on, making a point of seeking out the pros and cons. It

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1 means we seek counsel with our own consciences, asking ourselves such  
2 questions as: Will this benefit only a few persons in my group or will it  
3 benefit my group generally? Will it help or hurt N.A. as a whole? Is it  
4 or isn't it in accord with all of the Traditions? And it means we turn to  
5 our Higher Power, by means of prayer and meditation, before voting or  
6 otherwise taking a stand on something.

7 Some members say they pretty much know when their opinion or  
8 vote is not expressing God's will because a little voice inside tells them  
9 so; they can't really fool themselves. If we stop long enough to listen, we  
10 all can hear that little voice within that keeps us honest. Some members  
11 also say they "know" when group conscience is expressed because there's  
12 something different, more electric in the air--a special feeling of  
13 rightness. One member was in a group debating whether to establish a  
14 hotline in its community. There were arguments for and against. The  
15 thrust was for, and the hotline was established. "When it happened,"  
16 the member recalled, "I got a warm feeling inside--a wonderful sense of  
17 being sure we were doing the right thing."

18 Things don't always go right even when we desperately want them  
19 to. Trusted servants occasionally breach their trust. Dissension now and  
20 again rips a group apart. Even in the best of circumstances sometimes,  
21 neither group decisions nor the judgment of trusted servants, however  
22 sincerely motivated, have a positive outcome. We're human; we make  
23 mistakes.

24 When this happens, some of us take it very badly. Where was  
25 God? Why didn't our God protect us? Why, when we tried so hard,  
26 couldn't we connect with our Higher Power? Feeling this way, we  
27 become very vulnerable. We may fear for N.A.'s life. We might fear for  
28 our own lives. Or fear that perhaps God has abandoned N.A. We  
29 erroneously believe that a loving God as expressed in our group

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1 conscience will constantly provide us with happy endings. We forget that  
2 God's will is always expressed, but that we don't always hear it. We  
3 may be unable to accept God's will because we're too attached to being  
4 right, or locked into a personality conflict with other members, or  
5 because of a combination of such factors. An example: A Group Service  
6 Representative who, at service meetings, is supposed to present both  
7 sides of an issue, but actually presents just one side--the one he or she  
8 favors.

9         We may also forget to keep on having faith. As long as we do  
10 have faith we're readier to forgive mistakes, be forgiven for them, learn  
11 from them, and do so with loving hearts. With faith we never forget  
12 that N.A. will survive in even the darkest times.

13         One member did forget that. She always wanted everything to be  
14 perfect--in her personal life, her work life, and her involvement with  
15 N.A. Husband, children, N.A. members, her boss--she tried her hardest  
16 to please everyone, even when their demands were unreasonable. A  
17 trusted servant, she was tireless in working on behalf of her group which  
18 was going through much turmoil. Finally, all her efforts wore her down  
19 to the point where she got the desire to use again.

20         That realization made her pull up short, go back to the Twelve  
21 Steps, and have long talks with her sponsor. Then she stopped. She just  
22 stopped using all of her energy to make things okay for everybody, and  
23 an odd thing happened. When she eased up on her expectations for  
24 herself, that she had to make everything wonderful for everybody, she  
25 realized that she hadn't been relying on her faith. In effect, she had  
26 said, "Let me fix it, God, because you can't." She'd completely forgotten  
27 about powerlessness and about a Power greater than herself, because in  
28 her mind those only applied to using drugs. She now saw that they  
29 applied to every compulsion, and stopped being so compulsive about

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1 every story needing to have a happy ending. She realized, finally, that  
2 she wasn't in control of people's lives.

3 At that point she started to put her trust in God. Then some  
4 endings turned out to be happy, some didn't--but she discovered that the  
5 people around her gradually stopped being so demanding. And without  
6 her intervention, other members of her group were forced to deal with  
7 situations that they had wanted to avoid, which was a big help.

8 This member discovered that even when a situation caused pain, it  
9 made sense in the long run. Having to deal with pain, she found out,  
10 made one stronger.

11 Like people, our groups sometimes have painful lessons to learn,  
12 but rocky times are never for naught. On the contrary, they provide us  
13 with an abundance of important lessons. Confronted with a power-  
14 hungry or dishonest trusted servant, for instance, we're forced to  
15 examine the situation--why it occurred, how to make our selection  
16 process more carefully, and what we can do to offer our trusted servants  
17 clear, appropriate guidance.

18 Endless quarrels and disagreements can bog down a group, sap its  
19 energy. But in time cooler heads prevail, and when things settle down  
20 we learn other lessons. We see that we're usually closer to each other  
21 than we were before. And we see, much more clearly than before, how  
22 important patience, cooperation and acceptance are to us--how they keep  
23 our program strong and our Fellowship united.

24 Internal friction may become so great that occasionally groups  
25 break up. While this is often extremely painful for the members  
26 involved, it also generates a rebirth--as new groups, far more spiritual  
27 and committed to recovery, spring up to take the place of the ones that  
28 folded.



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1 willingness to sublimate our own desires to the expression of our  
2 ultimate authority, a loving God, the Fellowship splinters and divides  
3 against itself.

4       There's a direct relationship between this concept of a group  
5 conscience being the expression of the will of a loving God and how  
6 trusted servants perceive and perform their duties. Trusted servants  
7 should convey and carry the group conscience and not their own wills.  
8 The groups they represent must place their faith in their trusted  
9 servants and believe that the people they choose to serve are guided by  
10 the principle of this tradition. When trusted servants fail in their  
11 purpose to carry forth the group conscience and try to govern on self-will,  
12 the strength of this tradition is weakened.

13       The principle of this tradition also applies in reverse. When the  
14 group fails to support its trusted servants to carry out their duties,  
15 Tradition Two is similarly undermined. We easily understand the  
16 accountability that trusted servants have to the Fellowship; it is equally  
17 important to understand the concept of the Fellowship's accountability to  
18 its trusted servants. A trusted servant must be given the respect and  
19 authority to exercise the group will in accordance with his or her  
20 understanding of the group conscience.

21       I would like to share an example to illustrate the difference  
22 between "group conscience" and "group will" and how easy it is to  
23 confuse and violate this tradition when our ultimate authority is not  
24 recognized as an integral part of it.

25       The activities committee of a certain area raised a great deal of  
26 money through one of its functions. With what they believed were good  
27 intentions, the members of this committee took a "group conscience" to  
28 send a portion of the money raised directly to the WSC, bypassing both  
29 the area and region they directly served.

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1           Their rationale was that their region had not donated funds to the  
2 WSC with any regularity and in fact had barely been able to maintain a  
3 prudent reserve to carry out its own business. The committee, frustrated  
4 by this state of affairs, justified its decision by asserting that they were  
5 the only body who contributed rather than depleted donations, and that  
6 in this way they could make certain "their" donation would be filtered  
7 up.

8           At the next area business meeting, the committee confidently  
9 presented its financial report and plans for distribution, certain they  
10 would be met with praise. Instead, they were confronted by immediate  
11 dissension. The area responded by telling the committee it had not only  
12 acted autonomously, but had overstepped its authority, lacking the faith  
13 to allow either the area or regional representatives to carry out their  
14 responsibilities as trusted servants. The meeting ended in chaos and  
15 conflict, with hurt and resentments on both sides.

16           At the next activities committee meeting, after much discussion  
17 between individual members, it was finally agreed to conform to the  
18 guidelines of the area and unconditionally turn over all donations in the  
19 accepted fund flow manner. Although they didn't realize it at the time,  
20 the group opinion of the committee had turned and was surrendered to  
21 the ultimate authority, a loving God as He was expressed in a group  
22 conscience.

23           A few months later, that conscience was reflected in the group  
24 purpose of the region which, contrary to the committee's fears and far  
25 beyond their faith, made a large contribution to the WSC. Had the  
26 committee acted according to its self-righteous opinion and desire to  
27 govern rather than to serve, disguised as "group conscience," the  
28 donation still would have been sent to the WSC, but the discord and  
29 distrust it would have created would not have been worth the

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1 contribution. When group conscience was truly expressed, by allowing  
2 God to work through the committee, trust and unity were re-established  
3 within the area and regional membership.

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8 *This article was written by a member of the Board of Trustees, in*  
9 *November 1984. It represents views at the time of writing.*

10

11 Two of the most perplexing controversies experienced throughout  
12 the Fellowship are finding workable and comfortable interpretations of  
13 when a group conscience is appropriate and how much latitude a trusted  
14 servant should be allowed to exercise.

15 This article will hopefully provide some insight on these issues.  
16 Experience gained over the years can best be conveyed by using real  
17 examples and discussing the reasoning behind each action. The approach  
18 will be used to discuss the issues we are concerned about. Actions taken  
19 at the World Service Conference provide the basis for many of the  
20 controversies concerning group conscience and action by trusted servants.

21 Each year, for instance, the WSC Policy Committee has proposed  
22 revisions to the service structure. Nearly every page of these proposals  
23 is the subject of different regional group conscience votes which are  
24 frequently conflicting with one another. One region may send its RSR  
25 with instructions to amend a paragraph in a certain way, and another  
26 RSR arrives with different instructions for the same paragraph. Near  
27 unanimous endorsement may be found among the Conference  
28 participants for one or the other, and these are easily adopted. However,  
29 it obviously changes the document that all of the other regions considered

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1 and gave a group conscience on. If the Fellowship group conscience  
2 concept is carried to its fullest extent, as many demand, then the revised  
3 language should be sent back to the full Fellowship and final approval  
4 made in another year. However, at the next Conference, a new  
5 paragraph could certainly be changed and the process repeated year  
6 after year.

7 Sometimes this is done, but more frequently the Conference  
8 participants adopt the item without sending it out to the full Fellowship  
9 again. Usually the majority of the Conference participants leave feeling  
10 they have properly exercised their responsibilities as trusted servants on  
11 such issues. Many times this has been accepted by the Fellowship  
12 without comment.

13 For example, a proposal was made by one region at the  
14 Conference in 1982 that a Fellowship magazine be created by the  
15 Conference. This proposal had not been sent to the Fellowship for  
16 consideration. The Conference approved it, appointed a committee, and  
17 within a few months they began selling subscriptions and publishing  
18 issues. It was not until two years after the original action by the  
19 Conference that the Fellowship was afforded the opportunity to consider  
20 the issue, and then only on the matter of conflicting operational policies  
21 proposed by different service committees. One of the proposals was  
22 adopted, but it was amended prior to its adoption. Here again is the  
23 question of whether or not the Conference-adopted version, as amended,  
24 should then have been sent out to the Fellowship for a vote at the  
25 Conference the following year.

26 There was opposition to the original proposal; in fact, it was nearly  
27 defeated. But even many of those in opposition to the original approval  
28 felt that approval of the magazine would represent a proper exercise of  
29 the authorities of trusted servants at the world level. In the action to

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1 amend and then adopt the amended policy two years later it was also  
2 the consensus of the Conference participants that such action was within  
3 the scope of their responsibilities and authorities.

4 The world level trusted servants (WSC, WSB and WSO) have not  
5 received any written complaints concerning these major decisions on the  
6 magazine.

7 In a matter affecting the voting right of the WSO office manager  
8 as a Conference participant (the manager had been a voting participant  
9 of the Conference since 1979), it was proposed at the 1984 Conference to  
10 remove the manager's vote and transfer it to the President of the Board  
11 of Directors of the WSO. No advance notice was given to the Fellowship  
12 that this issue would be presented. It was adopted by a unanimous vote  
13 of all Conference participants and again the world level trusted servants  
14 (WSC, WSB and WSO) have not received a written complaint.

15 On the most persistently discussed issue at the Conference, the  
16 voting rights of non-RSR's, it has been sent to the Fellowship in advance  
17 of the Conference in two separate years. Additionally, the matter was  
18 raised at two other Conference meetings without advance notice. In all  
19 four instances, the vote of the Conference was to keep all voting  
20 participants as they are currently detailed in the service structure.

21 Following each of the four Conferences that this issue was voted  
22 on, the Board of Trustees received letters from a few individuals, a few  
23 area committees and one or two regions declaring either that the action  
24 was a violation of traditions or that all of the acts of the Conference are  
25 void because more than just the RSR's voted.

26 The Conference Administrative Committee in recent years has  
27 properly compiled with the requirements to send to the Fellowship all of  
28 the material proposed by the committees for adoption at the Conference.  
29 However, as these items are reviewed around the Fellowship, some

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1 regions approve instructions that their RSR is expected to carry to the  
2 Conference for a vote that did not go out for a Fellowship-wide group  
3 conscience. There seems to be four ways that the Fellowship is currently  
4 handling this circumstance:

5       1. The RSR attends the Conference with instructions to vote as  
6 they have been instructed, based on the group conscience of  
7 the region, and only on those things that have gone out to  
8 their members for review and for which a group conscience  
9 has been taken.

10  
11       2. The RSR attends the Conference with instructions to vote as  
12 they have been instructed, based on group conscience of the  
13 region for those items that they were given advance notice  
14 of and they are authorized to use their best judgment on  
15 other issues that may arise for which the region could not  
16 have obtained a group conscience.

17  
18       3. Other regions look at the enormous amount of material sent  
19 out for their consideration and decide that spending time  
20 discussing and then voting on every item by each group is  
21 not only a waste of time, but this is what the RSR was  
22 elected as a trusted servant to handle.

23  
24       4. An interesting variation of the first two options arise when  
25 the region instructs the RSR to introduce a certain item  
26 originated within their region for the Conference to adopt.

27  
28       Different RSR's have responded to these situations with varying  
29 degrees of consternation. At one Conference an RSR who had been

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1 specifically instructed, insisted on taking the time of the Conference to  
2 voice his objection to issues his region had not been advised of and  
3 insisted his vote be recorded as abstaining. Others with greater latitude  
4 were able to act on the variety of items as they were proposed or  
5 amended. The RSR with strict instructions was, in reality, unable to  
6 fully represent the membership that sent him because of the instructions  
7 limiting his participation. It has frequently been observed that regions  
8 using this approach could save the money of sending the RSR and simply  
9 send in their votes by mail.

10 The conflict between action by trusted servants and group  
11 conscience desires, is not limited to actions when the Conference is  
12 meeting each year.

13 Last year, for example, the WSC received a directive from one  
14 region regarding how the WSC should utilize the paper for the reports  
15 being distributed. The region had elected to inform the WSC that the  
16 group conscience of the region felt that the WSC should comply with  
17 their instructions. However, the officers of the Conference, while  
18 exercising their duties as trusted servants, should have been relied upon  
19 to use their prudent judgment in this matter. Further, if the WSC  
20 trusted servants had blatantly disregarded common sense on this matter,  
21 the RSR of the region should simply have, on his own, sent a letter  
22 bringing the matter to the attention of the Conference officers. The  
23 region should not have been bothered with such a trivial matter on  
24 which to develop a regional group conscience.

25 Another example of this conflict will be helpful in understanding  
26 how confusing the issue can get. One regional service committee, acting  
27 within what they thought was their authority as trusted servants,  
28 decided the region needed an office to serve the needs of their growing  
29 membership. A subcommittee was selected and after some consideration

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1 they rented a place and began operation of that office. There were some  
2 loud and angry opinions voiced that the committee did not have  
3 authority to open the office and had violated traditions by not asking  
4 permission from the Fellowship. In subsequent weeks, the desired  
5 regional group conscience was obtained supporting the decision. Some  
6 months later financial difficulties arose and the rent payments could not  
7 be met. The regional service committee met and concluded that they  
8 had been wrong for not having asked the Fellowship if they could open  
9 an office and reasoned that the Fellowship should be polled to get  
10 authority to close the office. This was eventually done, but not before  
11 additional months of rent had been accrued.

12 On an issue that is currently evolving, errors in grammar, use of  
13 tense, a suspected tradition violation and offensive language was  
14 discovered in three stories while proofreading was being done for  
15 publication of the Third Edition of the Basic Text. The Literature  
16 Committee requested a determination and recommendation from the  
17 Board of Trustees on each problem. The Board by unanimous vote  
18 recommended the Literature Committee make the appropriate grammar  
19 and punctuation changes and that the suspected tradition violation was  
20 not in fact a violation. The phrase "I urinated on Stalin's tomb" in the  
21 opinion of the WSB, was offensive and it was our recommendation that  
22 the phrase be removed. The phrase is a slang expression and is  
23 commonly used in the country the story originated in to denote contempt  
24 for everyone and everything. Its removal did not alter the meaning or  
25 message of the sentence of which it was part.

26 Many in the Fellowship will see this recommendation as the Board  
27 of Trustees simply performing their duties as trusted servants; others  
28 may see this as a violation of group conscience. At all levels of service,  
29 trusted servants have the same concerns with decisions they make

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1 because sometimes controversy erupts and calls go out for a group  
2 conscience. In other areas of the Fellowship, the membership often does  
3 not want to be involved and feel the trusted servants should in fact make  
4 many of these decisions and not bother them with every little thing that  
5 comes up. A commonly expressed feeling of those in service is simply,  
6 "damned if I do and damned if I don't."

7       The *Temporary Working Guide to Our Service Structure* allows for  
8 all the approaches we use. However, as long as one approach is held as  
9 superior and all others are held as violating the traditions, the situation  
10 becomes one of right and wrong, inferior and superior. "My way, my  
11 group's way, or my region's way is the only way and everyone else is in  
12 violation of Tradition Two" is divisive and an incorrect approach to a  
13 loving Fellowship.

14       There are times when individuals or groups of individuals on the  
15 using side of the vote of an issue strive to keep the issue on the front  
16 burner in the Fellowship by claiming violation of group conscience. The  
17 WSB, WSC and WSO each year receive a few letters accusing one, two  
18 or all three branches of world level service of violating Tradition Two, on  
19 one issue or another. This occurs, despite the fact that no group  
20 conscience was taken on the issues of their concern, and the person  
21 writing the letter is assuming what the group conscience of the  
22 Fellowship would be, if in fact it were taken.

23       A reasonable solution to the controversy revolving around  
24 Tradition Two lies in understanding and applying all the Traditions and  
25 guidance from our service structure. All levels of service need to operate  
26 within guidelines approved by their membership. It is neither feasible  
27 nor desirable that every decision made by trusted servants or committees  
28 be referred for group conscience, at the area, region or world level. If  
29 that was the desired course of action, groups would be spending all of

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1 their time making decisions, and there would be little need for trusted  
2 servants and little time to work on recovery or carrying the message of  
3 recovery to others.

4 As addicts, most of us enter the Program of Narcotics Anonymous  
5 with distrust and paranoia. As we progress in our recovery we should  
6 begin to develop trust in each other and ourselves and less and less feel  
7 that the world is out to get us. Some of that distrust and paranoia is  
8 evident when we find ourselves insisting that Tradition Two demands  
9 that everyone participate in every single decision made by every  
10 committee from all levels of service. If we still have the viewpoint that  
11 we must tell WSC how to use paper, or we must be there to approve or  
12 disapprove the removal of inconsequential but offensive slang from a  
13 story, or that an office should not be closed until a group conscience is  
14 obtained even though it is losing money, then we have not progressed in  
15 our recovery over the paranoia and distrust we came in with.

16 If we have the attitude that N.A. will go down the tubes if the  
17 entire Fellowship is not involved in one decision or another or if wrong  
18 decisions will be made unless we are involved in it, we are missing some  
19 important elements of our recovery. This attitude also reflects a lack of  
20 faith and confidence in our acceptance of a Higher Power. Narcotics  
21 Anonymous exists as much, if not more, because of a Higher Power,  
22 higher than the collective efforts of all the most enlightened trusted  
23 servants combined. We are going to make mistakes, of that there is no  
24 doubt. But as long as we are willing to make mistakes, be forgiven for  
25 them, and do so with a loving heart, our Fellowship will survive a lot of  
26 mistakes by trusted servants. Of course, there will arise some situations  
27 when a trusted servant is not being responsible to the members who  
28 selected them. If this situation does occur, then those members can  
29 direct the trusted servant to change whatever was done and if that fails,

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1 they have the final option of removing that person. There should be no  
2 service board or committee that does not have provisions for removal of a  
3 trusted servant who is not responsible to the Fellowship. However,  
4 removal must be sparingly used and only as a last resort.

5 We must, as members of the Fellowship, always communicate  
6 with our trusted servants, asking them for reports and information and  
7 sharing our opinions but we should give them trust and support to do  
8 their jobs. We need not constantly peer over their shoulders on every  
9 issue or they will not serve us well. If our paranoia and distrust  
10 overtakes our judgment, we frequently find ourselves concluding that  
11 mistakes will be made which we could prevent. But without the  
12 experience that trusted servants gain from doing their work, they will  
13 not grow in recovery and our Fellowship will be hurt and so will the  
14 addict who is still out on the streets using.

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16 Reprinted from: *Newsline* Vol. 1, No. 11

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**General Input**

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22 An ASC problem over who is right about how a fund-raiser is  
23 carried out. They were arguing over the idea of one person selling  
24 something, without using N.A.'s name, to the general public, and then  
25 giving the money to N.A.

26

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It was resolved to hold learning day and invite experienced  
trusted servants from outside the area. They appealed to their Higher  
Power and gathered all information and opinions. Then, each ASC

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1 member re-evaluated the situation based on the motivation involved to  
2 solicit money outside of the membership.

3 In the end, everyone decided to hold their fundraiser for N.A.  
4 members and not to solicit outside the membership. Also, it was made  
5 clear that all money was for N.A. in case non-members were involved by  
6 their own choice.

7 The understanding evolved that "we don't pick leaders to force  
8 their opinion," just to lead us all in gathering and evaluating. The  
9 ultimate authority wasn't left out or replaced.

10 This Tradition tells us how to go about finding direction in the  
11 task of fulfilling the needs of the Fellowship. It gives us a standard for  
12 selecting what is suitable for presenting N.A. and what is not. It is a  
13 means of determining if our service is "attraction, not promotion".

14 "In Narcotics Anonymous we are concerned with protecting  
15 ourselves, from ourselves. Our Second Tradition is an example of this.  
16 By nature we are strong willed, self centered people, thrust together in  
17 N.A. mismanagers all; not one of us is capable of making consistently  
18 good decisions". (Basic Text p. 58-59).

19 If we make an effort to adhere to the spirit and letter of this  
20 principle, we may avoid many of the pitfalls awaiting us in service work.  
21 The most successful way of carrying this out is by depending on group  
22 conscience, and minimizing group opinion. This can be done by  
23 maintaining an atmosphere of recovery in our committee meetings. If a  
24 decision is in keeping with our Traditions it is group conscience, if not, it  
25 is group opinion. "True spiritual principles are never in conflict; they  
26 complement each other". (Basic Text p.59).

27 The sub-committees that work within our service structure are  
28 more able to receive the guidance of our Ultimate Authority. They begin  
29 to realize the importance of communications. A sub-committee that

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1 reports to its area or regional committee, that makes an effort to keep  
2 the membership informed of its projects, and seeks the involvement of  
3 members in the groups it serves, will be developing a conscience among  
4 the membership being served, and will be functioning in the spirit of this  
5 Tradition. Awareness is the birthplace of willingness.

6 P.I. is an attractive place for our disease to function. Vigilance  
7 seems entirely necessary, and surrender is its key. We do not govern.  
8 Those of us given the opportunity to serve need always be reminded of  
9 this. We are given a trust through the voice of this principle. The  
10 practical way to honor it seems to be surrender to what the voice serves.  
11 Commitment to an N.A. program of recovery can eliminate most of the  
12 personality problems our disease brings with it, and surrender to group  
13 conscience can be a key to that commitment.

14

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16 This tradition is an example of us protecting ourselves from  
17 ourselves. Many of us are strong-willed, self centered mismanagers, used  
18 to controlling everyone and everything around us.

19 We learn to rely on God through this tradition, not personal  
20 opinion and ego. In the long run, the group conscience is wiser than any  
21 single leader. No one is capable of consistently making effective  
22 decisions.

23 The titles of our officers imply service, not control: secretary group  
24 service representative, not president or director.

25 We elect those who are willing to freely give of their time, effort  
26 and love, and for a definite term of office such as one year, six months,  
27 etc.

28 We must beware of "letting George do it". One person serving for  
29 as long as he is willing can create the feeling in him/her that she/he is

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1 indispensable. The dominance of any one personality is doomed to  
2 failure. Experience has shown that in the long run the group conscience  
3 is wiser than any single leader and that is why we arrive at decisions by  
4 majority vote.

5 Individuals speaking their opinions--even if they are in the  
6 minority--are necessary to the ultimate group conscience. It is only by  
7 seriously considering every aspect of a question that we can arrive at the  
8 best possible solution. Through the clash of opinions comes the spark of  
9 truth. This same principle can be applied to the sponsor/sponsee  
10 relationship--the sponsor gives direction based on his/her experience,  
11 points out the options, but does not give advice.

12 The progress of individuals and N.A. as a whole can be  
13 endangered when a member forgets that God is in charge. No one  
14 speaks for God. He speaks to us through the group conscience.

15 \*\*\*\*\*

16 A member claims trusted servants don't get clear guidelines, do  
17 get mixed messages, etc. Should they receive guidelines? Should I get  
18 into the whole issue of trusted servants functions?

19 The service structure is a system of defined relationships which  
20 allow our trusted servants to function without fear of self-will.  
21 Guidelines are developed to give the members doing the service a clear  
22 plan of action, complete with procedures for elections and various other  
23 routine committee functions. It is hard for me to understand what is  
24 meant by "mixed message" in this context. More often, problems do  
25 occur where members are active beyond their proper committee functions  
26 or in fact have a "mixed message" problem in their personal programs  
27 which is reflected in their experience of N.A. service. Another problem  
28 which comes up with some frequency is to give any "guidelines"  
29 established for their committee a token acknowledgement as long as the

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1 guides don't restrict their frame of action. Where restriction occurs,  
2 many members in service have made the mistake of changing their  
3 guidelines to suit themselves which can become very personal. When  
4 egos flame, anonymity goes out the window.

5 The second idea is that the guidelines of a committee serve to help  
6 members new to the committee understand their relative roles and  
7 functions. This is important for the surrendered member in service to  
8 feel the coherence and "structure" which allows them to play effective,  
9 useful roles without stepping on the toes of other committees or  
10 committee members.

11 As a practical matter we have found that while we need some  
12 structure, it is more important to have a group of members actively and  
13 happily doing their service work than to emphasize guidelines to the  
14 point where they take precedence over good sense.

15 This has occurred repeatedly in our history, especially in young  
16 communities which don't have experienced members with long clean time  
17 to settle disputes and bring common sense, humor and a sense of fair  
18 play to the structure. The problem seems to be that we addicts will  
19 allow ourselves to get caught up in rule breaking and forget what we  
20 have been entrusted to do.

21 The question, "Should they receive guidelines?" is poorly stated.  
22 New committees within our structure established their guides as a  
23 matter of course based on what members present knew and what can be  
24 found in our written service guides. New service manuals for  
25 subcommittee specialties like P.I. and H&I have the effect of helping  
26 these new committees form guides which reflect a general continuity  
27 which used to be impossible. This process is likely to continue to  
28 stabilize as time goes on. Existing committees need to employ existing  
29 guidelines unless change is required as a result of increased awareness or

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1 growth of the Fellowship served. The thrill of service is in the doing not  
2 the talking. It is easy for us to get side-tracked.

3 Trusted servants' functions need to be addressed in the material  
4 on the Second Tradition to clarify the difference between governors and  
5 "leaders". We serve by right of the emotional and financial support we  
6 receive from other members who support what we are doing. It may be  
7 very helpful to get into the exact ways in which a competent secretary  
8 can improve a service committee. The important functions a Vice Chair  
9 can play in assisting subcommittees which need additional support under  
10 a new chair or during a period of growth or change. Treasurers who  
11 follow the sound procedures from our new Treasurer's Handbook not only  
12 provide accountability but give our service efforts a propriety and  
13 stability which can not otherwise exist. They also set good examples.  
14 Chairs who have the ability to communicate, listen as well as express  
15 themselves clearly, and set a good tone are probably essential to a good  
16 service committee. While this fact may emphasize the personality of the  
17 chair, it is really their ability to do the job that counts. Functions such as  
18 getting out agendas and minutes on schedule are essential to attracting  
19 members serious about service. These materials help our committees  
20 gain a (collective vision) that help members work together for common  
21 goals. They also may be relied on to keep the pace of committee meeting  
22 moving so that there is no sense of time being wasted. Generalizing  
23 about these matters has not worked out too well...

24  
25 \*\*\*\*\*

26 As addicts, our conscience is motivated by fear and guilt.  
27 "Getting caught" and the pain resulting from it was the reasoning most  
28 of us applied in deciding what was right or wrong before the Twelve  
29 Steps became a reality in our lives. Our group conscience is, according to

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1 the Second tradition, motivated by a loving God. When we surrender to  
2 group conscience, we allow our lives to be shaped by a loving God.  
3 Surrendering to group conscience means much more than accepting a  
4 decision that didn't go "our way" at a group or service committee  
5 business meeting. It means that we can take any problem or question  
6 we have with our recovery to other addicts practicing these same  
7 principles, share it with them, and receive the hope and guidance we  
8 need to make a change for the better. When we share a problem with  
9 our home group it is seldom one person's feedback that provides the  
10 answers we need. More often it seems that we leave the meeting with a  
11 better knowledge and conviction of what we need to do. This is one of  
12 the ways that group conscience works and how a loving God speaks  
13 through it.

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- 1    **IV.    Membership.**
- 2           **A.    What is it (What does it mean)?(NA membership vs. group**
- 3                   **membership, committee membership)**
- 4           **B.    Responsibilites and privieges.**
- 5           **C.    It's not automatic (we don't feel a part of if we're still using;**
- 6                   **we only exclude those who exclude themselves).**
- 7                    1.    **Intolerance and prejudice.**
- 8                    2.    **Using membership as a justification for poor**
- 9                           **behaviour.**
- 10   **V.    Special needs (common purpose) groups/meetings.**
- 11   **VI.   Application of Tradition 3 to members, groups and NA as a**
- 12           **whole.**
- 13   **VII. Conclusion and lead in to Tradition 4.**
- 14



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1 human condition are totally irrelevant to drug addiction and recovery  
2 from this disease. We need to remember that if we had been barred  
3 from N.A.'s doors, we might well have died.

4 We are made up of all different kinds of people. Anyone may be a  
5 member, no matter what background, if they have a desire to stop using.  
6 No matter what drug you used, if you have a desire to stop, and you  
7 want to be a member, then you are a member. This gives us the choice  
8 of allowing ourselves and others the right to remain here. No one knows  
9 the dark and lonely path we have walked; yet we all share what we find  
10 here through this tradition.

11 At first it may be difficult for some of us to relate to people who  
12 used differently than we did, but we are told to, "Look for the  
13 similarities rather than the differences." If we keep an open mind, we  
14 see that the feelings we experienced while using, and in our recovery, are  
15 very much the same. We have no right to judge someone else's right to  
16 membership.

17 Some members of our Fellowship have been able to see and face  
18 their own addiction only after seeking help for the sake of a spouse, child  
19 or other loved one. Whatever road we took to find our way to N.A., we  
20 came to believe that it was our own personal Higher Power who  
21 ultimately got us here. The saying is: "No one comes through these  
22 doors by mistake." We are welcomed into the Fellowship of Narcotics  
23 Anonymous simply because we have a desire to stop using. Many of us  
24 did not desire to stop using at first, but by attending meetings our  
25 outlook changed, and we gained a desire to stop using.

26 No one asks for our credentials. We paid our dues "out there," but  
27 that is our business, and we don't have to prove it. Many of us lost our  
28 jobs, homes, cars, families, etc. Many of us wondered if this was the  
29 right place for us. Did we use enough drugs? Would we be accepted if

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1 we only smoked pot or took prescription pills or drank alcohol? Do we  
2 have to have a police record or a litany of trips to mental institutions?  
3 These questions were quickly answered through the love and acceptance  
4 of the Fellowship. When this tradition registers in our brains, it gives us  
5 the freedom to belong and stay if we choose to. We are all in the  
6 meeting for the same reason: We don't want to use drugs any more, and  
7 we need help in living clean.

8       Narcotics Anonymous "is a program of complete abstinence from  
9 all drugs." Even so, our doors remain open to those addicts still clinging  
10 to forms of denial. These may include our brothers and sisters who, for  
11 instance, stop shooting narcotics, but hold to the use of other mind-  
12 altering chemicals in a last-ditch effort to keep getting high. There are  
13 some, too, who use over and over again. They, too, may recover--if they  
14 come back before completing the self-destruction which is the essence of  
15 active addiction. No one can be kicked out of our Fellowship. If we  
16 closed our doors to those who weren't able yet to stay clean or may not  
17 be ready, we would be aiding in their death by preventing their recovery.  
18 As long as they bring no drugs or paraphernalia into meetings, all  
19 addicts are welcome.

20       While we may get frustrated with perpetual newcomers, we must  
21 first thank the God of our understanding that our own  
22 obsession/compulsion to use has been arrested just for today, and then  
23 quickly remind ourselves that the only requirement for N.A. membership  
24 is a desire to stop using.

25       Desire is not a thinking process, but rather a feeling process which  
26 requires fulfillment of its own. It is not a want or a need; it is a longing.  
27 Almost everyone has felt a longing for something or someone in his/her  
28 life. While many of us have felt a desperate need to belong, our lack of  
29 self-worth and fear of failure usually prevented us from risking

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1 involvement. But even when we didn't think we could meet the  
2 demands of a gang or other groups, we found that we could live up to  
3 N.A.'s simple membership requirement: a desire to stop using.

4       When we first arrived at Narcotics Anonymous, most of us knew  
5 that we were sick and had to do something different. We were lonely;  
6 we had no self-worth and knew nothing of being clean. All we knew was  
7 that we needed help and had nowhere else to go. Most of us had already  
8 tried everything else. When we first heard Tradition Three, it brought  
9 relief. We didn't know what would be expected of us nor what we would  
10 have to do to achieve happiness. Truthfully, many of us did not want to  
11 stop using drugs; addiction was all we knew. It is not required to be  
12 clean to attend N.A. meetings, but it is strongly suggested. We found  
13 that all we needed to keep coming back was a desire to stop using. Some  
14 of us didn't think drugs were our problem anyway. We had tried to  
15 blame our using on life's situations, but we soon found that this was not  
16 the case. In our hearts, we eventually realized that drugs just didn't  
17 work anymore.

18       Our desires may be obscure and buried deep beneath our defenses  
19 and fears, but the longer we stay clean, the more intense our desire for  
20 recovery becomes. We choose the N.A. Program as our philosophy for  
21 life because it shows us, one day at a time, how to live in this world  
22 without using or abusing ourselves or others.

23       Most of us come to N.A. to escape the suffering of active addiction.  
24 We stay to experience the joy of living. We pray that the doors of  
25 Narcotics Anonymous will remain open to anyone and everyone who  
26 stumbles in. Our primary concern is that newcomers have a safe haven  
27 to come to, and that they find recovery through the Twelve Steps and  
28 Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous.

29



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1 direction of sanity, but desire is the thought that's father to the action.  
2 Actually not using is the action.

3 Many different paths brought us to N.A.'s doors, and the strength  
4 of our desire to stop using varied from person to person. Some of us  
5 were sick, broke and beaten down. We were desperate. N.A. seemed  
6 like our last hope for sanity and survival. Fearful and trembling we  
7 knew, however dimly, that it was N.A. or death--and we weren't  
8 prepared to die.

9 Some others of us would, if pressed to the wall, admit that maybe  
10 we weren't functioning well. But we were a long way from admitting  
11 that drugs were a life-and-death issue. If we were asked why we came  
12 to N.A., we'd say something like, "I came out of curiosity," or "So my  
13 family would shut up." One now-dedicated N.A. member first attended  
14 meetings because of something less than what he later called "genuine  
15 desire." Initially he came to meetings because his wife was becoming  
16 more and more upset about his using. She insisted that he had to do  
17 something, and he came, as he said, "to get her off my back." Then he  
18 came to meetings because he was curious about all these people who had  
19 horrible drug stories to tell. Later he came because he thought, "I don't  
20 like what I've got, I'd better try something else." Finally he came  
21 because this low-key desire grew stronger; he liked that "something else"  
22 and wanted more of it.

23 Some of us first came to N.A. not only denying we were drug  
24 addicts powerless over our addiction, we also put up a good front denying  
25 N.A. really had anything to offer us. One such member had a longing  
26 for the blessings that recovering addicts had, but he couldn't believe their  
27 blessings had anything to do with being clean. He saw how they smiled  
28 and seemed happy--saw that good things were happening to them. But  
29 for some time he needed to believe that the N.A. Program was a phony.

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1 He was convinced that members were really using but pretending not to.  
2 It was only when the longing for something better in his own life was  
3 strong enough that he finally had to admit the N.A. Program of recovery  
4 was no hoax.

5 There were countless ways we could pretend N.A. wasn't really for  
6 us or we for it. A woman who had used an enormous quantity of drugs  
7 over the years listened to other members sharing their recovery  
8 experiences and went away from her first N.A. meeting thinking,  
9 "Maybe I haven't used enough to qualify." When she heard about a  
10 drug she hadn't used, she thought, "Maybe I'm not really an addict  
11 because I haven't used that one." When she heard a member talk about  
12 having been in prison, she thought, "Maybe I don't belong here because I  
13 haven't been locked up."

14 Another member told herself she wasn't really the N.A. type  
15 because she was so bad, so helpless and hopeless, the program probably  
16 wouldn't work for her. A third went out and used a drug she first heard  
17 about in N.A.; her excuse was, "It will help me qualify for membership."  
18 But it was really just an excuse to use again. Later, when she really  
19 wanted to recover, she realized that the desire to stop using was the only  
20 ticket she needed for admission to N.A.

21 Some of us came to N.A. convinced we wouldn't be accepted  
22 because we were so unacceptable as persons. We were bitter, self-  
23 hating, self-rejecting to an extreme. Because we'd been rejected so often  
24 in the outside world, we figured the same thing would happen in N.A.  
25 So we took the attitude, "I'll reject you before you reject me," and  
26 showed ourselves at our defensive, defiant, hostile worst. Maybe we  
27 were subconsciously hoping to be kicked out if we made ourselves nasty  
28 enough. But Tradition Three says nothing about having to measure up  
29 to certain positive character traits as a qualification for membership.

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1 Confronting and dealing with our character defects is an integral part of  
2 the program itself. So, in most instances, the groups we were in waited  
3 for us to cool down and accept the gift of caring which they offered us.  
4 We were accepted because we were suffering addicts having the desire to  
5 stop using, nothing more.

6 Then there were those of us who first stepped into an N.A.  
7 meeting because we'd gotten into trouble with the law, and the judge or  
8 probation officer or somebody else with legal power over us had said,  
9 "Either attend N.A. meetings or go to jail." Who wouldn't rather be in  
10 N.A. than in jail? Many of us with such court orders had the naive  
11 notion that N.A. could teach us to use drugs in a way that wouldn't get  
12 us into trouble. But even when we were quickly disabused of that notion  
13 we stayed. Was it because we didn't want to chance violating the court  
14 order or was something else making us come back week after week?

15 The point is that if someone doesn't have the desire to stop, not  
16 even the threat of being locked up is going to have any effect. On the  
17 other hand, court-order members who show up at N.A. meetings  
18 regularly may insist, "I'm only here because I don't want to go to jail."  
19 And in part that may be true--but only in part. Nobody has a gun to our  
20 heads and is marching us to meetings. In fact, some addicts with court  
21 orders don't stay. We're not ready for the kind of searching self-  
22 confrontation the program requires. We don't want to struggle with the  
23 Twelve Steps, the Traditions, the literature and the rest of the program.  
24 Our desire still isn't strong enough and we decide, "It's easier to go do  
25 time, nobody bothers you, you get three hots and a cot and when your  
26 time is up it's over." Those of us who do keep coming back to N.A. have  
27 made the choice to do so, and in the end it doesn't really have much to  
28 do with legal requirements or the threat of jail. Though it may take us

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1 some time to admit it, we want something better for ourselves than we  
2 have.

3 In N.A. we see that the strength of a person's desire to stop using  
4 doesn't necessarily have a direct connection with his outside  
5 circumstances. An addict may be sick, homeless, desperate--yet run  
6 away in panic after a meeting or two, still more attached to addiction  
7 than to survival. We can be in the hands of psychiatrists, drug  
8 counselors, ministers, judges, jailers--we can be prayed over, or  
9 abandoned by everyone who cared about us--but the desire to stop using  
10 won't be there strongly until the pain of our existence forces us to do so.

11 On the other hand, the desire to stop using can be stronger than  
12 we first realize. It can be quickened into life when we see a collection of  
13 recovering addicts. They had been just like us. They had used. They  
14 had made a mess of their lives. They had been steeped in misery--but no  
15 longer. They are now clean. Now they hold on to jobs. Now they have  
16 real friendships, loving relationships. Now they don't rush out to use  
17 pills or pot or coke or heroin every time something bad--or good--happens  
18 to them. They don't rush out for a fix, period. That's powerful stuff, if  
19 we let it be--a tremendous impetus to change.

20 A Narcotics Anonymous slogan goes, "You're a member when you  
21 say you are." Some of us laughed when we first heard that slogan. It  
22 sounded so easy. We thought: Okay, then you can shoot up and still be  
23 a member of N.A. because you say you are. You can pop pills and still  
24 be a member because you say you are. You can get stoned out of this  
25 world and still be a member because you say you are. Easy? Ridiculous!

26 When we gave the matter a little more thought, though, we  
27 realized that it wasn't ridiculous at all. Sure, anybody can say they're a  
28 member of N.A. as long as they say they have the desire. That's what  
29 the Third Tradition says and it's all to the good because it emphasizes

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1 how open N.A.'s doors are to any addict who wants to enter. But just  
2 saying, "I'm a member" isn't all there is to it. Membership isn't  
3 automatic. We can be members in name only--while we keep on using,  
4 fail to work the steps, read the literature or carry the message of  
5 recovery to other addicts. But it's like holding a boarding pass to a ship  
6 that's going on a wonderful cruise and saying, "I'm a passenger"--  
7 meanwhile staying on the dock, watching that ship sail off into the  
8 sunset.

9       Only we can make ourselves true members by what we do or don't  
10 do. The God of our understanding might have led us to N.A., but it  
11 becomes our responsibility, with His help, to go on from there. To show  
12 up at meetings regularly. To read the literature. To reach out and ask  
13 for help, even though we might be scared to death of doing so. To ask  
14 questions. One woman, in N.A. for three months, kept telling her  
15 sponsor, "I say I'm a member, but so what? People at meetings are nice  
16 to me, but I just don't feel like I belong." Her sponsor replied, "You  
17 don't feel you're a member, but the fact is, your desire to stop using is  
18 your membership card. You're going to have a good membership card or  
19 a bad membership card. You fill it in yourself, you know.

20       Thinking about what her sponsor had said, she realized how  
21 superficial her involvement in N.A. had been. Even going through the  
22 steps had been a mechanical process with her. Only then, with the help  
23 of lots of prayer and meditation, did she put some meaning into being a  
24 member.

25       Many of us have had a similar experience--at first we were pretty  
26 superficial in the way we worked the program. It was more on the order  
27 of once over lightly. Later we became more involved and committed--and  
28 that's when we really began to get something solid out of our  
29 membership in N.A.

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1           Many of us were still using when we first came to N.A. and some  
2 of us kept on using--steadily or intermittently--for a while. Every time  
3 we stopped we'd say, "Now I'm cured," ease up on the program, and  
4 relapse. Some of us fooled ourselves another way. We'd quit using one  
5 drug but start using another, telling ourselves this other one wasn't half  
6 as bad. But the use of any mood-altering drug is simply another last-  
7 ditch effort to keep getting loaded. Clean addicts encouraged us to come  
8 to meetings anyway, but they made it clear that complete abstinence  
9 from all drugs was the only thing that ever worked for them.

10           Not all newcomers who find it so hard to stop using or stay clean  
11 get the caring and concern they need. Some groups are impatient with  
12 these addicts--they ignore them, make them feel unwelcome or actually  
13 ask them to leave. We tend to react so negatively to somebody else's  
14 difficulty with abstinence when we ourselves aren't far enough along in  
15 our own recovery. We haven't shed our judgmental nature, that all-too-  
16 common facet of our disease. We still feel threatened by anyone who  
17 can't stop using because it reminds us of our own strong vulnerability to  
18 drugs.

19           Neglecting newcomers or treating them inhospitably is, however,  
20 definitely hazardous to their health and welfare. As individuals and as  
21 groups we must always reach out to addicts who come to us for help--  
22 make them feel welcome and wanted. Anything less is a violation of our  
23 traditions and reflects badly on the spiritual maturity of the groups  
24 involved.

25           Tradition Three is very clear about the fact that only the desire to  
26 quit need be there, that no one can be kicked out of our Fellowship for  
27 using. If we closed our doors to those who weren't yet ready to be clean  
28 we'd be putting their survival at risk by denying them the chance to  
29 recover. We'd be putting our survival at risk, as well, and jeopardize

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1 N.A.'s reason for being. Newcomers are the lifeblood of our Fellowship.  
2 As long as they bring no drugs or paraphernalia into meetings, the Third  
3 Tradition says, all addicts are welcome. Ours is an equal-opportunity  
4 program: everybody has an equal chance at recovery; it's up to us to  
5 take advantage of that chance. In this spirit, remarkable things can  
6 happen. It took one member over a decade to stop using drugs and stay  
7 clean; he kept coming back and the groups to which he returned  
8 continued to root for him. A decade is a long time, but the point is that  
9 finally he did make it. You never know.

10 When an addict attends a meeting while high, that's another  
11 matter. That's a delicate situation, yet it can be worked out within the  
12 boundaries of good sense and in the spirit of the tradition. Only if  
13 someone is truly disruptive, actually interfering with the atmosphere of  
14 recovery, should he be asked to leave. Groups have handled members in  
15 a variety of successful ways, depending on the circumstances. For  
16 instance, loaded persons have been asked to sit quietly and just listen, or  
17 have been taken out for coffee. When an addict insists on sharing while  
18 under the influence of drugs, the other members in the room may not  
19 have a choice but to let him talk--recognizing, however, that his message  
20 is one of pain and suffering, not hope and recovery.

21 While we may get frustrated with addicts who come in high or are  
22 perpetual newcomers, we can best deal with that frustration by thanking  
23 our Higher Power that our own obsession/compulsion to use has been  
24 blocked just for today. It also helps to remind ourselves how important  
25 our own sense of belonging, which we developed in our N.A. groups, was  
26 to our recovery. The most constructive thing we can do is to extend  
27 loving acceptance to those who come to us for help, no matter how  
28 difficult that occasionally is.

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1           Being accepting can be very difficult for us until we've been in the  
2 Fellowship for a long time. As far as the Third Tradition is concerned,  
3 though, all suffering addicts are welcome to join. For this reason, N.A.  
4 requires no fees or dues for membership. Though a basket is always  
5 passed around at meetings, to defray expenses and carry the message of  
6 recovery to addicts "out there," nobody has to put any money in. If  
7 some members are so broke today they can't contribute anything--well,  
8 maybe next time they can.

9           That no terms and conditions are placed on membership  
10 guarantees newcomers will not be excluded because of the prejudices of  
11 established members. It prevents members and groups of members from  
12 labelling anyone as "undesirable" because of race, creed, handicap,  
13 economic status, sexual orientation, religion, national origin or anything  
14 else. This open door policy is what our spiritual program is all about--  
15 helping all addicts no matter who, what or where they are. In its best it  
16 weaves an atmosphere of concern and caring that makes newcomers feel  
17 accepted--"at home."

18           Yet it's also true that our groups aren't always as loving or caring  
19 as they might be. Groups are made up of individuals, after all, and on  
20 the whole individual N.A. members may not be more or less prejudiced  
21 than non-addicts, but not a one of us came into N.A. prejudice-free. Not  
22 one of us came in feeling so good about ourselves we didn't badly need  
23 somebody to feel superior to. When we were using, many of us felt  
24 superior to non-users, the ones we derisively called the "straights."  
25 When we came into N.A. and were in the midst of recovering addicts, we  
26 needed other immediate targets we could slight or mock.

27           If there wasn't anything else we could think of, and we felt  
28 worthless enough, we could always feel superior to newcomers and other  
29 N.A. members who hadn't used the way we had. We could set up a

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1 "ladder of success" at the top of which were the "baddest" addicts--our  
2 kind. We could pride ourselves on having used the harshest drugs, done  
3 the meanest things, been in the roughest prisons.

4 This attitude, "If you aren't a real dope fiend like me you don't  
5 belong," clearly conflicts with both the spirit and substance of Tradition  
6 Three. Ours is an all-embracing program. It doesn't require us to use  
7 any specific type of drug in order to qualify for membership. It doesn't  
8 specify how awful our life had to be. It doesn't offer any guidelines  
9 about what we should or shouldn't have left in the way of worldly  
10 possessions. All it asks of us is to have the desire to stop using.

11 In one way or another, all of us addicts have suffered. We've all  
12 walked down dark and lonely paths. We've all amply paid our dues  
13 while using and we don't have to prove to anyone what miseries we've  
14 seen. Every addict who found recovery because of our program might  
15 have died if N.A.'s doors had been barred to him.

16 Prejudice, snobbishness and smugness are some of the ways our  
17 addiction talks to us. As we turn to God for help in raising our self-  
18 esteem and removing our character defects, as we begin to feel better  
19 about ourselves, we change. The need to feel superior at somebody's  
20 expense becomes less and less urgent. The need to hate others because  
21 we hate ourselves so much wanes. We become more compassionate. We  
22 come to see more clearly the bonds we share with others. All of us  
23 having suffered from the disease of addiction, we can find ourselves in all  
24 our members. Thus, our sense of humanity expands. Our disease is the  
25 common denominator; we can find ourselves in all our members.

26 Tradition Three clearly says that our doors are open to everyone  
27 who has "a desire to stop using." At times this has been misinterpreted.  
28 The desire to stop using what? Some people show up at N.A. meetings  
29 when their problem is addiction to food. Some people show up who don't

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1 use drugs but can't stop playing cards or roulette or something else for  
2 money--they're compulsive gamblers. Some people, aware that N.A. is a  
3 Twelve Step Program, have assumed it could help them solve serious  
4 personal problems or emotional illness.

5 The compulsion to use obviously isn't confined to drugs. There are  
6 suffering addicts of all types in the world, all powerless over their  
7 addictions. But no Twelve Step Program, no matter how effective, can  
8 be all things to all people. Though Tradition Three doesn't go on to say  
9 membership is open to all who use drugs, our name makes this very  
10 clear. God led us to found an organization that would help addicts  
11 recover from mind-altering drugs. If our spiritual message of recovery  
12 were to include addicts who eat or gamble addictively, that message  
13 would be diluted, quite possibly beyond any effectiveness. We would lose  
14 our thrust, our focus. And newcomers with drug problems could easily  
15 feel that they were in the wrong place if, for example, they heard long  
16 discussions by people who need to binge on ice cream. No addiction is  
17 trivial, but God has directed our particular program to deal with drugs.

18 Some of us already belonged to another Twelve Step Program  
19 when we came to N.A. We, too, were welcomed. All that was asked of  
20 us was that at N.A. meetings we confine our discussions to the N.A.  
21 meeting. Narcotics Anonymous welcomes all addicts, those who belong  
22 to other Twelve Step groups as well as those who don't. Membership in  
23 another Twelve Step group doesn't violate our traditions or do harm to  
24 our spiritual program, as long as N.A. meetings are strictly limited to  
25 N.A. matters. However, some of us who do belong to N.A. groups bring  
26 to N.A. the notion of "dual addiction" or "cross addiction." We quickly  
27 learn that the concepts of dual and cross addiction are definitely not in  
28 accord with N.A.'s philosophy and program. In N.A. we don't  
29 differentiate between drugs or addictions. For us, addiction is the

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1 disease, addiction no matter what form it takes is the bottom line. We  
2 may use more than one drug, we may express our addiction in more than  
3 one way. But we don't think of ourselves as dual or cross-addicts--we  
4 identify ourselves as addicts, period.

5 A number of us with drug problems also came to N.A. bearing  
6 labels pinned on us by psychiatrists and other mental health  
7 professionals from institutions and treatment centers. We might have  
8 been diagnosed as neurotic or psychotic or perhaps been given a more  
9 specific clinical name. Though such labels may not always be helpful or  
10 accurate, the drugs we took and the addictive lives we led were  
11 undeniably damaging to our emotional stability. In N.A. we found that  
12 once we stopped using and began to develop spiritually we could lead the  
13 stable lives we found it impossible to live while under the power of the  
14 drugs. Often, then, we no longer thought or acted in the ways that  
15 brought on those psychiatric labels. But of course that's not the same  
16 thing as saying N.A. can cure psychiatric problems. It can't. N.A.'s sole  
17 function is to carry the message of recovery to drug addicts.

18 After we've been in the Fellowship for a time, most of us realize  
19 that our initial contact with N.A. was neither accidental nor coincidental.  
20 Our God, our Higher Power--whatever we choose to call this Power  
21 greater than ourselves--brought us to N.A.'s doors. In most instances we  
22 found those doors open--but no one forced us to enter. Once we entered,  
23 no one forced us to stay. Once we were settled in, no one forced us to  
24 work the program meaningfully. Once we began to work the program  
25 seriously, no one forced us to recover at a set pace or schedule.

26 The Third Tradition places the responsibility for recovery squarely  
27 with us. We can choose to be members or not. We can choose to be  
28 involved members or not. We can come freely and openly to an N.A.  
29 meeting--and if we wish to leave, do so just as freely. In not setting up

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1 membership requirements, our Fellowship declares that every addict has  
2 the right to recover--that nothing should stand in the way if the desire is  
3 there.

4       The Third Tradition enables us who are addicts to see that  
5 recovery is no pipedream and that life without drugs is better than we  
6 could have imagined. Yet though Narcotics Anonymous has no formal  
7 membership requirements beyond a desire to stop using, the Third  
8 Tradition offers us a wonderful opportunity. It's the opportunity to give  
9 back that which is being given to us. To help other addicts as other  
10 addicts have helped us. Many of us, having had a long history of simply  
11 taking, find that being able to give in return is more than an  
12 opportunity--it's a privilege.

13       In fact, the meaning the Third Tradition has for us deepens the  
14 longer we stay clean. We see ever more clearly that there's a big  
15 difference between being an addict in N.A. and fully being an N.A.  
16 member. Membership in the fullest sense of the word does have its  
17 obligations and responsibilities--and we welcome them.

18

19

20

Newline Articles

21

22       *This article was written by a member of the Board of Trustees in*  
23 *1984. It represents views at the time of writing.*

24

25       Tradition interpretation is probably not something the average  
26 member gives much thought to. However, to ensure the continuation  
27 and growth of Narcotics Anonymous, effort must be made by groups and  
28 individual members to understand and practice the Traditions. The N.A.  
29 program is still in maintenance of the Traditions to ensure our survival.

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1           Implementation of the Traditions affects every individual seeking  
2 recovery. It is therefore very important for the newcomer to understand  
3 that all one needs is a desire to stop using drugs, as they come to their  
4 first meeting. After they have accepted this fact and begin to practice it,  
5 they can consider themselves members of Narcotics Anonymous. At  
6 their first meetings they will meet people from all walks of life who were  
7 as hopelessly addicted to drugs as they were.

8           Confusion can easily be caused in a newcomer's thinking and  
9 understanding of the N.A. Program, if the group is not properly versed  
10 in the Twelve Steps and Traditions themselves. The group's  
11 responsibility is to provide the necessary atmosphere for recovery.  
12 Stable meetings with a single purpose coupled with an understanding of  
13 N.A. Traditions and led by people who are recovering addicts are the  
14 best ways to fulfill that responsibility.

15           Care must be shown so as not to dilute the understanding of the  
16 Traditions by trying to have N.A. be all things to all people. We can be  
17 grateful to A.A. as the grandfather of all Twelve Step programs and we  
18 can provide guidance to those from other programs such as O.A., G.A.,  
19 and others. But N.A. is not a warehouse for members of other programs.  
20 People from these other programs can certainly learn from N.A. as we  
21 learned from A.A., but their participation should not include involvement  
22 in the decisions made by an N.A. group, nor should those individuals  
23 serve as officers of groups or special service committees.

24           It must be remembered that Tradition Three speaks of a desire to  
25 stop using, which for N.A. has a parenthetical phrase immediately  
26 following which would correctly say, "drugs and narcotics." The phrase  
27 should not be interpreted as including other problems such as gambling,  
28 overeating, or other such matters.



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1 and their own recovery program. Appearances have made this lesson  
2 difficult but time speaks in its own way and teaches us that the best we  
3 can hope to be is instruments of our own Higher Powers. There is a  
4 mysterious side to service.

5 It is hard to say exactly where the mundane leaves off and the  
6 miracle begins. Evidence that some miraculous Power is at work is best  
7 seen from afar sometimes... Still, members can feel its presence or  
8 absence. Appearances cannot explain the recovery of even one of our  
9 members, much less the hundreds of thousands. We all had pain and  
10 problems and lots of reasons to quit using before N.A. but we could not  
11 stop and somehow, now, we can.

12 In doing service, we have to have some prior knowledge of these  
13 things or we will think of ourselves as the CHAIR of all these members,  
14 their pitiful lives in our hands. That is patently NOT SO.

15 The ability to respond to the duties of a service position without  
16 getting caught up in and distracted by the way others see us or treat us  
17 is the real reason for the clean time requirements. When all else is said  
18 and done, can we show up for the committee meetings? Can we get the  
19 agendas and minutes out on time? Can we help others who might be  
20 having some problems doing their part without forgetting totally our  
21 own? Can we do our part as trusted servants without getting  
22 sanctimonious, critical of others or self righteous?

23 Without discounting any of the foregoing, experience with our  
24 Twelve Steps is included for an obvious reason along with statements  
25 regarding our Traditions and our clean time. They all go together and  
26 we experience them simultaneously. As far as `Knowledge of the  
27 Twelve Steps' goes, can we be expected to serve the needs of others if we  
28 haven't gotten comfortable with our surrender to our disease? Can we  
29 serve without the faith it takes to work out our Third Step and let the

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1 God of our understanding take care of our lives? Can we serve with our  
2 character defects intact? Can we serve without the ability to admit error  
3 where we have wronged someone? The answer to all these questions is  
4 NO. Now, reality has extended itself in our favor enough for meetings to  
5 get started and addicts to get clean in even the smaller towns where we  
6 know there has been little if any ongoing recovery. We also know that  
7 these types of meetings have consistently died out. Sometimes literally,  
8 until our literature efforts had produced our Basic Text, Narcotics  
9 Anonymous.

10 This Tradition says anyone who has the desire to stop using is a  
11 member -- yet also says membership is not automatic simply because  
12 someone walks in the N.A. door. Can someone who still uses be an N.A.  
13 member?

14 The meaning of this is simply that it is our giving evidence of our  
15 desire for recovery which makes us accepted as members by the N.A.  
16 Fellowship. This begins inwardly when the desire to quit using begins in  
17 some terrible moment when we realize that the drugs are using us and  
18 we can for the first time feel our disease robbing us of our lives. The  
19 process continues when we walk through the N.A. doors and find other  
20 addicts like ourselves who have the desire to live clean. We are still a  
21 long way from real recovery. We listen, we share and we learn that  
22 living clean is possible and that the program might work for us. We see  
23 others relapse and yet we are clean. We realize gradually that we will  
24 continue in recovery if we just keep doing what works for us.

25 `Membership' is the recognition of our desire for recovery among  
26 those who are already our members. We have seen those who are  
27 obviously `qualified' for N.A. membership in terms of their using, but  
28 their lack of desire keeps them from putting their recovery first and they  
29 get loaded. Many of those among us today have had to go through

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1 prolonged periods of relapsing before their desire became stronger than  
2 their disease. This is the price many of us have had to pay.

3 If this sounds judgmental on the part of our members, it is not. It  
4 is something of the heart. The language imposes limitations not of our  
5 making. Everyone who comes to N.A. seeking recovery from the disease  
6 of addiction is accepted. This is remarkable because we well know that  
7 everyone who seeks recovery may not be an addict. Perhaps they have  
8 other problems which make them want the acceptance and closeness we  
9 share among ourselves. These people may be accepted and think of  
10 themselves as members and yet not be addicts. This would be a moot  
11 point to bring out except to illustrate that our acceptance of newcomers  
12 far outweighs any tendency to exclude those who might seek our help.

13 Membership is not automatic because only we can make ourselves  
14 members by the things we do. The point needs to be emphasized that  
15 recovery is our responsibility. It is our actions and inactions which will  
16 define us - not what others think or even say about us. In the final  
17 analysis our membership will be acknowledged by our Fellows if it is  
18 there. They will see it in us when we reach out for help although  
19 hurting terribly and scared to death. They will notice us taking time to  
20 help another who needs our help. They will notice that we are asking  
21 questions and showing up at meetings on a regular basis. In time they  
22 will see the pain go out of our faces and realize that our obsession to use  
23 has been lifted from us. When they try to reach out to help in some  
24 way, they will feel our acceptance of their kindness.

25 We define using in terms which are both self-willed and self-  
26 destructive. To answer the last question, using alone may not constitute  
27 relapse. In times of illness or physical injury, we and many members  
28 have come through periods of using in the sense that they had drugs in  
29 their systems but did not show the characteristic behaviors that go with

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1 active addiction. They continued to ask for help, continued to pray and  
2 exhibited personal honesty. All these things, and yet they had the same  
3 chemicals in their bodies which they used in active addiction. Whether  
4 they went through detox at the end of treatment, they were willing.

5 Far more often, we have seen the slightest tendency to deny or be  
6 dishonest grow to overwhelm our members into active, unmistakable  
7 addiction. We see the themes played out in our program constantly and  
8 see ourselves as subject to the same tendencies which have killed so  
9 many of us. In our gratitude and our selfless service, we do the best we  
10 can to stay clean and help others because it is the only way we can have  
11 any hope. Judging others by their performance and ourselves by our  
12 motives is one mistake we have all made. There are those among us  
13 who are forced to take prescribed medication for illness beyond their  
14 control and they do exhibit all the signs of recovery. They are  
15 indistinguishable from other members, so the answer must be `yes`.

16 Back to the original point about distinguishing between self  
17 determined taking in of drugs versus a car wreck where we are dosed  
18 while we are out cold by the side of the road. It is sad that this hair  
19 splitting goes on.

20 Active addiction doesn't mess around. The disease takes us and  
21 we do whatever the disease requires. We don't jolly along, going to  
22 meetings asking questions about recovery, reading spiritual literature  
23 and attempting to serve in various ways others who may benefit from  
24 our actions. WE USE. If an addict is doing their best to stay clean and  
25 showing any kind of desire at all, they can find some N.A. member who  
26 believes in them and will help them in their recovery. They deserve and  
27 need all the encouragement they can get and we try to give it to them.

28 One more messy point: lose your newcomer's respect and you lose  
29 your newcomer...Amazingly, we learn in N.A. how to stand ready to help

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1 but will not do so until we are asked. This is because we intuitively  
2 know that it is the reaching for help, which helps, not what we can  
3 receive from the outside. All we can really do is respond honestly to the  
4 self admitted need of another like ourselves. Of course, we get a lot of  
5 practice in N.A.

6 A general question on membership: How do people find N.A.?  
7 Specifically, are some court-referred?

8 Court referral is no hindrance to N.A. membership. The crucial  
9 elements are the personal pain we experience in our active addiction and  
10 the feelings of relief and hopefulness we find in contact with other clean  
11 addicts following the N.A. way of life. In other words, how we find the  
12 Program is not so important as finding it.

13 Considered as a disease, this apparent problem, i.e., how can  
14 something as Worldly as a court system lead to clean addicts leading  
15 spiritual lives, becomes properly simplified. Someone with cancer who  
16 found freedom from their disease as a result of legal direction would  
17 likely say, "So what! I'm glad that I found a way to arrest my disease.  
18 I'm grateful, even to the court!"

19 "Desire is the key word. Desire is the basis of our recovery."  
20 Recovery is of equal importance to each and every addict. It is our  
21 ability to accept the personal responsibility of it that varies. We all have  
22 one thing in common. We suffer from the disease of addiction, and will  
23 to some degree, until we are relieved of the responsibility human life  
24 carries with it.

25 "A desire to stop using" is not "the only requirement for  
26 membership" (Tradition 3) of our committees. Some of us must be  
27 elected, others may be chosen by drawing lots. A desire to comply with  
28 the spiritual intent of this principle is necessary to P.I. work and will be  
29 reflected in our Fellowship. "Addiction does not discriminate. This

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1 Tradition is to insure that any addict, regardless of drugs used, race,  
2 religion, beliefs, sex, sexual preference, or financial conditions, is free to  
3 practice the N.A. way of life."

4 Open-mindedness seems to be called for here. In order to work  
5 within the spirit of this Tradition, we need to be aware of what we  
6 haven't been doing, and plan our P.I. efforts accordingly. We may find it  
7 helpful to ask ourselves some tough questions. Find out who is missing  
8 from our meetings, and why.

9 Vigilance and desire, when united, become honest effort. The  
10 Third Tradition gives definition to our anonymity, and "Anonymity is the  
11 spiritual foundation of all our Traditions." Our efforts are our recovery  
12 speaking to the world of our existence.

13  
14

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15 Please accept for inclusion in the Third Tradition portion of It  
16 Works: How and Why the following correlation suggested by the  
17 principle inherent in our Third Tradition:

18 "One correlation suggested by the principle of our Third Tradition  
19 is any person with the desire to stop using may attend any regular N.A.  
20 meeting, anywhere a regular meeting is being held, and if a person with  
21 the desire to stop using is kept from attending the N.A. meeting because  
22 of any rule or regulation outside of our Twelve Traditions, then the  
23 meeting is in violation of N.A.'s Third Tradition."

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26 Do I touch on the early days in N.A. when pill users weren't  
27 welcome, to illustrate how N.A. has expanded its scope since then?

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1           In the days when there was no literature, our members had not  
2 yet discovered the power of simply telling the truth in writing. Since  
3 those times, an enormous increase in written materials has resulted from  
4 the discovery that as long as we are speaking from our real personal and  
5 collective experience, no one can deny us.

6           For this reason, and the value of letting our history speak  
7 for our principles, we should tell our story as completely and honestly as  
8 we can.

9           The phrase `expanded its scope' is imprecise. We have simply  
10 learned more about our disease and our recovery process. Tradition  
11 Three is developed in Narcotics Anonymous to include rather than  
12 exclude. One definition of `narcotics' is `sleep or dream inducing' and  
13 this word tells a lot about our disease. While Webster's may never  
14 change, we share the pain of our nightmares and the joy of awakening to  
15 find ourselves clean, alive and not alone.

16           Not only pill addicts were excluded. Our recovery process was  
17 only known to a certain point. Surely there were isionaries but judging  
18 by the divisive elements we have had to overcome in our own times,  
19 their influence was probably limited. One of the purposes which guided  
20 us in the creation of our Basic Text was the knowledge that we would no  
21 longer limit our message to our personalities. Even today the problem of  
22 getting along with the personality in a small town with perhaps only one  
23 meeting a week is only surmountable because we have at last a written  
24 message. In days gone by these small meetings almost always died out.

25           The principle of anonymity applies here because we have learned  
26 to set aside our personal preference in favor of the primary purpose of  
27 our groups. We have learned that what is good for N.A. is usually best  
28 for us.

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1           Are people who are clean but use prescription drugs on doctor's  
2 orders "users" or not ?

3           Again, the only way which presents itself to answer such a  
4 question is to observe the people who come to our meetings, claim  
5 membership in N.A. and are recognized as such by their local Fellowship.  
6 In other words, theorizing or moralizing about this type of question is  
7 generally useless and arouses passions among our people without really  
8 helping anyone. It is true that N.A. is a program of total abstinence and  
9 that clean means not using any chemicals whatsoever. It is also true  
10 that we eat, drink coffee and many of us smoke cigarettes! All of these  
11 things have some effect on our 'cleanliness,' state of mind and spiritual  
12 condition. The great thing about N.A. is that we have a practical  
13 approach to these things which may not always be easy to write down  
14 but works out pretty well in practice.

15           In all likelihood, most if not all of us clean addicts will at some  
16 time have to take some prescribed medication whether we want it or not,  
17 for medical reasons. The same principles which help us stay clean in  
18 normal circumstances do not cease to work for us here. Prayer, being  
19 honest with our doctors and asking for the special help we need to get  
20 through a period of illness from our friends can help us maintain our  
21 recovery.

22           "Users" are addicts in a state of active addiction. Sick people who  
23 may be recovering addicts in N.A. with no real say so in the matter do  
24 not generally exhibit the qualities associated with being loaded. They  
25 don't fear discovery. They don't lie, cheat or steal. If they do these  
26 things, they shift from using prescribed drugs to using whatever they can  
27 get their hands on pretty fast. So, in practice there is usually a  
28 recognizable difference between someone who is using as opposed to  
29 taking medication on doctor's orders. In fact, many of these who claim to

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1 have been taking prescribed medication and have done as well as  
2 members, have slipped into hellish pain and insanity when they  
3 discontinued the medication because they wanted to be 'really clean.'

4 Using should be defined with all the attributes of self-  
5 centeredness, dishonesty and fear that goes with active addiction.  
6 Medication in times of illness has always been in a sort of 'not good but  
7 let's try to make the best of it and stand by our friend who is hurting'  
8 category. Never will we as a Fellowship condone 'using'. In practice,  
9 we do well with our members who get sick and reach out for help.

10 Personally, I don't think an addict in active addiction can take  
11 prescribed drugs as prescribed. This 'as prescribed' factor is enough of a  
12 qualifier to separate in my mind someone who is using to get high from  
13 someone who has surrendered and is doing as they are told by a  
14 physician knowledgeable about the disease of addiction. More and more  
15 doctors are becoming knowledgeable about addiction as well as our  
16 recovery process. Our message has to include useful information on how  
17 to avoid relapse in illness.

18 There seems to be some question as to whether all members are  
19 properly represented, prison inmates, for example.

20 Our service structure is a response to our need for order and the  
21 functional needs of our Fellowship. I can agree with the technical point  
22 that group conscience materials rarely make it inside prison walls but  
23 this is a situation which may be corrected at any time. There is no  
24 obstacle to such distribution of group conscience materials and input  
25 from such members. In fact, we have the genesis of informing,  
26 involving and gathering input from such members today in the form of  
27 the 'Reaching Out.'

28 It is hard to emphasize this need in a time period where we are  
29 still working out some of the base lines for structures yet to come. The

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1 occasion of this input is a case in point! Group conscience materials do  
2 not make it through our structure to most members period, not just  
3 those in jail. It is not anyone's fault, either. The members who are  
4 really interested in them tend to get them and those who aren't will  
5 leave them on the table if you don't put them in their hands.

6           Difference between group and N.A. membership.

7           (I am embarrassed to respond to this question because it sounds  
8 like an individual member's opinion is being questioned rather than  
9 input from the member who wrote the original service structure after  
10 much discussion, study and deliberation.)

11           The difference between group membership and N.A. membership  
12 is the commitment made to a particular group by a particular member.  
13 In all versions of our service structure over the years, in the section on  
14 the group it mentions the steering committee of a group which is made  
15 up of those people who regularly attend, support a group and attend the  
16 business meetings. The steering committee is made up of those who  
17 consider themselves to be 'members of the group'. I guess it may help  
18 the material on the Third Tradition to bring this distinction out more. It  
19 is also being addressed in the material, 'A Guide To Service.'

20           Basically, there is a philosophical difference between someone who  
21 stays clean, attends meetings regularly, reads the literature, has an  
22 N.A. sponsor and all the other things we do as members but who has not  
23 yet become a member of a group. These are ways we receive in N.A. A  
24 member of a group one way or another has become a giver.

25           It is a natural part of the process of identification with other clean  
26 addicts to reach a point where we want to give back some of what has  
27 been freely given to us. This is hard to do since we don't charge for our  
28 services. The main option is some form of service. The same material in  
29 'The Temporary Working Guide' says it is at the group level that the

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1 concept of trusted servant comes into being. Trusted servants generally  
2 begin as formal or informal group members. In the case of many groups,  
3 the secretary reads a statement which goes like this: "You become a  
4 member of N.A. when you say you are. You may also become a member  
5 of this group by seeing the secretary of the group after this meeting and  
6 giving them your name and address."

7 Only a member who regularly attends a group meeting would do  
8 this and only a grateful member would be interested in committing to a  
9 particular group and becoming someone who helps greet the newcomers,  
10 occasionally may chair or lead the meeting, help the secretary set up or  
11 clean up, etc. A special bond develops between members who do this. It  
12 is a deepening of their N.A. experience. It is also visible evidence of  
13 surrender, faith, selflessness and having been mended to some extent. It  
14 is more literally 'a part of' N.A. than 'apart from'.

15 Group membership also means that the member has a "home  
16 group." This group membership is a way for the average N.A. member  
17 to discover for themselves the real basis of love and unity which goes into  
18 a meeting. In every town, there was some first meeting which still  
19 continues to meet. Those members who attended and supported that  
20 first meeting are the founders of N.A. in their community. Becoming a  
21 member of an existing group or committing to a new one, we feel the  
22 same air of responsibility as founders. If we're not there, then we are  
23 missed, more so than a member who may occasionally attend. If we  
24 have accepted some responsibility such as laying out the literature,  
25 making the coffee, etc., this is even more true. If we are the first one to  
26 arrive and unlock the building, then the responsibility and commitment  
27 became even more obvious. If we don't do what we've committed to do,  
28 than N.A. may not have a meeting that night!

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1           The difference between a newcomer sick, confused and unable to  
2 do for themselves, and someone who freely and willingly commits to a  
3 meeting, is obvious and is very real evidence that our recovery process  
4 works.

5

6           Dual addiction in context of N.A. membership.

7           Narcotics Anonymous is a program of total abstinence from all  
8 drugs. The question involves other forms of addiction which do not  
9 necessarily involve drugs in any form. In recovery, we find ourselves  
10 faced with most if not all of these substitute addictions and part of the  
11 way the Twelve Steps work is to help us survive our addiction once the  
12 chemicals have been removed.

13           The pain of our active addiction is usually the first point of  
14 identification with clean addicts that we get as new members. Our  
15 stories are hard to make up. The terms `food addict' and `food problem'  
16 are so specific that they imply the person had no primary problem with  
17 using drugs or in getting and staying clean. The basis for identity might  
18 therefore be missing. This would affect the person's potential for  
19 recovery in N.A. since it would be difficult or impossible for them to find  
20 the widespread basis for identifying with and feeling personally a part of  
21 our Fellowship. If the person had gotten help from or identified  
22 themselves as members of another Twelve Step program, the problem of  
23 identification and the basis for mutual sharing would almost certainly  
24 become a major obstacle for them.

25           In dealing with this sort of question, it is again generally helpful  
26 to observe or find out what we actually do in our meetings in cases such  
27 as this. It is doubtful that a newcomer who went on and on about their  
28 food addiction would be asked to leave out of hand. If, on the other  
29 hand, someone with a food problem attended one of our meetings and

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1 extolled the virtues of another program and began recruiting addicts who  
2 had come to the N.A. meeting seeking recovery to go to some other  
3 program, it would go against the primary purpose of our groups. This  
4 would require action on the part of the discussion leader or the chair and  
5 perhaps members of the steering committee. The person would have to  
6 be told that they were out of order, for the N.A. meeting to continue and  
7 get back on recovery. This has actually happened and is no more a big  
8 deal than the other forms of disruption we have to deal with from time  
9 to time. It is a matter of honesty with us. We do not claim to have all  
10 the answers for all the ills which the human race suffers from. It is  
11 enough for us to carry our message to those who seek it.

12 This would not be dual addiction to us. Dual addiction is not an  
13 N.A. term. It implies that different drugs result in separate and distinct  
14 addictions and that is not true in our experience.

15

16 **Special interest groups.**

17 Even while a newly formed Ad-Hoc Committee of the WSC  
18 continues to work on this question, some things are clear and are likely  
19 to remain clear.

20 Some of our members feel that special interest groups are  
21 important enough to take the time and trouble to form them. They feel  
22 that identification is needed in some special sense to carry our message  
23 to certain types of members who may have trouble identifying with the  
24 N.A. Fellowship in general. Many members have strong opinions on this  
25 and the problem, if it is a problem, will likely go on.

26 We have found that to survive, a group must carry a sufficient  
27 message of recovery to have something to offer the newcomer seeking  
28 recovery. Where this is not the case, the group fails and ceases to meet.

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1           It may be that members who form a `special interest' group have  
2 the problem identifying with the general membership and they are  
3 serving their own needs which, in light of our generally flexible attitude  
4 to such issues, is fine with most members. Problems have occurred  
5 where such meetings become so specialized that local members are not  
6 comfortable sending newcomers there who would have difficulty  
7 identifying with the recovery of the special interest involved... In these  
8 cases, the meetings would have trouble getting listed on the meeting  
9 directory as an ordinary N.A. meeting which, by its own description, it is  
10 not.

11  
12

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13           At first glance, this tradition seems quite simple to understand  
14 and apply. It tells us who can be a member of Narcotics Anonymous;  
15 anyone that has a desire to stop using. However, like all of our twenty-  
16 four principles, there is a greater depth of understanding that can be  
17 gained through closer examination. At a personal level, the Third  
18 Tradition teaches us that no matter what happens today, both good or  
19 bad, if we "don't pick up the first one" we have a chance to get better.  
20 There is much more to recovery in Narcotics Anonymous than not using  
21 drugs, but we'll never experience the other miracles if we don't stay  
22 clean. The Third Tradition also teaches us acceptance of others on an  
23 equal basis. Old prejudices and personality judgments that we brought  
24 in the door with us have no place here. Whether a person is black or  
25 white, man or woman, young or old, aggressive or humble, boastful or  
26 shy, old-timer or newcomer, heterosexual or gay, financially successful or  
27 unemployed, happy or hurting, healthy or sick, etc. has no bearing nor  
28 meaning in NA. We all belong here equally as much, and on an equal

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1 basis. The Third Tradition asks us to put the humility we gained from  
2 the Twelve Steps into practice. Total acceptance without judgement or  
3 expectation is the spiritual goal of the Third Tradition.

4

5

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1 indispensable. The dominance of any one personality is doomed to  
2 failure. Experience has shown that in the long run the group conscience  
3 is wiser than any single leader and that is why we arrive at decisions by  
4 majority vote.

5 Individuals speaking their opinions--even if they are in the  
6 minority--are necessary to the ultimate group conscience. It is only by  
7 seriously considering every aspect of a question that we can arrive at the  
8 best possible solution. Through the clash of opinions comes the spark of  
9 truth. This same principle can be applied to the sponsor/sponsee  
10 relationship--the sponsor gives direction based on his/her experience,  
11 points out the options, but does not give advice.

12 The progress of individuals and N.A. as a whole can be  
13 endangered when a member forgets that God is in charge. No one  
14 speaks for God. He speaks to us through the group conscience.

15 \*\*\*\*\*

16 A member claims trusted servants don't get clear guidelines, do  
17 get mixed messages, etc. Should they receive guidelines? Should I get  
18 into the whole issue of trusted servants functions?

19 The service structure is a system of defined relationships which  
20 allow our trusted servants to function without fear of self-will.  
21 Guidelines are developed to give the members doing the service a clear  
22 plan of action, complete with procedures for elections and various other  
23 routine committee functions. It is hard for me to understand what is  
24 meant by "mixed message" in this context. More often, problems do  
25 occur where members are active beyond their proper committee functions  
26 or in fact have a "mixed message" problem in their personal programs  
27 which is reflected in their experience of N.A. service. Another problem  
28 which comes up with some frequency is to give any "guidelines"  
29 established for their committee a token acknowledgement as long as the

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1 guides don't restrict their frame of action. Where restriction occurs,  
2 many members in service have made the mistake of changing their  
3 guidelines to suit themselves which can become very personal. When  
4 egos flame, anonymity goes out the window.

5 The second idea is that the guidelines of a committee serve to help  
6 members new to the committee understand their relative roles and  
7 functions. This is important for the surrendered member in service to  
8 feel the coherence and "structure" which allows them to play effective,  
9 useful roles without stepping on the toes of other committees or  
10 committee members.

11 As a practical matter we have found that while we need some  
12 structure, it is more important to have a group of members actively and  
13 happily doing their service work than to emphasize guidelines to the  
14 point where they take precedence over good sense.

15 This has occurred repeatedly in our history, especially in young  
16 communities which don't have experienced members with long clean time  
17 to settle disputes and bring common sense, humor and a sense of fair  
18 play to the structure. The problem seems to be that we addicts will  
19 allow ourselves to get caught up in rule breaking and forget what we  
20 have been entrusted to do.

21 The question, "Should they receive guidelines?" is poorly stated.  
22 New committees within our structure established their guides as a  
23 matter of course based on what members present knew and what can be  
24 found in our written service guides. New service manuals for  
25 subcommittee specialties like P.I. and H&I have the effect of helping  
26 these new committees form guides which reflect a general continuity  
27 which used to be impossible. This process is likely to continue to  
28 stabilize as time goes on. Existing committees need to employ existing  
29 guidelines unless change is required as a result of increased awareness or

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1 growth of the Fellowship served. The thrill of service is in the doing not  
2 the talking. It is easy for us to get side-tracked.

3 Trusted servants' functions need to be addressed in the material  
4 on the Second Tradition to clarify the difference between governors and  
5 "leaders". We serve by right of the emotional and financial support we  
6 receive from other members who support what we are doing. It may be  
7 very helpful to get into the exact ways in which a competent secretary  
8 can improve a service committee. The important functions a Vice Chair  
9 can play in assisting subcommittees which need additional support under  
10 a new chair or during a period of growth or change. Treasurers who  
11 follow the sound procedures from our new Treasurer's Handbook not only  
12 provide accountability but give our service efforts a propriety and  
13 stability which can not otherwise exist. They also set good examples.  
14 Chairs who have the ability to communicate, listen as well as express  
15 themselves clearly, and set a good tone are probably essential to a good  
16 service committee. While this fact may emphasize the personality of the  
17 chair, it is really their ability to do the job that counts. Functions such as  
18 getting out agendas and minutes on schedule are essential to attracting  
19 members serious about service. These materials help our committees  
20 gain a (collective vision) that help members work together for common  
21 goals. They also may be relied on to keep the pace of committee meeting  
22 moving so that there is no sense of time being wasted. Generalizing  
23 about these matters has not worked out too well...

24  
25 \*\*\*\*\*

26 As addicts, our conscience is motivated by fear and guilt.  
27 "Getting caught" and the pain resulting from it was the reasoning most  
28 of us applied in deciding what was right or wrong before the Twelve  
29 Steps became a reality in our lives. Our group conscience is, according to

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1 the Second tradition, motivated by a loving God. When we surrender to  
2 group conscience, we allow our lives to be shaped by a loving God.  
3 Surrendering to group conscience means much more than accepting a  
4 decision that didn't go "our way" at a group or service committee  
5 business meeting. It means that we can take any problem or question  
6 we have with our recovery to other addicts practicing these same  
7 principles, share it with them, and receive the hope and guidance we  
8 need to make a change for the better. When we share a problem with  
9 our home group it is seldom one person's feedback that provides the  
10 answers we need. More often it seems that we leave the meeting with a  
11 better knowledge and conviction of what we need to do. This is one of  
12 the ways that group conscience works and how a loving God speaks  
13 through it.

14

15



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- 1    **IV.    Membership.**
- 2           **A.    What is it (What does it mean)?(NA membership vs. group**
- 3                   **membership, committee membership)**
- 4           **B.    Responsibilites and privieges.**
- 5           **C.    It's not automatic (we don't feel a part of if we're still using;**
- 6                   **we only exclude those who exclude themselves).**
- 7                    1.    **Intolerance and prejudice.**
- 8                    2.    **Using membership as a justification for poor**
- 9                           **behaviour.**
- 10   **V.    Special needs (common purpose) groups/meetings.**
- 11   **VI.   Application of Tradition 3 to members, groups and NA as a**
- 12           **whole.**
- 13   **VII. Conclusion and lead in to Tradition 4.**
- 14



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1 human condition are totally irrelevant to drug addiction and recovery  
2 from this disease. We need to remember that if we had been barred  
3 from N.A.'s doors, we might well have died.

4 We are made up of all different kinds of people. Anyone may be a  
5 member, no matter what background, if they have a desire to stop using.  
6 No matter what drug you used, if you have a desire to stop, and you  
7 want to be a member, then you are a member. This gives us the choice  
8 of allowing ourselves and others the right to remain here. No one knows  
9 the dark and lonely path we have walked; yet we all share what we find  
10 here through this tradition.

11 At first it may be difficult for some of us to relate to people who  
12 used differently than we did, but we are told to, "Look for the  
13 similarities rather than the differences." If we keep an open mind, we  
14 see that the feelings we experienced while using, and in our recovery, are  
15 very much the same. We have no right to judge someone else's right to  
16 membership.

17 Some members of our Fellowship have been able to see and face  
18 their own addiction only after seeking help for the sake of a spouse, child  
19 or other loved one. Whatever road we took to find our way to N.A., we  
20 came to believe that it was our own personal Higher Power who  
21 ultimately got us here. The saying is: "No one comes through these  
22 doors by mistake." We are welcomed into the Fellowship of Narcotics  
23 Anonymous simply because we have a desire to stop using. Many of us  
24 did not desire to stop using at first, but by attending meetings our  
25 outlook changed, and we gained a desire to stop using.

26 No one asks for our credentials. We paid our dues "out there," but  
27 that is our business, and we don't have to prove it. Many of us lost our  
28 jobs, homes, cars, families, etc. Many of us wondered if this was the  
29 right place for us. Did we use enough drugs? Would we be accepted if

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1 we only smoked pot or took prescription pills or drank alcohol? Do we  
2 have to have a police record or a litany of trips to mental institutions?  
3 These questions were quickly answered through the love and acceptance  
4 of the Fellowship. When this tradition registers in our brains, it gives us  
5 the freedom to belong and stay if we choose to. We are all in the  
6 meeting for the same reason: We don't want to use drugs any more, and  
7 we need help in living clean.

8       Narcotics Anonymous "is a program of complete abstinence from  
9 all drugs." Even so, our doors remain open to those addicts still clinging  
10 to forms of denial. These may include our brothers and sisters who, for  
11 instance, stop shooting narcotics, but hold to the use of other mind-  
12 altering chemicals in a last-ditch effort to keep getting high. There are  
13 some, too, who use over and over again. They, too, may recover--if they  
14 come back before completing the self-destruction which is the essence of  
15 active addiction. No one can be kicked out of our Fellowship. If we  
16 closed our doors to those who weren't able yet to stay clean or may not  
17 be ready, we would be aiding in their death by preventing their recovery.  
18 As long as they bring no drugs or paraphernalia into meetings, all  
19 addicts are welcome.

20       While we may get frustrated with perpetual newcomers, we must  
21 first thank the God of our understanding that our own  
22 obsession/compulsion to use has been arrested just for today, and then  
23 quickly remind ourselves that the only requirement for N.A. membership  
24 is a desire to stop using.

25       Desire is not a thinking process, but rather a feeling process which  
26 requires fulfillment of its own. It is not a want or a need; it is a longing.  
27 Almost everyone has felt a longing for something or someone in his/her  
28 life. While many of us have felt a desperate need to belong, our lack of  
29 self-worth and fear of failure usually prevented us from risking

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1 involvement. But even when we didn't think we could meet the  
2 demands of a gang or other groups, we found that we could live up to  
3 N.A.'s simple membership requirement: a desire to stop using.

4 When we first arrived at Narcotics Anonymous, most of us knew  
5 that we were sick and had to do something different. We were lonely;  
6 we had no self-worth and knew nothing of being clean. All we knew was  
7 that we needed help and had nowhere else to go. Most of us had already  
8 tried everything else. When we first heard Tradition Three, it brought  
9 relief. We didn't know what would be expected of us nor what we would  
10 have to do to achieve happiness. Truthfully, many of us did not want to  
11 stop using drugs; addiction was all we knew. It is not required to be  
12 clean to attend N.A. meetings, but it is strongly suggested. We found  
13 that all we needed to keep coming back was a desire to stop using. Some  
14 of us didn't think drugs were our problem anyway. We had tried to  
15 blame our using on life's situations, but we soon found that this was not  
16 the case. In our hearts, we eventually realized that drugs just didn't  
17 work anymore.

18 Our desires may be obscure and buried deep beneath our defenses  
19 and fears, but the longer we stay clean, the more intense our desire for  
20 recovery becomes. We choose the N.A. Program as our philosophy for  
21 life because it shows us, one day at a time, how to live in this world  
22 without using or abusing ourselves or others.

23 Most of us come to N.A. to escape the suffering of active addiction.  
24 We stay to experience the joy of living. We pray that the doors of  
25 Narcotics Anonymous will remain open to anyone and everyone who  
26 stumbles in. Our primary concern is that newcomers have a safe haven  
27 to come to, and that they find recovery through the Twelve Steps and  
28 Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous.

29



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1 direction of sanity, but desire is the thought that's father to the action.  
2 Actually not using is the action.

3 Many different paths brought us to N.A.'s doors, and the strength  
4 of our desire to stop using varied from person to person. Some of us  
5 were sick, broke and beaten down. We were desperate. N.A. seemed  
6 like our last hope for sanity and survival. Fearful and trembling we  
7 knew, however dimly, that it was N.A. or death--and we weren't  
8 prepared to die.

9 Some others of us would, if pressed to the wall, admit that maybe  
10 we weren't functioning well. But we were a long way from admitting  
11 that drugs were a life-and-death issue. If we were asked why we came  
12 to N.A., we'd say something like, "I came out of curiosity," or "So my  
13 family would shut up." One now-dedicated N.A. member first attended  
14 meetings because of something less than what he later called "genuine  
15 desire." Initially he came to meetings because his wife was becoming  
16 more and more upset about his using. She insisted that he had to do  
17 something, and he came, as he said, "to get her off my back." Then he  
18 came to meetings because he was curious about all these people who had  
19 horrible drug stories to tell. Later he came because he thought, "I don't  
20 like what I've got, I'd better try something else." Finally he came  
21 because this low-key desire grew stronger; he liked that "something else"  
22 and wanted more of it.

23 Some of us first came to N.A. not only denying we were drug  
24 addicts powerless over our addiction, we also put up a good front denying  
25 N.A. really had anything to offer us. One such member had a longing  
26 for the blessings that recovering addicts had, but he couldn't believe their  
27 blessings had anything to do with being clean. He saw how they smiled  
28 and seemed happy--saw that good things were happening to them. But  
29 for some time he needed to believe that the N.A. Program was a phony.

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1 He was convinced that members were really using but pretending not to.  
2 It was only when the longing for something better in his own life was  
3 strong enough that he finally had to admit the N.A. Program of recovery  
4 was no hoax.

5         There were countless ways we could pretend N.A. wasn't really for  
6 us or we for it. A woman who had used an enormous quantity of drugs  
7 over the years listened to other members sharing their recovery  
8 experiences and went away from her first N.A. meeting thinking,  
9 "Maybe I haven't used enough to qualify." When she heard about a  
10 drug she hadn't used, she thought, "Maybe I'm not really an addict  
11 because I haven't used that one." When she heard a member talk about  
12 having been in prison, she thought, "Maybe I don't belong here because I  
13 haven't been locked up."

14         Another member told herself she wasn't really the N.A. type  
15 because she was so bad, so helpless and hopeless, the program probably  
16 wouldn't work for her. A third went out and used a drug she first heard  
17 about in N.A.; her excuse was, "It will help me qualify for membership."  
18 But it was really just an excuse to use again. Later, when she really  
19 wanted to recover, she realized that the desire to stop using was the only  
20 ticket she needed for admission to N.A.

21         Some of us came to N.A. convinced we wouldn't be accepted  
22 because we were so unacceptable as persons. We were bitter, self-  
23 hating, self-rejecting to an extreme. Because we'd been rejected so often  
24 in the outside world, we figured the same thing would happen in N.A.  
25 So we took the attitude, "I'll reject you before you reject me," and  
26 showed ourselves at our defensive, defiant, hostile worst. Maybe we  
27 were subconsciously hoping to be kicked out if we made ourselves nasty  
28 enough. But Tradition Three says nothing about having to measure up  
29 to certain positive character traits as a qualification for membership.

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1 Confronting and dealing with our character defects is an integral part of  
2 the program itself. So, in most instances, the groups we were in waited  
3 for us to cool down and accept the gift of caring which they offered us.  
4 We were accepted because we were suffering addicts having the desire to  
5 stop using, nothing more.

6 Then there were those of us who first stepped into an N.A.  
7 meeting because we'd gotten into trouble with the law, and the judge or  
8 probation officer or somebody else with legal power over us had said,  
9 "Either attend N.A. meetings or go to jail." Who wouldn't rather be in  
10 N.A. than in jail? Many of us with such court orders had the naive  
11 notion that N.A. could teach us to use drugs in a way that wouldn't get  
12 us into trouble. But even when we were quickly disabused of that notion  
13 we stayed. Was it because we didn't want to chance violating the court  
14 order or was something else making us come back week after week?

15 The point is that if someone doesn't have the desire to stop, not  
16 even the threat of being locked up is going to have any effect. On the  
17 other hand, court-order members who show up at N.A. meetings  
18 regularly may insist, "I'm only here because I don't want to go to jail."  
19 And in part that may be true--but only in part. Nobody has a gun to our  
20 heads and is marching us to meetings. In fact, some addicts with court  
21 orders don't stay. We're not ready for the kind of searching self-  
22 confrontation the program requires. We don't want to struggle with the  
23 Twelve Steps, the Traditions, the literature and the rest of the program.  
24 Our desire still isn't strong enough and we decide, "It's easier to go do  
25 time, nobody bothers you, you get three hots and a cot and when your  
26 time is up it's over." Those of us who do keep coming back to N.A. have  
27 made the choice to do so, and in the end it doesn't really have much to  
28 do with legal requirements or the threat of jail. Though it may take us

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1 some time to admit it, we want something better for ourselves than we  
2 have.

3 In N.A. we see that the strength of a person's desire to stop using  
4 doesn't necessarily have a direct connection with his outside  
5 circumstances. An addict may be sick, homeless, desperate--yet run  
6 away in panic after a meeting or two, still more attached to addiction  
7 than to survival. We can be in the hands of psychiatrists, drug  
8 counselors, ministers, judges, jailers--we can be prayed over, or  
9 abandoned by everyone who cared about us--but the desire to stop using  
10 won't be there strongly until the pain of our existence forces us to do so.

11 On the other hand, the desire to stop using can be stronger than  
12 we first realize. It can be quickened into life when we see a collection of  
13 recovering addicts. They had been just like us. They had used. They  
14 had made a mess of their lives. They had been steeped in misery--but no  
15 longer. They are now clean. Now they hold on to jobs. Now they have  
16 real friendships, loving relationships. Now they don't rush out to use  
17 pills or pot or coke or heroin every time something bad--or good--happens  
18 to them. They don't rush out for a fix, period. That's powerful stuff, if  
19 we let it be--a tremendous impetus to change.

20 A Narcotics Anonymous slogan goes, "You're a member when you  
21 say you are." Some of us laughed when we first heard that slogan. It  
22 sounded so easy. We thought: Okay, then you can shoot up and still be  
23 a member of N.A. because you say you are. You can pop pills and still  
24 be a member because you say you are. You can get stoned out of this  
25 world and still be a member because you say you are. Easy? Ridiculous!

26 When we gave the matter a little more thought, though, we  
27 realized that it wasn't ridiculous at all. Sure, anybody can say they're a  
28 member of N.A. as long as they say they have the desire. That's what  
29 the Third Tradition says and it's all to the good because it emphasizes

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1 how open N.A.'s doors are to any addict who wants to enter. But just  
2 saying, "I'm a member" isn't all there is to it. Membership isn't  
3 automatic. We can be members in name only--while we keep on using,  
4 fail to work the steps, read the literature or carry the message of  
5 recovery to other addicts. But it's like holding a boarding pass to a ship  
6 that's going on a wonderful cruise and saying, "I'm a passenger"--  
7 meanwhile staying on the dock, watching that ship sail off into the  
8 sunset.

9       Only we can make ourselves true members by what we do or don't  
10 do. The God of our understanding might have led us to N.A., but it  
11 becomes our responsibility, with His help, to go on from there. To show  
12 up at meetings regularly. To read the literature. To reach out and ask  
13 for help, even though we might be scared to death of doing so. To ask  
14 questions. One woman, in N.A. for three months, kept telling her  
15 sponsor, "I say I'm a member, but so what? People at meetings are nice  
16 to me, but I just don't feel like I belong." Her sponsor replied, "You  
17 don't feel you're a member, but the fact is, your desire to stop using is  
18 your membership card. You're going to have a good membership card or  
19 a bad membership card. You fill it in yourself, you know.

20       Thinking about what her sponsor had said, she realized how  
21 superficial her involvement in N.A. had been. Even going through the  
22 steps had been a mechanical process with her. Only then, with the help  
23 of lots of prayer and meditation, did she put some meaning into being a  
24 member.

25       Many of us have had a similar experience--at first we were pretty  
26 superficial in the way we worked the program. It was more on the order  
27 of once over lightly. Later we became more involved and committed--and  
28 that's when we really began to get something solid out of our  
29 membership in N.A.

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1           Many of us were still using when we first came to N.A. and some  
2 of us kept on using--steadily or intermittently--for a while. Every time  
3 we stopped we'd say, "Now I'm cured," ease up on the program, and  
4 relapse. Some of us fooled ourselves another way. We'd quit using one  
5 drug but start using another, telling ourselves this other one wasn't half  
6 as bad. But the use of any mood-altering drug is simply another last-  
7 ditch effort to keep getting loaded. Clean addicts encouraged us to come  
8 to meetings anyway, but they made it clear that complete abstinence  
9 from all drugs was the only thing that ever worked for them.

10           Not all newcomers who find it so hard to stop using or stay clean  
11 get the caring and concern they need. Some groups are impatient with  
12 these addicts--they ignore them, make them feel unwelcome or actually  
13 ask them to leave. We tend to react so negatively to somebody else's  
14 difficulty with abstinence when we ourselves aren't far enough along in  
15 our own recovery. We haven't shed our judgmental nature, that all-too-  
16 common facet of our disease. We still feel threatened by anyone who  
17 can't stop using because it reminds us of our own strong vulnerability to  
18 drugs.

19           Neglecting newcomers or treating them inhospitably is, however,  
20 definitely hazardous to their health and welfare. As individuals and as  
21 groups we must always reach out to addicts who come to us for help--  
22 make them feel welcome and wanted. Anything less is a violation of our  
23 traditions and reflects badly on the spiritual maturity of the groups  
24 involved.

25           Tradition Three is very clear about the fact that only the desire to  
26 quit need be there, that no one can be kicked out of our Fellowship for  
27 using. If we closed our doors to those who weren't yet ready to be clean  
28 we'd be putting their survival at risk by denying them the chance to  
29 recover. We'd be putting our survival at risk, as well, and jeopardize

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1 N.A.'s reason for being. Newcomers are the lifeblood of our Fellowship.  
2 As long as they bring no drugs or paraphernalia into meetings, the Third  
3 Tradition says, all addicts are welcome. Ours is an equal-opportunity  
4 program: everybody has an equal chance at recovery; it's up to us to  
5 take advantage of that chance. In this spirit, remarkable things can  
6 happen. It took one member over a decade to stop using drugs and stay  
7 clean; he kept coming back and the groups to which he returned  
8 continued to root for him. A decade is a long time, but the point is that  
9 finally he did make it. You never know.

10 When an addict attends a meeting while high, that's another  
11 matter. That's a delicate situation, yet it can be worked out within the  
12 boundaries of good sense and in the spirit of the tradition. Only if  
13 someone is truly disruptive, actually interfering with the atmosphere of  
14 recovery, should he be asked to leave. Groups have handled members in  
15 a variety of successful ways, depending on the circumstances. For  
16 instance, loaded persons have been asked to sit quietly and just listen, or  
17 have been taken out for coffee. When an addict insists on sharing while  
18 under the influence of drugs, the other members in the room may not  
19 have a choice but to let him talk--recognizing, however, that his message  
20 is one of pain and suffering, not hope and recovery.

21 While we may get frustrated with addicts who come in high or are  
22 perpetual newcomers, we can best deal with that frustration by thanking  
23 our Higher Power that our own obsession/compulsion to use has been  
24 blocked just for today. It also helps to remind ourselves how important  
25 our own sense of belonging, which we developed in our N.A. groups, was  
26 to our recovery. The most constructive thing we can do is to extend  
27 loving acceptance to those who come to us for help, no matter how  
28 difficult that occasionally is.

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1           Being accepting can be very difficult for us until we've been in the  
2 Fellowship for a long time. As far as the Third Tradition is concerned,  
3 though, all suffering addicts are welcome to join. For this reason, N.A.  
4 requires no fees or dues for membership. Though a basket is always  
5 passed around at meetings, to defray expenses and carry the message of  
6 recovery to addicts "out there," nobody has to put any money in. If  
7 some members are so broke today they can't contribute anything--well,  
8 maybe next time they can.

9           That no terms and conditions are placed on membership  
10 guarantees newcomers will not be excluded because of the prejudices of  
11 established members. It prevents members and groups of members from  
12 labelling anyone as "undesirable" because of race, creed, handicap,  
13 economic status, sexual orientation, religion, national origin or anything  
14 else. This open door policy is what our spiritual program is all about--  
15 helping all addicts no matter who, what or where they are. In its best it  
16 weaves an atmosphere of concern and caring that makes newcomers feel  
17 accepted--"at home."

18           Yet it's also true that our groups aren't always as loving or caring  
19 as they might be. Groups are made up of individuals, after all, and on  
20 the whole individual N.A. members may not be more or less prejudiced  
21 than non-addicts, but not a one of us came into N.A. prejudice-free. Not  
22 one of us came in feeling so good about ourselves we didn't badly need  
23 somebody to feel superior to. When we were using, many of us felt  
24 superior to non-users, the ones we derisively called the "straights."  
25 When we came into N.A. and were in the midst of recovering addicts, we  
26 needed other immediate targets we could slight or mock.

27           If there wasn't anything else we could think of, and we felt  
28 worthless enough, we could always feel superior to newcomers and other  
29 N.A. members who hadn't used the way we had. We could set up a

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1 "ladder of success" at the top of which were the "baddest" addicts--our  
2 kind. We could pride ourselves on having used the harshest drugs, done  
3 the meanest things, been in the roughest prisons.

4 This attitude, "If you aren't a real dope fiend like me you don't  
5 belong," clearly conflicts with both the spirit and substance of Tradition  
6 Three. Ours is an all-embracing program. It doesn't require us to use  
7 any specific type of drug in order to qualify for membership. It doesn't  
8 specify how awful our life had to be. It doesn't offer any guidelines  
9 about what we should or shouldn't have left in the way of worldly  
10 possessions. All it asks of us is to have the desire to stop using.

11 In one way or another, all of us addicts have suffered. We've all  
12 walked down dark and lonely paths. We've all amply paid our dues  
13 while using and we don't have to prove to anyone what miseries we've  
14 seen. Every addict who found recovery because of our program might  
15 have died if N.A.'s doors had been barred to him.

16 Prejudice, snobbishness and smugness are some of the ways our  
17 addiction talks to us. As we turn to God for help in raising our self-  
18 esteem and removing our character defects, as we begin to feel better  
19 about ourselves, we change. The need to feel superior at somebody's  
20 expense becomes less and less urgent. The need to hate others because  
21 we hate ourselves so much wanes. We become more compassionate. We  
22 come to see more clearly the bonds we share with others. All of us  
23 having suffered from the disease of addiction, we can find ourselves in all  
24 our members. Thus, our sense of humanity expands. Our disease is the  
25 common denominator; we can find ourselves in all our members.

26 Tradition Three clearly says that our doors are open to everyone  
27 who has "a desire to stop using." At times this has been misinterpreted.  
28 The desire to stop using what? Some people show up at N.A. meetings  
29 when their problem is addiction to food. Some people show up who don't

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1 use drugs but can't stop playing cards or roulette or something else for  
2 money--they're compulsive gamblers. Some people, aware that N.A. is a  
3 Twelve Step Program, have assumed it could help them solve serious  
4 personal problems or emotional illness.

5 The compulsion to use obviously isn't confined to drugs. There are  
6 suffering addicts of all types in the world, all powerless over their  
7 addictions. But no Twelve Step Program, no matter how effective, can  
8 be all things to all people. Though Tradition Three doesn't go on to say  
9 membership is open to all who use drugs, our name makes this very  
10 clear. God led us to found an organization that would help addicts  
11 recover from mind-altering drugs. If our spiritual message of recovery  
12 were to include addicts who eat or gamble addictively, that message  
13 would be diluted, quite possibly beyond any effectiveness. We would lose  
14 our thrust, our focus. And newcomers with drug problems could easily  
15 feel that they were in the wrong place if, for example, they heard long  
16 discussions by people who need to binge on ice cream. No addiction is  
17 trivial, but God has directed our particular program to deal with drugs.

18 Some of us already belonged to another Twelve Step Program  
19 when we came to N.A. We, too, were welcomed. All that was asked of  
20 us was that at N.A. meetings we confine our discussions to the N.A.  
21 meeting. Narcotics Anonymous welcomes all addicts, those who belong  
22 to other Twelve Step groups as well as those who don't. Membership in  
23 another Twelve Step group doesn't violate our traditions or do harm to  
24 our spiritual program, as long as N.A. meetings are strictly limited to  
25 N.A. matters. However, some of us who do belong to N.A. groups bring  
26 to N.A. the notion of "dual addiction" or "cross addiction." We quickly  
27 learn that the concepts of dual and cross addiction are definitely not in  
28 accord with N.A.'s philosophy and program. In N.A. we don't  
29 differentiate between drugs or addictions. For us, addiction is the

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1 disease, addiction no matter what form it takes is the bottom line. We  
2 may use more than one drug, we may express our addiction in more than  
3 one way. But we don't think of ourselves as dual or cross-addicts--we  
4 identify ourselves as addicts, period.

5 A number of us with drug problems also came to N.A. bearing  
6 labels pinned on us by psychiatrists and other mental health  
7 professionals from institutions and treatment centers. We might have  
8 been diagnosed as neurotic or psychotic or perhaps been given a more  
9 specific clinical name. Though such labels may not always be helpful or  
10 accurate, the drugs we took and the addictive lives we led were  
11 undeniably damaging to our emotional stability. In N.A. we found that  
12 once we stopped using and began to develop spiritually we could lead the  
13 stable lives we found it impossible to live while under the power of the  
14 drugs. Often, then, we no longer thought or acted in the ways that  
15 brought on those psychiatric labels. But of course that's not the same  
16 thing as saying N.A. can cure psychiatric problems. It can't. N.A.'s sole  
17 function is to carry the message of recovery to drug addicts.

18 After we've been in the Fellowship for a time, most of us realize  
19 that our initial contact with N.A. was neither accidental nor coincidental.  
20 Our God, our Higher Power--whatever we choose to call this Power  
21 greater than ourselves--brought us to N.A.'s doors. In most instances we  
22 found those doors open--but no one forced us to enter. Once we entered,  
23 no one forced us to stay. Once we were settled in, no one forced us to  
24 work the program meaningfully. Once we began to work the program  
25 seriously, no one forced us to recover at a set pace or schedule.

26 The Third Tradition places the responsibility for recovery squarely  
27 with us. We can choose to be members or not. We can choose to be  
28 involved members or not. We can come freely and openly to an N.A.  
29 meeting--and if we wish to leave, do so just as freely. In not setting up

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1 membership requirements, our Fellowship declares that every addict has  
2 the right to recover--that nothing should stand in the way if the desire is  
3 there.

4 The Third Tradition enables us who are addicts to see that  
5 recovery is no pipedream and that life without drugs is better than we  
6 could have imagined. Yet though Narcotics Anonymous has no formal  
7 membership requirements beyond a desire to stop using, the Third  
8 Tradition offers us a wonderful opportunity. It's the opportunity to give  
9 back that which is being given to us. To help other addicts as other  
10 addicts have helped us. Many of us, having had a long history of simply  
11 taking, find that being able to give in return is more than an  
12 opportunity--it's a privilege.

13 In fact, the meaning the Third Tradition has for us deepens the  
14 longer we stay clean. We see ever more clearly that there's a big  
15 difference between being an addict in N.A. and fully being an N.A.  
16 member. Membership in the fullest sense of the word does have its  
17 obligations and responsibilities--and we welcome them.

18

19

20

Newline Articles

21

22 *This article was written by a member of the Board of Trustees in*  
23 *1984. It represents views at the time of writing.*

24

25 Tradition interpretation is probably not something the average  
26 member gives much thought to. However, to ensure the continuation  
27 and growth of Narcotics Anonymous, effort must be made by groups and  
28 individual members to understand and practice the Traditions. The N.A.  
29 program is still in maintenance of the Traditions to ensure our survival.

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1           Implementation of the Traditions affects every individual seeking  
2 recovery. It is therefore very important for the newcomer to understand  
3 that all one needs is a desire to stop using drugs, as they come to their  
4 first meeting. After they have accepted this fact and begin to practice it,  
5 they can consider themselves members of Narcotics Anonymous. At  
6 their first meetings they will meet people from all walks of life who were  
7 as hopelessly addicted to drugs as they were.

8           Confusion can easily be caused in a newcomer's thinking and  
9 understanding of the N.A. Program, if the group is not properly versed  
10 in the Twelve Steps and Traditions themselves. The group's  
11 responsibility is to provide the necessary atmosphere for recovery.  
12 Stable meetings with a single purpose coupled with an understanding of  
13 N.A. Traditions and led by people who are recovering addicts are the  
14 best ways to fulfill that responsibility.

15           Care must be shown so as not to dilute the understanding of the  
16 Traditions by trying to have N.A. be all things to all people. We can be  
17 grateful to A.A. as the grandfather of all Twelve Step programs and we  
18 can provide guidance to those from other programs such as O.A., G.A.,  
19 and others. But N.A. is not a warehouse for members of other programs.  
20 People from these other programs can certainly learn from N.A. as we  
21 learned from A.A., but their participation should not include involvement  
22 in the decisions made by an N.A. group, nor should those individuals  
23 serve as officers of groups or special service committees.

24           It must be remembered that Tradition Three speaks of a desire to  
25 stop using, which for N.A. has a parenthetical phrase immediately  
26 following which would correctly say, "drugs and narcotics." The phrase  
27 should not be interpreted as including other problems such as gambling,  
28 overeating, or other such matters.



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1 and their own recovery program. Appearances have made this lesson  
2 difficult but time speaks in its own way and teaches us that the best we  
3 can hope to be is instruments of our own Higher Powers. There is a  
4 mysterious side to service.

5 It is hard to say exactly where the mundane leaves off and the  
6 miracle begins. Evidence that some miraculous Power is at work is best  
7 seen from afar sometimes... Still, members can feel its presence or  
8 absence. Appearances cannot explain the recovery of even one of our  
9 members, much less the hundreds of thousands. We all had pain and  
10 problems and lots of reasons to quit using before N.A. but we could not  
11 stop and somehow, now, we can.

12 In doing service, we have to have some prior knowledge of these  
13 things or we will think of ourselves as the CHAIR of all these members,  
14 their pitiful lives in our hands. That is patently NOT SO.

15 The ability to respond to the duties of a service position without  
16 getting caught up in and distracted by the way others see us or treat us  
17 is the real reason for the clean time requirements. When all else is said  
18 and done, can we show up for the committee meetings? Can we get the  
19 agendas and minutes out on time? Can we help others who might be  
20 having some problems doing their part without forgetting totally our  
21 own? Can we do our part as trusted servants without getting  
22 sanctimonious, critical of others or self righteous?

23 Without discounting any of the foregoing, experience with our  
24 Twelve Steps is included for an obvious reason along with statements  
25 regarding our Traditions and our clean time. They all go together and  
26 we experience them simultaneously. As far as `Knowledge of the  
27 Twelve Steps' goes, can we be expected to serve the needs of others if we  
28 haven't gotten comfortable with our surrender to our disease? Can we  
29 serve without the faith it takes to work out our Third Step and let the

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1 God of our understanding take care of our lives? Can we serve with our  
2 character defects intact? Can we serve without the ability to admit error  
3 where we have wronged someone? The answer to all these questions is  
4 NO. Now, reality has extended itself in our favor enough for meetings to  
5 get started and addicts to get clean in even the smaller towns where we  
6 know there has been little if any ongoing recovery. We also know that  
7 these types of meetings have consistently died out. Sometimes literally,  
8 until our literature efforts had produced our Basic Text, Narcotics  
9 Anonymous.

10 This Tradition says anyone who has the desire to stop using is a  
11 member -- yet also says membership is not automatic simply because  
12 someone walks in the N.A. door. Can someone who still uses be an N.A.  
13 member?

14 The meaning of this is simply that it is our giving evidence of our  
15 desire for recovery which makes us accepted as members by the N.A.  
16 Fellowship. This begins inwardly when the desire to quit using begins in  
17 some terrible moment when we realize that the drugs are using us and  
18 we can for the first time feel our disease robbing us of our lives. The  
19 process continues when we walk through the N.A. doors and find other  
20 addicts like ourselves who have the desire to live clean. We are still a  
21 long way from real recovery. We listen, we share and we learn that  
22 living clean is possible and that the program might work for us. We see  
23 others relapse and yet we are clean. We realize gradually that we will  
24 continue in recovery if we just keep doing what works for us.

25 `Membership' is the recognition of our desire for recovery among  
26 those who are already our members. We have seen those who are  
27 obviously `qualified' for N.A. membership in terms of their using, but  
28 their lack of desire keeps them from putting their recovery first and they  
29 get loaded. Many of those among us today have had to go through

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1 prolonged periods of relapsing before their desire became stronger than  
2 their disease. This is the price many of us have had to pay.

3 If this sounds judgmental on the part of our members, it is not. It  
4 is something of the heart. The language imposes limitations not of our  
5 making. Everyone who comes to N.A. seeking recovery from the disease  
6 of addiction is accepted. This is remarkable because we well know that  
7 everyone who seeks recovery may not be an addict. Perhaps they have  
8 other problems which make them want the acceptance and closeness we  
9 share among ourselves. These people may be accepted and think of  
10 themselves as members and yet not be addicts. This would be a moot  
11 point to bring out except to illustrate that our acceptance of newcomers  
12 far outweighs any tendency to exclude those who might seek our help.

13 Membership is not automatic because only we can make ourselves  
14 members by the things we do. The point needs to be emphasized that  
15 recovery is our responsibility. It is our actions and inactions which will  
16 define us - not what others think or even say about us. In the final  
17 analysis our membership will be acknowledged by our Fellows if it is  
18 there. They will see it in us when we reach out for help although  
19 hurting terribly and scared to death. They will notice us taking time to  
20 help another who needs our help. They will notice that we are asking  
21 questions and showing up at meetings on a regular basis. In time they  
22 will see the pain go out of our faces and realize that our obsession to use  
23 has been lifted from us. When they try to reach out to help in some  
24 way, they will feel our acceptance of their kindness.

25 We define using in terms which are both self-willed and self-  
26 destructive. To answer the last question, using alone may not constitute  
27 relapse. In times of illness or physical injury, we and many members  
28 have come through periods of using in the sense that they had drugs in  
29 their systems but did not show the characteristic behaviors that go with

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1 active addiction. They continued to ask for help, continued to pray and  
2 exhibited personal honesty. All these things, and yet they had the same  
3 chemicals in their bodies which they used in active addiction. Whether  
4 they went through detox at the end of treatment, they were willing.

5 Far more often, we have seen the slightest tendency to deny or be  
6 dishonest grow to overwhelm our members into active, unmistakable  
7 addiction. We see the themes played out in our program constantly and  
8 see ourselves as subject to the same tendencies which have killed so  
9 many of us. In our gratitude and our selfless service, we do the best we  
10 can to stay clean and help others because it is the only way we can have  
11 any hope. Judging others by their performance and ourselves by our  
12 motives is one mistake we have all made. There are those among us  
13 who are forced to take prescribed medication for illness beyond their  
14 control and they do exhibit all the signs of recovery. They are  
15 indistinguishable from other members, so the answer must be `yes`.

16 Back to the original point about distinguishing between self  
17 determined taking in of drugs versus a car wreck where we are dosed  
18 while we are out cold by the side of the road. It is sad that this hair  
19 splitting goes on.

20 Active addiction doesn't mess around. The disease takes us and  
21 we do whatever the disease requires. We don't jolly along, going to  
22 meetings asking questions about recovery, reading spiritual literature  
23 and attempting to serve in various ways others who may benefit from  
24 our actions. WE USE. If an addict is doing their best to stay clean and  
25 showing any kind of desire at all, they can find some N.A. member who  
26 believes in them and will help them in their recovery. They deserve and  
27 need all the encouragement they can get and we try to give it to them.

28 One more messy point: lose your newcomer's respect and you lose  
29 your newcomer...Amazingly, we learn in N.A. how to stand ready to help

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1 but will not do so until we are asked. This is because we intuitively  
2 know that it is the reaching for help, which helps, not what we can  
3 receive from the outside. All we can really do is respond honestly to the  
4 self admitted need of another like ourselves. Of course, we get a lot of  
5 practice in N.A.

6 A general question on membership: How do people find N.A.?  
7 Specifically, are some court-referred?

8 Court referral is no hindrance to N.A. membership. The crucial  
9 elements are the personal pain we experience in our active addiction and  
10 the feelings of relief and hopefulness we find in contact with other clean  
11 addicts following the N.A. way of life. In other words, how we find the  
12 Program is not so important as finding it.

13 Considered as a disease, this apparent problem, i.e., how can  
14 something as Worldly as a court system lead to clean addicts leading  
15 spiritual lives, becomes properly simplified. Someone with cancer who  
16 found freedom from their disease as a result of legal direction would  
17 likely say, "So what! I'm glad that I found a way to arrest my disease.  
18 I'm grateful, even to the court!"

19 "Desire is the key word. Desire is the basis of our recovery."  
20 Recovery is of equal importance to each and every addict. It is our  
21 ability to accept the personal responsibility of it that varies. We all have  
22 one thing in common. We suffer from the disease of addiction, and will  
23 to some degree, until we are relieved of the responsibility human life  
24 carries with it.

25 "A desire to stop using" is not "the only requirement for  
26 membership" (Tradition 3) of our committees. Some of us must be  
27 elected, others may be chosen by drawing lots. A desire to comply with  
28 the spiritual intent of this principle is necessary to P.I. work and will be  
29 reflected in our Fellowship. "Addiction does not discriminate. This

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1 Tradition is to insure that any addict, regardless of drugs used, race,  
2 religion, beliefs, sex, sexual preference, or financial conditions, is free to  
3 practice the N.A. way of life."

4 Open-mindedness seems to be called for here. In order to work  
5 within the spirit of this Tradition, we need to be aware of what we  
6 haven't been doing, and plan our P.I. efforts accordingly. We may find it  
7 helpful to ask ourselves some tough questions. Find out who is missing  
8 from our meetings, and why.

9 Vigilance and desire, when united, become honest effort. The  
10 Third Tradition gives definition to our anonymity, and "Anonymity is the  
11 spiritual foundation of all our Traditions." Our efforts are our recovery  
12 speaking to the world of our existence.

13  
14

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15 Please accept for inclusion in the Third Tradition portion of It  
16 Works: How and Why the following correlation suggested by the  
17 principle inherent in our Third Tradition:

18 "One correlation suggested by the principle of our Third Tradition  
19 is any person with the desire to stop using may attend any regular N.A.  
20 meeting, anywhere a regular meeting is being held, and if a person with  
21 the desire to stop using is kept from attending the N.A. meeting because  
22 of any rule or regulation outside of our Twelve Traditions, then the  
23 meeting is in violation of N.A.'s Third Tradition."

24  
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26 Do I touch on the early days in N.A. when pill users weren't  
27 welcome, to illustrate how N.A. has expanded its scope since then?

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1           In the days when there was no literature, our members had not  
2 yet discovered the power of simply telling the truth in writing. Since  
3 those times, an enormous increase in written materials has resulted from  
4 the discovery that as long as we are speaking from our real personal and  
5 collective experience, no one can deny us.

6           For this reason, and the value of letting our history speak  
7 for our principles, we should tell our story as completely and honestly as  
8 we can.

9           The phrase `expanded its scope' is imprecise. We have simply  
10 learned more about our disease and our recovery process. Tradition  
11 Three is developed in Narcotics Anonymous to include rather than  
12 exclude. One definition of `narcotics' is `sleep or dream inducing' and  
13 this word tells a lot about our disease. While Webster's may never  
14 change, we share the pain of our nightmares and the joy of awakening to  
15 find ourselves clean, alive and not alone.

16           Not only pill addicts were excluded. Our recovery process was  
17 only known to a certain point. Surely there were isionaries but judging  
18 by the divisive elements we have had to overcome in our own times,  
19 their influence was probably limited. One of the purposes which guided  
20 us in the creation of our Basic Text was the knowledge that we would no  
21 longer limit our message to our personalities. Even today the problem of  
22 getting along with the personality in a small town with perhaps only one  
23 meeting a week is only surmountable because we have at last a written  
24 message. In days gone by these small meetings almost always died out.

25           The principle of anonymity applies here because we have learned  
26 to set aside our personal preference in favor of the primary purpose of  
27 our groups. We have learned that what is good for N.A. is usually best  
28 for us.

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1           Are people who are clean but use prescription drugs on doctor's  
2 orders "users" or not ?

3           Again, the only way which presents itself to answer such a  
4 question is to observe the people who come to our meetings, claim  
5 membership in N.A. and are recognized as such by their local Fellowship.  
6 In other words, theorizing or moralizing about this type of question is  
7 generally useless and arouses passions among our people without really  
8 helping anyone. It is true that N.A. is a program of total abstinence and  
9 that clean means not using any chemicals whatsoever. It is also true  
10 that we eat, drink coffee and many of us smoke cigarettes! All of these  
11 things have some effect on our 'cleanliness,' state of mind and spiritual  
12 condition. The great thing about N.A. is that we have a practical  
13 approach to these things which may not always be easy to write down  
14 but works out pretty well in practice.

15           In all likelihood, most if not all of us clean addicts will at some  
16 time have to take some prescribed medication whether we want it or not,  
17 for medical reasons. The same principles which help us stay clean in  
18 normal circumstances do not cease to work for us here. Prayer, being  
19 honest with our doctors and asking for the special help we need to get  
20 through a period of illness from our friends can help us maintain our  
21 recovery.

22           "Users" are addicts in a state of active addiction. Sick people who  
23 may be recovering addicts in N.A. with no real say so in the matter do  
24 not generally exhibit the qualities associated with being loaded. They  
25 don't fear discovery. They don't lie, cheat or steal. If they do these  
26 things, they shift from using prescribed drugs to using whatever they can  
27 get their hands on pretty fast. So, in practice there is usually a  
28 recognizable difference between someone who is using as opposed to  
29 taking medication on doctor's orders. In fact, many of these who claim to

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1 have been taking prescribed medication and have done as well as  
2 members, have slipped into hellish pain and insanity when they  
3 discontinued the medication because they wanted to be 'really clean.'

4 Using should be defined with all the attributes of self-  
5 centeredness, dishonesty and fear that goes with active addiction.  
6 Medication in times of illness has always been in a sort of 'not good but  
7 let's try to make the best of it and stand by our friend who is hurting'  
8 category. Never will we as a Fellowship condone 'using'. In practice,  
9 we do well with our members who get sick and reach out for help.

10 Personally, I don't think an addict in active addiction can take  
11 prescribed drugs as prescribed. This 'as prescribed' factor is enough of a  
12 qualifier to separate in my mind someone who is using to get high from  
13 someone who has surrendered and is doing as they are told by a  
14 physician knowledgeable about the disease of addiction. More and more  
15 doctors are becoming knowledgeable about addiction as well as our  
16 recovery process. Our message has to include useful information on how  
17 to avoid relapse in illness.

18 There seems to be some question as to whether all members are  
19 properly represented, prison inmates, for example.

20 Our service structure is a response to our need for order and the  
21 functional needs of our Fellowship. I can agree with the technical point  
22 that group conscience materials rarely make it inside prison walls but  
23 this is a situation which may be corrected at any time. There is no  
24 obstacle to such distribution of group conscience materials and input  
25 from such members. In fact, we have the genesis of informing,  
26 involving and gathering input from such members today in the form of  
27 the 'Reaching Out.'

28 It is hard to emphasize this need in a time period where we are  
29 still working out some of the base lines for structures yet to come. The

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1 occasion of this input is a case in point! Group conscience materials do  
2 not make it through our structure to most members period, not just  
3 those in jail. It is not anyone's fault, either. The members who are  
4 really interested in them tend to get them and those who aren't will  
5 leave them on the table if you don't put them in their hands.

6           Difference between group and N.A. membership.

7           (I am embarrassed to respond to this question because it sounds  
8 like an individual member's opinion is being questioned rather than  
9 input from the member who wrote the original service structure after  
10 much discussion, study and deliberation.)

11           The difference between group membership and N.A. membership  
12 is the commitment made to a particular group by a particular member.  
13 In all versions of our service structure over the years, in the section on  
14 the group it mentions the steering committee of a group which is made  
15 up of those people who regularly attend, support a group and attend the  
16 business meetings. The steering committee is made up of those who  
17 consider themselves to be 'members of the group'. I guess it may help  
18 the material on the Third Tradition to bring this distinction out more. It  
19 is also being addressed in the material, 'A Guide To Service.'

20           Basically, there is a philosophical difference between someone who  
21 stays clean, attends meetings regularly, reads the literature, has an  
22 N.A. sponsor and all the other things we do as members but who has not  
23 yet become a member of a group. These are ways we receive in N.A. A  
24 member of a group one way or another has become a giver.

25           It is a natural part of the process of identification with other clean  
26 addicts to reach a point where we want to give back some of what has  
27 been freely given to us. This is hard to do since we don't charge for our  
28 services. The main option is some form of service. The same material in  
29 'The Temporary Working Guide' says it is at the group level that the

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1 concept of trusted servant comes into being. Trusted servants generally  
2 begin as formal or informal group members. In the case of many groups,  
3 the secretary reads a statement which goes like this: "You become a  
4 member of N.A. when you say you are. You may also become a member  
5 of this group by seeing the secretary of the group after this meeting and  
6 giving them your name and address."

7 Only a member who regularly attends a group meeting would do  
8 this and only a grateful member would be interested in committing to a  
9 particular group and becoming someone who helps greet the newcomers,  
10 occasionally may chair or lead the meeting, help the secretary set up or  
11 clean up, etc. A special bond develops between members who do this. It  
12 is a deepening of their N.A. experience. It is also visible evidence of  
13 surrender, faith, selflessness and having been mended to some extent. It  
14 is more literally 'a part of' N.A. than 'apart from'.

15 Group membership also means that the member has a "home  
16 group." This group membership is a way for the average N.A. member  
17 to discover for themselves the real basis of love and unity which goes into  
18 a meeting. In every town, there was some first meeting which still  
19 continues to meet. Those members who attended and supported that  
20 first meeting are the founders of N.A. in their community. Becoming a  
21 member of an existing group or committing to a new one, we feel the  
22 same air of responsibility as founders. If we're not there, then we are  
23 missed, more so than a member who may occasionally attend. If we  
24 have accepted some responsibility such as laying out the literature,  
25 making the coffee, etc., this is even more true. If we are the first one to  
26 arrive and unlock the building, then the responsibility and commitment  
27 became even more obvious. If we don't do what we've committed to do,  
28 than N.A. may not have a meeting that night!

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1           The difference between a newcomer sick, confused and unable to  
2 do for themselves, and someone who freely and willingly commits to a  
3 meeting, is obvious and is very real evidence that our recovery process  
4 works.

5

6           Dual addiction in context of N.A. membership.

7           Narcotics Anonymous is a program of total abstinence from all  
8 drugs. The question involves other forms of addiction which do not  
9 necessarily involve drugs in any form. In recovery, we find ourselves  
10 faced with most if not all of these substitute addictions and part of the  
11 way the Twelve Steps work is to help us survive our addiction once the  
12 chemicals have been removed.

13           The pain of our active addiction is usually the first point of  
14 identification with clean addicts that we get as new members. Our  
15 stories are hard to make up. The terms 'food addict' and 'food problem'  
16 are so specific that they imply the person had no primary problem with  
17 using drugs or in getting and staying clean. The basis for identity might  
18 therefore be missing. This would affect the person's potential for  
19 recovery in N.A. since it would be difficult or impossible for them to find  
20 the widespread basis for identifying with and feeling personally a part of  
21 our Fellowship. If the person had gotten help from or identified  
22 themselves as members of another Twelve Step program, the problem of  
23 identification and the basis for mutual sharing would almost certainly  
24 become a major obstacle for them.

25           In dealing with this sort of question, it is again generally helpful  
26 to observe or find out what we actually do in our meetings in cases such  
27 as this. It is doubtful that a newcomer who went on and on about their  
28 food addiction would be asked to leave out of hand. If, on the other  
29 hand, someone with a food problem attended one of our meetings and

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1 extolled the virtues of another program and began recruiting addicts who  
2 had come to the N.A. meeting seeking recovery to go to some other  
3 program, it would go against the primary purpose of our groups. This  
4 would require action on the part of the discussion leader or the chair and  
5 perhaps members of the steering committee. The person would have to  
6 be told that they were out of order, for the N.A. meeting to continue and  
7 get back on recovery. This has actually happened and is no more a big  
8 deal than the other forms of disruption we have to deal with from time  
9 to time. It is a matter of honesty with us. We do not claim to have all  
10 the answers for all the ills which the human race suffers from. It is  
11 enough for us to carry our message to those who seek it.

12 This would not be dual addiction to us. Dual addiction is not an  
13 N.A. term. It implies that different drugs result in separate and distinct  
14 addictions and that is not true in our experience.

15

16 **Special interest groups.**

17 Even while a newly formed Ad-Hoc Committee of the WSC  
18 continues to work on this question, some things are clear and are likely  
19 to remain clear.

20 Some of our members feel that special interest groups are  
21 important enough to take the time and trouble to form them. They feel  
22 that identification is needed in some special sense to carry our message  
23 to certain types of members who may have trouble identifying with the  
24 N.A. Fellowship in general. Many members have strong opinions on this  
25 and the problem, if it is a problem, will likely go on.

26 We have found that to survive, a group must carry a sufficient  
27 message of recovery to have something to offer the newcomer seeking  
28 recovery. Where this is not the case, the group fails and ceases to meet.

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1           It may be that members who form a `special interest' group have  
2 the problem identifying with the general membership and they are  
3 serving their own needs which, in light of our generally flexible attitude  
4 to such issues, is fine with most members. Problems have occurred  
5 where such meetings become so specialized that local members are not  
6 comfortable sending newcomers there who would have difficulty  
7 identifying with the recovery of the special interest involved... In these  
8 cases, the meetings would have trouble getting listed on the meeting  
9 directory as an ordinary N.A. meeting which, by its own description, it is  
10 not.

11  
12

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13           At first glance, this tradition seems quite simple to understand  
14 and apply. It tells us who can be a member of Narcotics Anonymous;  
15 anyone that has a desire to stop using. However, like all of our twenty-  
16 four principles, there is a greater depth of understanding that can be  
17 gained through closer examination. At a personal level, the Third  
18 Tradition teaches us that no matter what happens today, both good or  
19 bad, if we "don't pick up the first one" we have a chance to get better.  
20 There is much more to recovery in Narcotics Anonymous than not using  
21 drugs, but we'll never experience the other miracles if we don't stay  
22 clean. The Third Tradition also teaches us acceptance of others on an  
23 equal basis. Old prejudices and personality judgments that we brought  
24 in the door with us have no place here. Whether a person is black or  
25 white, man or woman, young or old, aggressive or humble, boastful or  
26 shy, old-timer or newcomer, heterosexual or gay, financially successful or  
27 unemployed, happy or hurting, healthy or sick, etc. has no bearing nor  
28 meaning in NA. We all belong here equally as much, and on an equal

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1 basis. The Third Tradition asks us to put the humility we gained from  
2 the Twelve Steps into practice. Total acceptance without judgement or  
3 expectation is the spiritual goal of the Third Tradition.

4

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- 1 IV. By adhering to the Twelve Traditions, we help to strengthen N.A.
- 2 A. Typical violations.
- 3 B. What autonomy isn't (not self-will, not uniformity).
- 4 C. Autonomy (or lack of) in service committees.
- 5 V. Relationship of Tradition 4 to areas, groups, region.
- 6 VI. Conclusion and lead in to Tradition 5.
- 7
- 8



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1 participation by all group members, rather than being dominated or  
2 influenced by individual personalities. Accepting responsibility as a  
3 group, providing N.A. literature, and utilizing group conscience are other  
4 factors which benefit the group. A strong, healthy N.A. group follows  
5 the concept of trusted servants, carefully selecting and encouraging  
6 experienced members to accept positions of responsibility, and being  
7 accountable to the group. The group concerns itself only with its  
8 primary purpose, and does not dictate to other groups or service  
9 committees. It participates in area and regional activities, striving  
10 always to be supportive and cooperative, assisting other groups and N.A.  
11 as a whole. Applying Tradition Four in this way keeps a group healthy  
12 and creates an atmosphere of recovery.

13       The group is the first place most addicts learn about the N.A.  
14 Fellowship. The effectiveness of our groups depends on how well our  
15 groups follow the Twelve Traditions. Where Tradition One shows us the  
16 importance of unity, Tradition Four reminds us of the importance that  
17 the individual group plays in the recovery process. The Fourth Tradition  
18 allows us to step back and question if we are honestly following the  
19 Twelve Traditions and fulfilling our primary purpose. This provides us  
20 with an opportunity to do our own housecleaning.

21       Some N.A. groups apply autonomy by appealing to specific types  
22 of people (i.e., professionals, men, women, young people, gay/lesbian,  
23 etc.). However, N.A. groups do not close themselves off to any addict  
24 who may need to attend a meeting. In appealing to special groups, we  
25 need to remember that no N.A. group should ever attach its name to any  
26 other group inside or outside of N.A.

27       An example of this is illustrated by groups who rent meeting space  
28 in facilities which treat addiction. A natural inclination may be to name  
29 the group after the facility, such as "the General Hospital Group."

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1    However, this practice serves to confuse newcomers and prevents the  
2    group from developing a personality or sense of autonomy from the  
3    facility.

4            Narcotics Anonymous groups are located throughout the world.  
5    We speak many languages and meet in a wide variety of facilities. Were  
6    it not for the varied flavors of our groups, some of us might become bored  
7    with regular attendance. How many times have we tired of hearing "the  
8    same old thing," and then attended a meeting only to hear a new twist  
9    on a familiar theme: This is a positive way our groups display their  
10   autonomy.

11           A group's autonomy also allows the members of the group to get to  
12   know one another on a personal level. A bond develops between us first  
13   in our group, and later with other groups around us. Finally, we learn it  
14   is all right to be a part of Narcotics Anonymous, no matter who or where  
15   we are.

16           Without sacrificing our individuality, we can meet with  
17   representatives of other N.A. groups. In this way, we exchange ideas  
18   and improve our effectiveness in carrying the message, which is the  
19   primary purpose of every group. Such communication serves another  
20   purpose; by giving us experience in the principles of the Twelve  
21   Traditions. Just as we use a sponsor to guide us in practicing the  
22   Twelve Steps in our personal recovery, so we can benefit from the  
23   experience of other members and groups in practicing the traditions. In  
24   our lack of knowledge, it is possible that we might inadvertently break  
25   traditions. Fortunately, other groups and members help us by making  
26   us aware of any such errors, so that we don't bring harm to any group or  
27   N.A. as a whole. This is the value of our autonomy--to become a **part of**  
28   rather than **apart from** each other.

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1           When we use our autonomy for the good of the group, we must be  
2 careful that our actions do not hurt other Narcotics Anonymous groups.  
3 What are some matters affecting other groups? Spreading gossip from  
4 one group to another or drawing members from another group are two  
5 practices which could harm other groups. We are careful, too, not to  
6 unduly influence the group conscience. If the group experience troubles  
7 or conflicts which cannot be resolved, we encourage the group to seek  
8 help from the area service committee, rather than involve other groups  
9 or members.

10           Some would ask, "Doesn't autonomy mean we can do whatever we  
11 can?" To this, we answer "Yes, we do have this freedom. But we need  
12 always remember our freedom as a group stops wherever it violates the  
13 freedom of other groups or N.A. as a whole." The Fourth Tradition  
14 encourages each group not to be self-governing, but to be governed by an  
15 Ultimate Authority as expressed in the group conscience. While  
16 autonomy is a very good thing, it can also become a potential danger if it  
17 is used as an excuse to violate the Twelve Traditions or to cut the group  
18 off from communication with the area or region. We follow Tradition  
19 Four, with the other traditions, to maintain the unity of N.A. on a group  
20 level and on all levels. We can use a simple rule of thumb: we make  
21 sure that our actions are clearly within the bounds of the Twelve  
22 Traditions; we don't represent anyone but ourselves; we don't dictate to  
23 other groups or force anything upon them; and we take the time to  
24 consider the consequences of our actions ahead of time. Then we trust  
25 that all will be well.

26           Group autonomy should always be high on the list of priorities,  
27 but if the group matters affect N.A. as a whole, this needs to be held  
28 above all other considerations. Some of the matters affecting N.A. as a  
29 whole include developing and reviewing new literature, following the

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1 suggested fund flow and participating and supporting N.A. at all levels of  
2 service. By getting involved in N.A. service boards or committees, we  
3 demonstrate our support through action. Each group exercises its  
4 autonomy in choosing to become involved with the rest of the N.A.  
5 Fellowship.

6 The actions of a group do indeed affect other parts of the  
7 Fellowship. A positive effect enhances personal recovery and N.A. as a  
8 whole, while a negative effect stunts our growth and makes the  
9 Fellowship unattractive to the newcomer. Therefore, group autonomy  
10 should always be within the framework of the Twelve Traditions. In this  
11 way, we increase the group's effectiveness, strengthen N.A. as a whole,  
12 and provide new opportunities to carry the message of recovery.

13 Some people believe that being different is practicing autonomy.  
14 At times, group autonomy has been used to justify the violation of the  
15 N.A. traditions. However, the Twelve Traditions cannot be manipulated  
16 or compromised without consequences. We read in Tradition Three that  
17 "true spiritual principles are never in conflict; they complement each  
18 other." When there is such a conflict, the spiritual principles of the  
19 traditions are violated and therefore affect N.A. as a whole.

20 Some members hide behind the misconception that the Twelve  
21 Traditions are only suggested, and use that fallacy to justify their  
22 distorted version of autonomy. It is an unhealthy motive that brings the  
23 attempt to control to the front. Experience has shown us that an  
24 Ultimate Authority, expressed through the group conscience, always  
25 prevails. In keeping with a trusted servant concept and encouraging the  
26 members to take responsibility for their group, the need to feel a part of  
27 N.A. as a whole becomes fulfilled.

28 An example of a group's decision which affected N.A. as a whole  
29 follows: one group, in the name of autonomy, decided to reproduce

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1 approved N.A. literature because it was cheaper than buying it at the  
2 regular price from the area, region, or World Service Office. This may  
3 seem all right on the surface, but if we look deeper, we find that this  
4 hurts us all in the end. Actions such as these do not allow funds to flow  
5 in the necessary manner for the production of new literature, so that  
6 N.A. may reach as many addicts as possible.

7 In considering this and similar examples, we see that we have to  
8 hold true to our Twelve Traditions. The history of N.A. proves that by  
9 following our traditions, N.A. works. N.A. has experienced certain trials  
10 and tribulations throughout its growth, but it has survived and  
11 prospered. It has, in fact, flourished and become stronger because of the  
12 integrity gained through holding fast to the Twelve Traditions. Since  
13 recovery is our goal, we follow the past experiences of the Fellowship  
14 with regard to our Fourth Tradition.

15 Some members travel in their recovery. This provides the  
16 opportunity of meeting other recovering addicts throughout the  
17 worldwide Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. This experience often  
18 precipitates an awareness of the freedom the Fourth Tradition gives  
19 Narcotics Anonymous. We see that N.A. works in many different cities  
20 and countries, regardless of the building, meeting format, or language  
21 used. We see and hear the N.A. message carried through one addict  
22 helping another. We become grateful for the autonomy of Tradition  
23 Four, and willingly accept the responsibility which it requires. At this  
24 very moment, somewhere, the N.A. message is being delivered. The  
25 proof of N.A.'s validity is in the fact that our members stay clean. We  
26 do recover!

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1986/1987 Unpublished Draft

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Autonomy? Many of us weren't sure what the word meant when we first read the Fourth Tradition. Even if we knew what it meant we weren't quite sure how it fit into N.A. and its groups. Turning to the dictionary helped. A dictionary definition of autonomy goes, "Having the right or power of self-government ... undertaken or carried on without outside control." So now we could--or thought we could--make sense of the Fourth Tradition. It meant that wherever we attended meetings--in New York City; in Santa Fe, New Mexico; in Portland, Oregon; in Tokyo, Japan; in Paris, France; in Bogata, Columbia, in San Diego, California--nobody could tell our groups what to do. Nobody could set up rules and regulations for us. We did that for ourselves. We were self-governing.

How we liked that! The arrogance which was a mark of our addiction had always kept us from listening to advice, no matter who it came from or how sound it was. Many of us hated to be told what to do. Many of us always knew better what was best for us. Many of us were ill at ease with the Twelve Steps and the Traditions--especially the Traditions--because they sounded too much like rules to us. But the Fourth Tradition was different--at least in the way we chose to interpret it at first. Many of us saw it as allowing our groups complete freedom. We glossed over--or decided to ignore--that part of the Fourth Tradition stating we were autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or N.A. as a whole. Even if the words registered in our minds, we couldn't figure out how the goings-on in our own home groups could affect groups elsewhere or the Fellowship as a whole.

Consequently, it becomes easy to disregard the full intent of the Fourth Tradition, to interpret it in ways that are basically self-serving.

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1 Often we're not even aware that we're misinterpreting this tradition; no  
2 deliberate harm is meant. But whenever we do disregard or  
3 misinterpret a tradition it causes harm to ourselves, our groups and--at  
4 times--to the Fellowship as a whole. The Fourth Tradition is no  
5 exception. For instance, when a group conducts its business with the  
6 attitude, "We're autonomous so we can do anything we want," it can  
7 easily breed the kind of discord that pits group against group. That  
8 makes a mockery of our First Tradition with its emphasis on unity.  
9 Whenever our unity is threatened, so is our atmosphere of recovery.

10 The autonomy of our groups in N.A. is very important. It's one of  
11 our most precious possessions. Autonomy defines the individuality of the  
12 group. It allows each group to develop its own personality and grow.  
13 Just as individuals learn from their mistakes, so does each of our groups  
14 grow and become stronger through its experience. Autonomy permits  
15 each group to make its own decisions about its methods of carrying the  
16 message of recovery. In this way, each group takes responsibility for  
17 fulfilling its primary purpose.

18 While autonomy means we have the freedom to do whatever we  
19 want, we need always remember that our freedom as a group stops  
20 wherever it violates the freedom of other groups or of N.A. as a whole.  
21 The Fourth Tradition encourages each group not to be self-governing but  
22 to be governed by an Ultimate Authority as expressed in the group  
23 conscience. While autonomy is a very good thing, it can also become a  
24 potential danger if it is used as an excuse to violate the Twelve  
25 Traditions or to cut the group off from communication with the area or  
26 region. We follow Tradition Four, along with the other Twelve  
27 Traditions, to maintain N.A.'s unity at all levels. We can use a simple  
28 rule of thumb: We make sure that our actions are clearly within the  
29 bounds of the Twelve Traditions; we don't represent anyone but

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1 ourselves; we don't dictate to other groups or force anything upon them;  
2 and we take the time to consider the consequences of our actions ahead  
3 of time. Then we trust that all will be well.

4 We were quick to understand the importance of autonomy to our  
5 groups when we thought about the importance of autonomy in our  
6 private homes. Normally, in our homes, our houses, we feel safe.  
7 They're familiar. Our patterns of living are familiar. This familiarity  
8 gives us a sense of security we wouldn't have if we were subject to  
9 abrupt changes not in our control. Even family squabbles, unless carried  
10 to extremes, don't shake this feeling of security. Except when we break  
11 the law, what we do in our houses isn't subject to outside interference.  
12 Our neighbors don't tell us how to run our households. Neither does the  
13 city, state or federal government.

14 In a spiritual way, our N.A. groups are also "home." We feel safe  
15 in our meetings with our friends. We're familiar with meeting formats;  
16 we know more or less what to expect each time we attend a meeting.  
17 We know what's expected of us. Nothing is suddenly changed on us. We  
18 may have internal disagreements in our groups, but unless they really  
19 get out of control we can handle them as we handle family squabbles.  
20 Our N.A. groups provide us with the sense of living and caring, the sense  
21 of security, we need in order to recover.

22 What if our groups weren't our "own?" What if outsiders--not  
23 members of N.A.--told us how to run our groups? It occasionally  
24 happens--most often because of Tradition Six or Seven violations--and  
25 causes much distress. What if other N.A. groups or committees or  
26 regions or areas could tell us exactly how we should run our meetings?  
27 They might set unacceptable meeting times for us, or speakers and  
28 discussion topics we don't want. They might tell us how many closed  
29 meetings to have, and how many open ones. They might tell us we

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1 should end our meetings with this or that prayer. They might dictate to  
2 us in many ways that don't take into account our local needs. With our  
3 meetings always subject to outside interference, we'd probably organize  
4 some powerful protest actions. Our unity would vanish. Our feelings of  
5 safety in N.A. would go.

6 The Fourth Tradition keeps others from interfering with our  
7 groups; it also keeps us from interfering with other groups. As addicts  
8 lots of us resisted any interference with our lives--but we hardly ever  
9 hesitated in telling other people how to live their lives, even if they were  
10 getting along ten thousand times better than we were. Some of us even  
11 sneered at people who didn't use, maybe even tried to talk them into  
12 using drugs. This was part of our addict's arrogance, and often got us  
13 into trouble. It takes time, often a long time, to rid ourselves of it. So,  
14 unmindful of the Fourth Tradition, some of us have used the power of  
15 our groups to interfere with the workings of other groups.

16 Even relatively minor issues can set one group against another.  
17 In one city two N.A. groups were strongly at odds with each other,  
18 though in more peaceful times members of each group had gone to the  
19 other's meetings. Their conflict had to do with light--specifically, the soft  
20 lights and candlelight with which the first group decided to illuminate its  
21 meeting. Members of the second group said this lighting was frivolous,  
22 not in keeping with N.A.'s spiritual nature, and insisted that the first  
23 group change it. Obviously, the second group was interfering with the  
24 autonomy of the first, which played havoc with unity in that community.  
25 There was other negative fall-out. Both groups spent so much time and  
26 energy in fighting each other, they lost sight of their primary purpose, to  
27 carry the message of recovery to suffering addicts.

28 Fights between groups are often akin to family fights--whatever  
29 the superficial fight is all about, on a deeper level it's really about

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1 something else. When a husband and wife have a shouting match about  
2 who left the cap off the toothpaste tube, for instance, it often turns out  
3 that their basic fight has nothing to do with the toothpaste. Sometimes  
4 they're actually involved in a power fight-- about who's going to be boss  
5 at home. Sometimes the fight is really a message from one to the other,  
6 "I'm angry with you because you're not treating me right." Similarly,  
7 when two N.A. groups are at each other's throats, the surface fight may  
8 be about something as superficial as candlelight vs. regular light rather  
9 than about deep spiritual principles. Yet underneath, the fight may be  
10 an expression of fear. Each group may fear, "If it isn't done our way,  
11 N.A. will be threatened." Each group may fear, "If it isn't done our  
12 way, newcomers will be neglected." Then again, a passionate fight  
13 between two groups may also basically be a power fight--each group  
14 wanting to have its own way.

15 The lesson that autonomy not only gives us freedom but requires  
16 us to respect the freedom of others is a valuable one. It serves us well in  
17 our personal lives, too. Once we learn it, we no longer try to impose our  
18 views on the people around us. We adopt a "live-and-let-live"  
19 philosophy, which eases our relationships with all kinds of people.

20 In its stress on autonomy, the Fourth Tradition encourages N.A.  
21 groups to develop in their own unique ways. Diversity in turn  
22 encourages us to be creative, to work up formats and meetings that  
23 reach out to addicts in a variety of ways. In one area, because the  
24 members are so inclined, a group may emphasize step and tradition  
25 meetings. In another, speaker meetings may be emphasized.

26 We're a diverse bunch. Even if most addicts in a particular group  
27 have more or less the same background, there's likely to be a great  
28 variety of personalities. We don't all want or respond to the same  
29 things. Having the autonomy to shape our groups according to members'

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1 needs, and the dictates of our group conscience, enables us to provide  
2 meetings that satisfy all. In a U.S. city, for example, two meetings were  
3 held on Saturday evenings. One was a speaker participation meeting so  
4 popular that it regularly pulled several hundred people. The other, a  
5 discussion meeting, usually drew no more than thirty people tops. The  
6 first was noisy, active. The second was quiet, reflective in tone. Few of  
7 the members who felt comfortable in the speaker participation meeting  
8 were at ease in the discussion meeting, and vice versa. But both groups  
9 were needed. Both were carrying the message of recovery, each in its  
10 own way.

11       Though both groups ran meetings on the same night they were  
12 cooperative, not competitive, with each other. This is in accord with our  
13 spiritual principles. Our purpose isn't to collect "bodies" so we can boast  
14 about our attendance, but to offer a place of recovery for any suffering  
15 addict who wishes to come. Occasionally two groups will fight, or one  
16 will spread malicious gossip about the other--but no group has cornered  
17 the market on God's voice. No group is more important or special than  
18 another.

19       The more effective all our groups are, the more we will grow. And  
20 the wider will be the circle of addicts we reach. When a particular  
21 meeting becomes so large as to be unwieldy, the meeting often is split in  
22 two. Each of the smaller meetings then develops differently, to meet the  
23 needs of the members who attend. But neither group is superior to the  
24 other; both carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

25       Each of our groups, like each individual in a group, is but a small  
26 part of a greater whole. Much of our freedom results from this balance.  
27 We experience freedom when we respect the freedom of others. Group  
28 autonomy gives interest to our meetings, while maintaining the spiritual  
29 qualities of N.A.

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1           While the Fourth Tradition refers only to our groups, it also affects  
2 our area and regional service committees and subcommittees. All our  
3 committees are directly responsible to those they serve. Therefore, it's  
4 each group's responsibility to see to it that their committees and  
5 subcommittees consider the implications of their actions on N.A. as a  
6 whole.

7           Confusion sometimes exists about the autonomy of service boards  
8 and committees. Boards and committees aren't independent of the  
9 groups they serve. They are, instead, responsible to those groups.  
10 Specifically, they're delegated the authority to carry out their tasks.  
11 Because of the great potential impact their actions and decisions have on  
12 other groups and regions, they should always adhere to the second half of  
13 the Fourth Tradition, making sure that what they do doesn't adversely  
14 affect N.A. as a whole. In fact, sometimes a seemingly minor or  
15 innocuous decision can affect other groups and areas in unexpected ways.  
16 Say, for example, that the Denver Region decides to create thirty-second  
17 public service announcements and have them shown on local television  
18 stations. Presumably, this has no effect on groups elsewhere. In reality,  
19 it does. Those thirty-second spots may also be seen by television viewers  
20 in neighboring states like New Mexico, Nebraska and Wyoming. If  
21 groups in those areas aren't alerted beforehand, they could well be  
22 flooded with calls from potential newcomers and not be prepared to help  
23 them.

24 [Insert to come: H&I viewed themselves as having autonomy from  
25 their regions or areas exercising autonomy in making decisions within  
26 group conscience of region...?

27           In N.A. we practice autonomy--but we're also interdependent. No  
28 N.A. group can stand alone. In order to be effective in fulfilling its  
29 purpose, it needs its ties and bonds with other groups, it needs its links

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1 at the local, regional and world levels. Too, our links with each other  
2 enable us to forge a strong, committed Fellowship. We support each  
3 other, learn from each other, exchange experiences valuable to us all.  
4 We profit from the lessons other groups have learned in practicing the  
5 Twelve Traditions, so that we bring no harm to any group or to N.A. as  
6 a whole.

7 Being connected to N.A. groups everywhere offers us still other  
8 rewards. Some of us travel in our recovery. This gives us the  
9 opportunity to meet other recovering addicts throughout our worldwide  
10 Fellowship. We hear the message of recovery expressed in a variety of  
11 ways fresh to our ears. We come away invigorated

12 A number of N.A. groups around the country apply autonomy by  
13 appealing to particular categories of addicts. For instance, there are  
14 women's groups, gay and lesbian groups, biker groups, teenager groups,  
15 and groups composed of professionals. Often called "common interest"  
16 groups, they're meetings where addicts with common needs can discuss  
17 addiction and recovery within the framework of those needs. It's while  
18 attending such meetings that some addicts first begin to feel at home in  
19 N.A. Common interest groups don't violate the Fourth Tradition as long  
20 as they refrain from adopting a name other than N.A.'s, and don't close  
21 themselves off to any addict who may need to attend a meeting. The  
22 N.A. Traditions require all N.A. groups to keep their doors open to any  
23 suffering addict who chooses to walk in. Many common needs groups  
24 make it a point to emphasize, in their announcements, that they're open  
25 to everyone.

26 We like the Fourth Tradition because it stresses autonomy, and we  
27 like autonomy because it enables us to shape our meetings in accordance  
28 with our N.A. community's needs. But we have a tendency to interpret  
29 autonomy as meaning, "We in our groups can do anything we want

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1 regardless of what anybody says." We find it easy to forget this  
2 tradition's qualifying phrase, "...except in matters affecting other groups  
3 or N.A. as a whole."

4       Autonomy is not the same thing as absolute freedom. When we  
5 think it is, we're sure to transgress one or more of our Twelve Traditions  
6 in addition to the Fourth. In the name of autonomy, some groups have  
7 brought in speakers who were not members of N.A. or used literature  
8 not approved by N.A. These are violations of the Sixth Tradition. In  
9 the name of autonomy some groups have converted step study meetings  
10 into Bible study meetings. This is also a breach of the Sixth. In the  
11 name of autonomy some groups have held on to all donations instead of  
12 participating in the fund flow that benefits the entire membership. This  
13 goes counter to the spirit of the Seventh Tradition. In the name of  
14 autonomy, and to save money, some groups have attempted to print  
15 their own literature. This compromises both the Seventh and the First  
16 Traditions; it's a we'll-go-it-alone attitude that damages our unity.

17       Many of us have read the second part of the Fourth Tradition with  
18 at least a little skepticism. We found it hard to believe that what  
19 happens in one group can seriously affect another group. We found it  
20 even harder to believe that the actions of a single group can affect N.A.  
21 as a whole. Yet we found our skepticism crumbling a bit when we heard  
22 about or were involved in incidents that show how connected we all are.  
23 In a large city members of one group tried to raid another group for  
24 members, even spreading lies about that other group. The anger and  
25 divisiveness this caused finally affected all of N.A. in that area.  
26 Elsewhere a group experiencing serious internal conflicts appealed to  
27 other groups in the area for help. Members rushed in to take sides;  
28 again there was the always-destructive divisiveness. If a group  
29 experiences conflicts which cannot be resolved, their most constructive

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1 approach is to seek help from the area service committee, rather than  
2 involving other groups and members.

3 In yet another town, an N.A. group rented space in a church. The  
4 members were so rowdy, however, that neighbors complained. The  
5 group had to leave and no other N.A. group in that town was allowed to  
6 rent space in the church. And N.A. members at a convention in a  
7 desirable hotel behaved so aggressively and irresponsibly that the hotel  
8 refused to rent to N.A. again. In these rare instances, and others like  
9 them, N.A.'s reputation clearly suffered. The community saw us as wild  
10 addicts--not addicts seriously seeking recovery by means of a spiritual  
11 program. Communities whose cooperation we needed turned against us,  
12 and very probably addicts who were thinking of joining turned away.

13 We're truly interdependent; we affect each other in untold ways.  
14 When our decisions and actions have a negative effect they do injustice  
15 to the principles of the First Tradition--creating disunity and  
16 compromising our common welfare. They can also harm us in the eyes of  
17 the outside world. When our decisions and actions have a positive effect  
18 they do the opposite. They enhance our personal recovery, strengthen  
19 N.A. as a whole and make us "attractive" to the world in the spirit of  
20 the Eleventh Tradition.

21 We have the freedom to conduct our groups as we wish. But, as  
22 the wording of the Fourth Tradition suggests, freedom without  
23 responsibility brings anarchy. If we take the time to consider the  
24 consequences of our actions, and make sure they're clearly within the  
25 bounds of the Twelve Traditions, we can trust that all will be well.

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1 humorously call `committees' are really collections of members, each of  
2 whom bring some special gift to offer freely to service the needs of  
3 addicts seeking recovery. This flow of ideas, ingenious approaches to  
4 carrying our message and bring our membership in closer alignment  
5 without stultifying uniformity, can only be accounted for in spiritual  
6 terms.

7       It might also help the reader gain insight to consider that most  
8 other bureaucracies have very different sanctions to control the  
9 members. A positive sanction is a raise or promotion; a negative  
10 sanction is a pay cut, demotion, transfer to the Gobi desert or being  
11 fired. Imagine applying these models to our structure! We don't get  
12 paid, few cheer us on, we basically hire and fire ourselves by  
13 performance or non-performance of the service commitments we make.  
14 We may be elected but no one can make us do it! Our primary system of  
15 sanction is to give or withhold praise. Sometimes this system is so subtle  
16 and nearly invisible it seems not to exist but our trusted servants only  
17 need a glance from someone who appreciates what they are doing to  
18 keep going. Internally, the moment we stop feeling like we are  
19 contributing effectively and constructively to the welfare of some addict  
20 somewhere, we move on to some other form of service.

21       So it might be better to describe our `committees' as `spiritual  
22 service bodies', but that would be a little syrupy for our collective taste.  
23 Those who need to know, know.

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26       There seems to be some fighting between groups, some  
27 jurisdictional disputes. Do I get into this?

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1           No topic which concerns the well being and growth of our  
2 Fellowship should be avoided in this material! If the answers come only  
3 with great difficulty that should galvanize our efforts to get at answers  
4 we can live with. Too often in the past, we have waited for someone else  
5 to handle it!

6           As I have gotten into earlier, most if not all of these problems  
7 stem from an individual or collective inability to surrender to the facts,  
8 lack of faith or unwillingness to change or make amends. These items  
9 are dealt with in our Twelve Steps. The problems only become severe  
10 when there is no one experienced enough to laugh at them, ridicule  
11 them, cite examples from our history until the 'weighty matter' becomes  
12 hilarious. The truth is that WE HAVE ALREADY SURVIVED the  
13 most unfair, inconceivable, awful, embarrassing, intentional, deliberate  
14 and consistent sabotage and adversity that can possibly be imagined for  
15 decades... And yet we have survived, some of us. A lot died gaining the  
16 ground so we can be clean today.

17           This 'infighting' and 'jurisdictional disputing' is almost never over  
18 items of substance. It is almost invariably the unwillingness of members  
19 to surrender and support other members who are working to the  
20 betterment of N.A. because the disease of addiction is always creating  
21 waves of bruised egos, controversy and confusion.

22           For the last few years more and more of our members have been  
23 getting clean and staying clean and settling the kinds of issues which  
24 used to distract us off the miracle of recovery into the realm of endless  
25 dispute. In community after community only the death of one or more  
26 members has startled a local Fellowship back to basics.

27           To me these apparently negative disputes are like the violence of  
28 land rising in an ocean. We double our population every eighteen  
29 months. This means we are factoring into our voting, participatory

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1 structure a huge volume of members who have a lot to learn about N.A.  
2 This automatically means there are going to be disagreements and  
3 conflicts which stem from the intense love and concern about Narcotics  
4 Anonymous which hit us after two or three years of recovery. It may be  
5 connected with spiritual awakening spread across tens of thousands of  
6 members: a lot of questions. The material we are working on is  
7 hopefully a vehicle to allow our members to gain an understanding of  
8 their own through reading and study. They also question their sponsors  
9 and friends in the fellowship. Word of mouth can be a very hit or miss  
10 proposition and just the slightest overstatement or misinformation can  
11 trigger huge waves of controversy.

12 Many of us in world services are intently willing to help generate  
13 material such as you are working on to engender stability and  
14 consistency to minimize the intensity of emotion in these periods of  
15 learning. All of us have had friends who have been injured by the  
16 infighting and disputation. Of course, we have been hurt as well. Some  
17 of us have the sort of commitment which will not back off while problems  
18 like this endure.

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21 In order to maintain the intent of autonomy, we "ought to be fully  
22 self supporting." In Narcotics Anonymous our Service Committees are  
23 dependent upon the groups for support, and in doing so remain directly  
24 responsible to them.

25 These two points tell us why our services cannot be autonomous.  
26 In doing so they emphasize our need to maintain the intent of the  
27 Traditions when presenting the Fellowship to the public.

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1            "The autonomy of our groups is necessary for our survival." (  
2    Basic Text p. 61). Our services are "for the express purpose of serving  
3    the specific needs of member groups" (Basic Text p.10 T.W.G.T.T.S.S.).  
4    And "to work together for their common welfare." (Basic Text p. 87  
5    T.W.G.T.T.S.S.). We are an extension of the groups. As servants we  
6    must maintain Traditional services to assure their autonomy, and enable  
7    our need to find spiritual solutions to our problems. The groups are  
8    supporting their services. We, as servants, are responsible for carrying  
9    them out.

10           Our P.I. work affects other groups or N.A. as a whole. The guide  
11    to P.I. services is written about how to perform our work within the  
12    spirit of this Tradition. A strong knowledge of our Service Structure,  
13    communication and cooperation within it, will bring us together in unity  
14    of purpose.

15           ...If we consider the consequences of our actions ahead of time,  
16    then all will be well. (Basic Text p. 62).

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19           Autonomous means self-governing and the wording of this  
20    tradition states that the group is autonomous, not the elected officers of  
21    the group which is in keeping with our 2nd tradition. Right away, that  
22    makes it clear that each group must rely on its group conscience, guided  
23    by a loving God, for all its decisions and actions.

24           Meeting formats such as topic or step discussions, speaker  
25    meetings, questions and answers, when and where to meet, whether to  
26    have the meeting open to everyone or closed for addicts and people who  
27    think they may be addicts only, are all matters for each group to decide

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1 on its own. The opening and/or closing prayer of each meeting is the  
2 group's choice as well as what readings to use.

3 Even allocation of funds and whether or not to support or use the  
4 services offered such as the N.A. Information line or Area Service  
5 Committee, rest with the conscience of each group.

6 Imagine how dull it would be if every meeting was identical to  
7 every other meeting. What if all meetings were closed?

8 With this freedom comes the responsibility to keep N.A. unified  
9 and to preserve its character. So each group decision must be kept  
10 within the bounds of all 12 Traditions. We are not free to alter the 12  
11 Steps, for example, or use outside literature which has not been  
12 approved by an N.A. Conference.

13 I believe that any group which misuses this tradition to move  
14 outside the bounds of any other tradition will flounder and cease to exist  
15 because of the spiritual foundation of all our traditions.

16 This tradition is saying that each group has the right to be wrong,  
17 and therefore to learn and grow through its mistakes.

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21 After careful examination some members and I feel additional  
22 information should be suggested:

23 It is suggested that a group have a register for its home group  
24 members.

25 In reading and reviewing we've noticed the words "its own  
26 members" "individual groups."

27 This register would help attain each groups personality and their  
28 right to be autonomous.



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1 group's existence supported by and dependent upon the N.A. members?,"  
2 you ask. Yes, that's true. The members have a direct voice and control  
3 over the operation of the group. This direct member input is what  
4 allows the groups to have autonomy. That is why group conscience is  
5 the ultimate authority of Narcotics Anonymous.

6 On a personal level of recovery, autonomy teaches us to be  
7 responsible for making our own decisions and accepting what that brings.  
8 It gives us the freedom of choice. How many times, before our spiritual  
9 awakening, did we run around and ask everyone under the sun what we  
10 should do about a certain situation? We polled people until we got the  
11 answers we wanted and if things didn't turn out the way we'd hoped, we  
12 blamed others for our lot in life. Through the application of the Fourth  
13 Tradition we learn that our decisions are just that, "our" decisions.  
14 People pleasing and blaming others are no longer options we choose to  
15 use. We may talk things over with our sponsor or someone else, pray  
16 about it or bring it to a meeting, but once the decision is made it is  
17 ultimately ours to make and we accept responsibility for the results.

18 It is also important to ask ourselves while making choices, "How  
19 will this affect someone else?" "Will it hurt anyone needlessly?" "How  
20 does this coincide with our spiritual principles?" By "checking our  
21 motives" before making a choice and being honest with ourselves we can  
22 make decisions that are in keeping with our primary purpose.

23

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- 1                   2.    Reaching out and welcoming newcomers - essence of  
2                   N.A. is two addicts sharing - they are coming into our  
3                   home, treat them as such.  
4                   (Personal example - if a meeting is "bad" or not carrying message  
5                   of recovery ask, "What did you do to make it better, to carry the  
6                   message?").  
7                   C.    Using and providing literature. Do we have cookies and  
8                   coffee but no literature?  
9                   D.    Being listed in a directory - being part of the service  
10                  structure.  
11                  E.    Stability - starting/ending on time, cleaning up (continuity  
12                  and consistency).  
13    III.   Being diverted from our primary purpose by business, social or  
14           other matter (meeting with long breaks).  
15           A.    Keeping controversy out of meetings (ASC's affecting  
16           groups; business meetings and other life issues are  
17           important but not connected with carrying the message).  
18    IV.   Tradition 12 comes into play here.  
19           A.    Keeping principles before personalities. Am I too busy  
20           visiting with my friends to greet newcomers?  
21           B.    "Unity of action and purpose makes possible what seemed  
22           impossible for--recovery" (Basic Text).  
23           With each group having the same purpose as conveyed in  
24           Tradition 5, and each member realizing the spiritual implications  
25           of carrying the message according to the 12th Step, the destructive  
26           possibilities of individual motives (ego, power) are removed. This  
27           is how anonymity is served as the spiritual foundation of this  
28           Tradition.

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- 1           C.    We are responsible to all addicts who seek recovery  
2                   (Example of two people disliking each other carrying the  
3                   message together).
- 4    V.    Service committees assist the group by directing addicts to groups  
5           and make the message available in areas where groups can't or  
6           shouldn't.
- 7           Outside issues divert us -- service committees are designed  
8           specifically to further the 5th Tradition and are born out of the  
9           need to carry the message in ways that are beyond the scope of  
10          groups, areas or regions.  Certain needs are more appropriately  
11          met by service boards, so that groups' primary purpose is not  
12          diverted or confused.
- 13          A.    Carefully choosing our group's trusted servants.
- 14          B.    Business meetings and service committees should ask  
15                  themselves, "What are we doing to carry out and further  
16                  the Fifth Tradition?  Are we diverted in any way from this  
17                  Tradition?"
- 18          C.    Contributing to the service structure in terms of fund flow -  
19                  Carrying message to all addicts everywhere, above and  
20                  beyond group/area -- translations, development of literature.
- 21    VI.  Application of Tradition 5 to members, groups and N.A. as a whole.
- 22    VII.  Summary and lead in to Tradition 6.
- 23                  Some benefits - One positive aspect of this Tradition is the  
24                  "ease" with which one can reconcile differences or controversy, i.e.,  
25                  language used in meetings.
- 26
- 27

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**Blue Review Book Draft**

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4

An N.A. group meets regularly at a specified place and time, and follows the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Our N.A. literature tells us that a group is made up of two or more addicts who meet to share their experience, strength, and hope about recovery from addiction. The primary purpose of an N.A. group is to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.

9

10

The Twelfth Step, which emphasizes the principle of giving, tells us that we cannot keep what we have unless we give it away. Through honest sharing in meetings, we carry a message of life without drugs. We share when we feel good, bad, or indifferent; we share for the purpose of showing addicts that we can live in today's society and face all of the problems and joys of life without the use of drugs.

15

16

N.A. groups provide us with a chance to discuss recovery - we share our daily experiences in learning to live by spiritual principles, and benefit from the wisdom of long-term members who have learned to apply the principles of recovery. A meeting may be the only place where a newcomer feels safe during a 24-hour period. We find unconditional acceptance at N.A. meetings, and gradually turn away from our destructive, addictive behaviors and embrace a better way of life.

22

23

By sharing the recovery we have found, we gather strength and commitment in our new way of life. We share how we strive to live life on a spiritual basis. This is the message--a new way of coping with old fears and reactions. Seeing and hearing recovery in action reassures other members of the group who may share similar feelings, and keeps us on the path of recovery. We share the difficulties as well as the good

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1 times and most importantly, the principles we have come to practice  
2 which make recovery a way of life. Each of us can learn from one  
3 another. It is important that we share, regardless of whether or not we  
4 sound "good." We carry the message of recovery, and someone may need  
5 to hear what is being said--"good" or "bad." We trust in our Higher  
6 Power to guide us when we share. Our groups enhance the recovery  
7 process by providing a suitable and reliable environment for sharing.

8       Being complex human beings, with a multitude of feelings, each of  
9 us can benefit as long as we keep an open mind. Listening to other  
10 addicts' experiences, even if our stories vary, allows us to learn from  
11 their mistakes. Hearing another addict share their progress can open  
12 the door for us to accept positive changes in our lives. If we share our  
13 feelings and experiences, and how we use the principles of N.A., then we  
14 are fulfilling the intent of this Tradition.

15       Groups have proven to be the most successful vehicle for Twelve  
16 Step work. There are different ways to carry the message, but there is  
17 only one message, and that is recovery through the Twelve Steps.  
18 Groups carry the message by providing a place to meet with a positive  
19 atmosphere of recovery. The members carry the message by sharing,  
20 welcoming newcomers, and staying clean.

21       The members of N.A., by the grace of a Power greater than  
22 ourselves, are given the ability to show that there is a productive and  
23 happy way of life without drugs. We need to take seriously our part in  
24 carrying the message. If we let personalities, conflicts or petty power  
25 struggles cheat the newcomer of his/her rightful place on recovery's path,  
26 we defeat our primary purpose--carrying the message. In each group we  
27 attend, we see clean, recovering addicts. This is Tradition Five in action.

28       Let us consider the term "still-suffering addict." Some addicts  
29 come in and out of the doors of N.A. Some do not return. We may hear

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1 that they are in hospitals, in jails or dead. These people carry the  
2 message in its most painful extreme. Their tragedies show us that  
3 addiction does not work. However, these addicts are not the only ones  
4 who suffer.

5 Addicts may vary a great deal in their lifestyles or experiences,  
6 but our feelings are remarkably similar. We came into the program  
7 defeated and confused, wanting to believe that there was a way we  
8 might be able to live without drugs. We listened at meetings and  
9 eventually came to an understanding of the N.A. Program. At times, we  
10 replace faith with doubt, become confused or impatient. We also feel  
11 great relief and joy as we progress in our recovery. Attending meetings  
12 and sharing these feelings is a way of carrying the message.

13 Sometimes, when we get a few months or a few years of clean  
14 time, we think we no longer have to listen, share, or even attend  
15 meetings. However, we must put aside our pride and ego. We have  
16 been blessed with some recovery and serenity; we must not forget where  
17 we came from, and the nature of our disease.

18 Because we are addicts, we don't have the capacity to stay clean  
19 without living a spiritual program. Our strength, experience and hope of  
20 a new way of life attracts the addict who still suffers. A suffering addict  
21 need not always be a newcomer to N.A.; indeed it may be a person with  
22 many years of recovery. Each addict has the potential for suffering, no  
23 matter how long we've been clean. Open sharing of grief or other pain  
24 encourages honest disclosure by all members of their personal conflicts.  
25 Such openness strengthens each member's recovery. We receive courage  
26 and strength to continue on the path of recovery through attending  
27 meetings and hearing the message of recovery.

28 There are times when a group becomes diverted from its primary  
29 purpose. For example, business matters can cause a group to get

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1 bogged down. When a group starts to collect a sizeable amount of  
2 money, it can be very tempting to divert our attention towards financial  
3 matters and material gains. The tragedy is that because the primary  
4 purpose was neglected, some suffering addict may not hear the message  
5 of recovery and therefore die. We must keep uppermost in mind that  
6 even though we still have bad days and problems, life clean is a lot  
7 better than when we were using. If we remember how we felt when we  
8 entered N.A., we never forget to share the message of hope.

9       The responsibility of the group in carrying the message can vary  
10 with the duties given to members of that group, especially its elected  
11 trusted servants. It is important for each group to choose the most  
12 responsible members to run the meetings.

13       There are no menial tasks in Narcotics Anonymous. The people  
14 who set up the meetings and make coffee are just as important as the  
15 group service representative or secretary. If a newcomer were to go to a  
16 meeting at a scheduled time and place and find an empty room, the  
17 results could be disastrous. How many potential members of N.A. have  
18 been diverted from the program because a steward could not act  
19 responsibly in opening a meeting on time?

20       There will always be an abundance of people who need the N.A.  
21 Program. As individuals, we are limited in our ability to carry the  
22 message of recovery. Our experience has shown that the group setting is  
23 the most effective vehicle in our Fellowship for carrying this message.  
24 N.A. groups "bring addicts together so that the magic of empathy,  
25 honesty, caring, sharing, and service can do their work."

26       A group's primary purpose is to carry the message--not the addict.  
27 Groups should refrain from lending money, trying to help with marriages  
28 or relationships, finding jobs or housing, or becoming involved in legal  
29 matters or medical problems. The message of recovery is based on

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1 spiritual principles. There may be members of the Fellowship who can  
2 help with personal matters, and they should be consulted in private,  
3 perhaps before or after the meeting.

4 Groups hold two basic types of meetings: those which are open to  
5 public, and those closed to the public--for addicts only.

6 Meetings vary widely in format from group to group. Examples  
7 include participation meetings, speaker meetings, question and answer,  
8 step studies, topic discussions, and combinations of these. Whichever  
9 format a group uses, the function is always the same: to provide a  
10 positive environment for personal recovery and to attract such recovery.

11 We need always remind ourselves that it is a privilege, given to us  
12 by the grace of God, for any of us to be of service to our Fellowship in  
13 any way. By all rights, many of us should not be alive, and yet we are  
14 recovering from addiction and able to help others. We never know when  
15 we might be the only example of recovery a suffering addict may see.

16 As members of N.A. groups, we do the best we can to share the  
17 message of recovery, trusting that God will direct us and help us. Even  
18 if our attempts to carry the message prove unsuccessful, they benefit our  
19 personal lives. We freely give away what was so freely given to us.

20

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22 1986/1987 Unpublished Draft

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25 The Twelfth Step asks us, as individual members of N.A., to carry  
26 the message of our spiritual awakening to other addicts. It makes clear  
27 that this is the most important way we have of fulfilling the  
28 responsibilities of membership, of putting our love and commitment into

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1 practice. The Fifth Tradition puts the same high priority on carrying the  
2 message--but does so within the context of the group.

3 The message itself is basically the same, whether we carry it as  
4 individuals or as groups. It's that an addict, any addict, can stop using  
5 drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. Our message is  
6 one of hope and the promise of freedom. When all is said and done, our  
7 primary purpose can only be to carry the message to the addict who still  
8 suffers because that is all we have to give.

9 By sharing the recovery we've found--and by doing so as groups as  
10 well as individually--we gather strength and commitment in our new  
11 way of life. We share how we strive to live life on a spiritual basis. This  
12 is the message we have to offer--that we've found new ways of coping  
13 with old fears and reactions. Seeing and hearing how our recovery works  
14 in action reassures other members of the group who may share similar  
15 feelings, and keeps us on the path of recovery. We share the difficulties  
16 we encounter as well as the good times we experience. Most  
17 importantly, we share the principles we practice, the principles that  
18 enable us to make recovery our way of life. This kind of sharing enables  
19 each of us to learn from each other. And this is why it's important that  
20 we do share, whether or not our words sound "good" to ourselves or  
21 others. We carry the message of recovery, and someone may need to  
22 hear what is being said--"good" or "bad." We trust in our Higher Power  
23 when we share.

24 Our groups help carry the message--and therefore enhance the  
25 recovery process--by providing a suitable and reliable environment for  
26 sharing. We offer meeting rooms that adhere to established schedules  
27 and are run in orderly fashion. We form service committees and  
28 subcommittees whose primary function, regardless of their immediate  
29 assignments, is to carry the message.

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1           A group--any N.A. group--can be defined very simply. It's two or  
2 more addicts sharing their experience, strength and hope. Hope is the  
3 key word. Individually we convey the hope we feel; as a group we  
4 collectively embody the hope our program gives us. So at meetings we  
5 talk about our experiences as addicts and as recovering addicts; most of  
6 all, we talk about how we came to change from one to the other. We  
7 talk about how we're able to live in the midst of everyday tensions,  
8 options, temptations and joys without using. This gives us the  
9 opportunity to learn from each other. It's how we share the message of  
10 hope.

11           Basically, what the Fifth Tradition does is to chart our course for  
12 us. Because of the autonomy our groups possess, they can interpret and  
13 convey the message in ways unique to each. Every group has the same  
14 overall goal, though, and this is what the Fifth Tradition is all about. It  
15 provides us with a constant reminder of N.A.'s primary purpose.  
16 Without it we would lack an overall sense of direction.

17           In time it becomes easy to see how important the structure  
18 provided by the Fifth Tradition really is. Without it we might each have  
19 a different interpretation of what our groups are for, and go off in dozens  
20 of different directions. We might easily get sidetracked by all kinds of  
21 issues that have no real bearing on our spiritual program, even though  
22 we might kid ourselves that they did. Some groups might concentrate on  
23 making money--and, yes, many of us might get rich. Some groups might  
24 concentrate on being a social club where they could find many friends  
25 and lovers--and would, indeed, find them. Some groups might specialize  
26 in education, and we would end up with many smart addicts. Some  
27 groups might specialize in offering medical help, and lots of us would get  
28 healthy. All these things might happen, but there would also be a big  
29 catch. The spiritual nature of our program would weaken or become

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1 lost. Consequently, many of us would die. Few of us would find  
2 recovery.

3 If we heed the Fifth Tradition we run all of our meetings--business  
4 meetings included--in ways that further our primary purpose. We take  
5 great care in choosing trusted servants--responsible members whose  
6 actions and decisions will further our spiritual principles as embodied in  
7 our Twelve Traditions. We refuse to let outside issues divert us from  
8 carrying the message. We contribute to the service structure in terms of  
9 the fund flow. We guide our service committees to direct addicts to our  
10 groups and make the message available in areas where groups are  
11 unable to do so directly. We use our business meetings for business  
12 matters, rather than diverting recovery meeting time for business items.

13 By its nature, a group is a very powerful and effective means for  
14 carrying the message. In fact, our groups can carry the message in ways  
15 individual members can't. For instance, in meetings we ask those  
16 present for the first time to identify themselves; then we welcome them  
17 collectively and, afterwards, get acquainted with them on an individual  
18 basis. We sometimes pass out lists of members and sponsors so that  
19 newcomers have a resource to turn to outside of meeting times.

20 The fact that a whole collection of members stays clean week after  
21 week is, in itself, a powerful message of recovery. If just one recovering  
22 addict shares recovery with a newcomer, that newcomer might say,  
23 "Well, you followed the N.A. Program and got clean and went on to lead  
24 a happy life--but you're an exception." If ten or twenty or fifty  
25 recovering addicts of all kinds collectively carry the message, it can't be  
26 so easily dismissed.

27 For this reason alone we must all strive, in accord with the Fifth  
28 Tradition, to keep meetings sharply focused on our primary function. At  
29 least one hour should be exclusively devoted to sharing about recovery.

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1 Experience shows that when this doesn't happen, when meeting talk  
2 meanders all over the lot, many members lose interest. They stop  
3 coming to those meetings. Eventually the group folds.

4 All of us have a responsibility to see that nothing of the sort  
5 happens. We exercise that responsibility in several ways--by choosing  
6 strong leaders who will keep meetings centered on our primary purpose,  
7 and by participating fully on an individual basis. Early in our recovery  
8 many N.A. members come away disappointed after attending certain  
9 meetings. They want every meeting to count, every meeting to give  
10 them something of substance. Typically, such members tell their  
11 sponsors, "That was a poor meeting last night--I didn't get a good  
12 message." The sponsor's usual--and apt--reply is, "What did you do to  
13 carry the message?" The point is that if a meeting goes astray we  
14 should do more than complain about it afterwards; we should do what we  
15 can, in terms of our own sharing, to turn that meeting around.

16 We must also make sure not to stretch coffee breaks to the point  
17 where they take more time than the meetings themselves. It  
18 occasionally happens, but we should always be on guard to see that it  
19 doesn't.

20 Seeing us sit around in a circle, talking about ourselves, some  
21 newcomers get the wrong idea. They jump to the conclusion that N.A.  
22 conducts group therapy sessions, the kind they had in treatment  
23 programs. It's the wrong conclusion but it can take awhile to sort out  
24 the differences between group therapy and the kind of sharing that's  
25 appropriate in N.A. meetings. Basically, it's simple. When we talk  
26 about problems and want reactions and solutions, that's more in the line  
27 of group therapy. A member says, "Boy, did I have a rotten day!"  
28 Another member replies, "Well, Jimmy (or Jane), let me tell you how to  
29 make your day a little better." That's merely expressing feelings of

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1   resentment or discontent, and getting a reward for it. This feeds into  
2   some of our self-destructive impulses--on the one hand, the need for  
3   power; on the other, a need to be dependent. When we give advice to  
4   people who should be figuring things out for themselves we feed our egos.  
5   When we ask others to do what we should be doing for ourselves, it's  
6   dependency. As addicts we were very dependent, not only on drugs but  
7   on people, places and things. Therefore, N.A. meetings that follow a tell-  
8   us-your-problem-and-we'll-figure-it-out pattern neither carry the message  
9   nor maintain an atmosphere of recovery.

10       When we express feelings and present problems only to give vent  
11   to them and to solicit advice, we're using our N.A. meetings as a  
12   dumping ground. When we talk about our feelings and problems in a  
13   way that relates them specifically to our disease of addiction and our  
14   program of recovery--that's carrying the message. In accord with the  
15   Fifth Tradition we don't give advice, for advice can be right or wrong.  
16   We do share our experiences, which are neither right nor wrong, they  
17   just are.

18       Yet, N.A. meetings are a perfectly appropriate forum in which to  
19   express feelings and emotions, when we do so in the context of the  
20   trouble they can get us into. For many members, newcomers in  
21   particular, meetings are their only really "safe" place during any given  
22   twenty-four hour period. It's where we don't have to make any  
23   pretenses, don't have to hide the nature of our disease. It's where we  
24   can openly share our fears and grief in what is hopefully a supportive,  
25   non-judgmental atmosphere.

26       For many of us, N.A. is the place where we first learn to be open  
27   about our feelings--good, bad and indifferent. Learning to express them  
28   helps us deal with them, keeps them from overwhelming us. Not being  
29   able to deal with our feelings has always been a danger, it has driven us

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1 to use. That's why discussion meetings on a topic like anger, or regular  
2 meetings in which half the time is devoted to a topic like that, are vital  
3 to our spiritual program. They help us recognize our character defects so  
4 that we may humbly ask God to remove them.

5 We learn a saying that goes, "We carry the message, not the  
6 addict." It's a principle that keeps our groups from getting into the  
7 business of solving personal problems, lending money to members,  
8 finding them jobs or housing, or becoming involved in their medical and  
9 legal difficulties. There are a number of reasons why we avoid offering  
10 these kinds of help. For one thing, we want our groups to be places that  
11 encourage self-reliance rather than dependency. Too, we're not a social  
12 service agency, hospital or legal assistance center. To get involved in  
13 any kind of counselling or rehabilitation work would divert our energies  
14 from our primary function, so we leave these things to others. We  
15 simply carry the message, which is what we've found to be most helpful  
16 and effective. Finally, we're not trained to offer psychological, legal,  
17 medical or other kinds of counselling. If we did offer such counselling we  
18 might inadvertently do injury to the recipients and create legal  
19 complications for ourselves.

20 There is, however, a distinction between group conduct and  
21 personal conduct. Members do help each other, counsel each other over  
22 coffee, by telephone, or in sponsor-member relationships. It's not a Fifth  
23 Tradition violation for one member to tell another, "You can crash at my  
24 place tonight," or "You need some groceries, here's ten bucks," or, "I  
25 know a guy who's looking for a painter, go see him, call this number."

26 However, the Fifth Tradition provides guidelines to remind us of  
27 our purpose. It teaches us to be cautious in how much help we give  
28 anybody, member or not, who is close to us. We want to refrain from

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1 going on power trips. We want to avoid feeding anybody's strong  
2 dependency needs.

3 Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who  
4 still suffers, and newcomers are among the most hurting of addicts with  
5 whom we come in contact. Yet we don't always pay as much attention  
6 to them when, scared and ready to bolt, they attend their first N.A.  
7 meetings. Sometimes, we stand around and talk to our friends rather  
8 than reaching out a welcoming hand to them. Sometimes we turn away.  
9 They remind us too much of where we once were--or could be again. For  
10 some newcomers that first meeting is the last; quick to feel rejected if  
11 ignored, they slip out and don't come back.

12 When we remind ourselves that we might have lost the chance for  
13 survival and recovery if we hadn't been greeted warmly during our first  
14 N.A. meetings, we take the Fifth Tradition as seriously as we can. We  
15 know that people's lives hinge on this. So we treat newcomers as the  
16 most important persons in the room, welcome them, let them know we  
17 understand their pain, invite them along for coffee after the meeting.  
18 We might challenge them on their attitudes--but pay attention to them.  
19 Some of our groups even have welcoming committees whose members  
20 keep a sharp lookout for strange faces that might otherwise be ignored in  
21 the general hubbub preceding and following a meeting.

22 "Newcomer" doesn't only mean addicts who attend their first few  
23 meetings. Some of us were initially the focus of concerned attention, but  
24 then interest in us was lost when fresh newcomers arrived. One member  
25 recalls how, after a couple of months, he was taken for granted by his  
26 group. The other members weren't deliberately ignoring him, they  
27 simply figured he was okay on his own by then. There were other  
28 newcomers for them to worry about.

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1           As it happened, however, this was a critical time for him. He had  
2 a foothold in N.A., but he wasn't fully committed and the desire to use  
3 again was strong. The desire not to use was stronger, fortunately, and  
4 he held on. When he became a trusted servant he recalled that difficult  
5 period and looked at ways to assist the newer members in being part of  
6 the group--making coffee, putting out the literature, helping with the  
7 arrangements for social functions. "Addicts coming into these rooms  
8 want to be loved and want to have a purpose in their lives," this member  
9 later explained.

10           When we first heard about carrying the message to the addict who  
11 still suffers we thought it meant only to the obviously suffering addicts--  
12 newcomers and those who still used. We thought that after we stopped  
13 using for a while the suffering would be over. But we saw that we were  
14 wrong. The acute suffering, born of the wretched lives we'd led while  
15 using, did end. Working the Twelve Steps, placing our trust in the God  
16 of our understanding, did quiet our inner turmoil. We learned, for the  
17 most part, to cope with our emotions. We led much happier, fulfilling  
18 lives than we ever had. But the potential for suffering didn't leave us.  
19 Few of us, no matter how long we were in N.A., could say we never felt  
20 like using. Few of us could say we never felt extra tense or blue.  
21 Actually, many of us have a special tendency to get depressed, a mark of  
22 our disease. At times something seemingly minor, such as being greeted  
23 less than enthusiastically by an old friend we encounter on the street,  
24 can upset us a lot. No matter how tough our veneer, we bruise easily  
25 and there's that strong association for us between pain and using. No  
26 matter how long we've been in the Fellowship, even years or decades,  
27 there are times when we need the message as much as a new member  
28 does.

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1           So the addict who still suffers can be any of us--someone who's still  
2 in withdrawal, someone who feels utterly hopeless because he hasn't yet  
3 pulled his life together, or someone who's been in recovery for years but  
4 going through a crisis. This quiet suffering is easy to overlook, especially  
5 in oldtimers, but we need to pay close, loving attention to each other to  
6 see that it isn't. We need to notice if a member--any member--looks, acts  
7 or talks differently, more anxiously or resentfully, this week than last.  
8 We need to listen to members who express feelings of helplessness or  
9 hopelessness or anger, or begin to talk about drugs in a way that makes  
10 drugs seem attractive. We need to tell that member that he or she is out  
11 of line. We need to listen for the feelings beneath the words--as when a  
12 member says, "I don't need you s.o.b.'s!" but is really saying, "For God's  
13 sake, straighten me out." If we don't pay this kind of loving attention it  
14 could mean somebody's life.

15           It's the responsibility of our groups, of the people in our groups, to  
16 speak out in these kinds of circumstances. To be straight with each  
17 other, though that may sometimes be hard, when we sense something  
18 amiss with a member. Sometimes a meeting is the right setting for such  
19 a confrontation. But sometimes it works better to take that suffering  
20 oldtimer or newcomer out for coffee afterwards, and trust our Higher  
21 Power that we voice our concern in a way the member can hear.

22           The Fifth Tradition asks us to "carry" the message, not to force it  
23 on anyone. Neither as individual members nor collectively as groups can  
24 we make addicts join our program of recovery or keep them in it. We  
25 can only show them, by our example, that any user may become clean  
26 and find a new way of life. We can only hope that when we carry our  
27 message the addicts who still suffer will hear it in time to save their  
28 lives.

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**General Input**

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5           Whether an addict is not yet clean, clean for a week, month, or  
6 many years she or he may still be suffering.

7           Tradition Five ensures an atmosphere of recovery for everyone  
8 who comes through those doors--a place where we are sure to find  
9 understanding, consideration and love.

10           Our message is one of hope, that addicts can live contented, happy  
11 lives without using drugs of any kind.

12           When disagreements, gossip or resentments surface, we would be  
13 well advised to remember this tradition and ask ourselves if we are  
14 contributing to an environment where people will feel welcome and hear  
15 about recovery.

16           I know many times I have come to meetings tearful or angry and  
17 found relief through the caring and sharing of fellow members. Because  
18 of this tradition I feel comfortable about coming to meetings when I am  
19 upset or afraid, and I am equally confident bringing newcomers because I  
20 know they will be welcomed with love and warmth and sincerity.

21           The group is a powerful tool in our recoveries. We can gather  
22 here--individuals from differing backgrounds, with different opinions and  
23 beliefs and stand together on this tradition to share our joyful message of

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1 recovery. In the group we are able to live in the solution instead of the  
2 problem.

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5           Someone says newcomers often get shuffled off at meetings. Do I  
6 get into that? (Maybe instead I could write about how newcomers should  
7 be treated.)

8           Well...I've heard this and possibly I've seen this but I've been very  
9 busy talking with other members including newcomers before and after  
10 meetings so maybe my viewpoint is a little different.

11           I suppose if someone took the time out to set off to the side and  
12 observe they would see some newcomers who get shuffled off. I would  
13 recommend that after they had established this terrible fact to their  
14 satisfaction, that they get back to what works in N.A. and greet those  
15 newcomers themselves.

16           We are great critics. We can spot error, fault and insufficiency in  
17 others with the kind of skill and ability that comes only after years of  
18 dedicated study and practice. We utilize this skill in recovery to uncover  
19 those same faults and insufficiencies in ourselves and pray for the God of  
20 our understanding to remove the tendency to criticize others and grant  
21 us the ability to unleash the talents and abilities we all have to help  
22 others and ourselves as well. This is what recovery is all about.

23           If we were able to help every addict who walked through our doors  
24 it would be incredible, fantastic; N.A. is not a fantasy. We suffer from a  
25 killing disease and the recovering addict is the best weapon we have  
26 against the disease of addiction. This crucial fact should be illuminated  
27 and repeatedly presented to the reader to instill the kind of energy and  
28 encouragement our members need to give it their personal best.

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1           Generally, when this sort of thing actually occurs with any  
2 regularity, there is something distracting the local Fellowship. It is good  
3 for those who seem to have the presence of mind to step into the moment  
4 and bring up the primary purpose of our groups when this most  
5 important of group functions is not being carried out. It only takes one  
6 of us per meeting to set this example.

7           Regarding the sticky question of dual membership, N.A. and A.A.?  
8           Certainly, this old question needs to be robbed of the undeserved  
9 power we have given it.

10           In days gone by we in N.A. didn't realize the extent to which  
11 alcohol was viewed as a separate drug and the exact reasons that this  
12 simple matter could so dispirit our members.

13           I don't claim complete understanding of all this but I have gotten  
14 over any fear of discussion, and apparently my understanding is  
15 sufficient to my needs, so in hopes it will help, I will hold forth on the  
16 subject.

17           One, regarding it as a sticky question is nonproductive. We know  
18 avoidance doesn't work. In response to members asking for help with  
19 this, I always say that they should regard anyone in a closed meeting of  
20 N.A. as an addict seeking recovery and treat with them accordingly.  
21 Don't allow them to distract you with talk of other programs or act like  
22 lords of recovery based on abstinence from just one drug. If they claim  
23 abstinence from all drugs, then welcome them to N.A. and talk about  
24 recovery from the disease of addiction and how it can work to divide  
25 people who should be working in accord with one another. Understand  
26 that they must be suffering, especially if they are acting superior to our  
27 members. What pride and arrogance to come into a place of recovery  
28 and disrupt what they do not understand. Spiritual arrogance is the  
29 worse sort of lack of faith.

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1           Now, to the elements of the `controversy': A.A. has been the  
2 larger program and the older program. They have certainly paid their  
3 dues and earned their stripes. We state plainly in our literature the  
4 honest gratitude we have for the many ways in which we benefit from  
5 the progress they may have made in recovery from one form of drug  
6 addiction. Where then does the animosity come from? An A.A. member  
7 is someone who owes their life and their recovery to Alcoholics  
8 Anonymous. They are naturally grateful and believe A.A. works based  
9 on their experience. An N.A. member is someone who feels the same  
10 way about N.A. In addition, for many of our members, A.A. has not  
11 worked for them. A little known fact about our Basic Text is that the  
12 stories were edited to avoid repeating the statement that A.A. didn't  
13 work. This was done because everyone involved with the work at the  
14 time felt it would be unworthy of us to direct uncomplimentary  
15 statements to predominate in material designed to foster recovery. Our  
16 Book shouldn't seem like we were putting A.A. down. These two  
17 elements produce the crash which occurs when people of different basic  
18 beliefs are brought into close proximity and required situationally to take  
19 up for their beliefs. The fact that this is totally out of place in a meeting  
20 where the primary purpose is to carry an N.A. message of recovery  
21 compounds the problem. Add in the fact that a lot of N.A. meetings got  
22 their start because addicts in A.A. meetings made alcoholics  
23 uncomfortable. Alcoholics who were supportive of addicts seeking  
24 recovery helped our meetings get started. Where we have grown to the  
25 point where we begin to stand on N.A. principles and gain in spiritual  
26 and personal integrity, many of these early supporters felt we were  
27 ungrateful to go our own, a program in our own right! Stir in few more  
28 factors: it is a sad fact that sober does not mean clean and that you can  
29 get an anniversary in A.A. while using drugs other than alcohol. By

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1    itself, this is bad enough from our point of view with regards to total  
2    abstinence, but add to it the factors of 1) denial of their need for help,  
3    and 2) that alcoholics attending our meetings who are not clean from all  
4    drugs are a threat to the primary purpose of our groups and you can  
5    easily see where the `controversy' comes from.

6            To avoid any possible assumption that I am getting my point  
7    across this easily, let me be a bit more graphic by citing some examples  
8    of how this has worked out in a few cases.

9            First, imagine members of A.A. deliberately coming into N.A.  
10   meetings seeking sex with women who had been assured they were in a  
11   safe place for purposes of recovery and smoking marijuana in front of  
12   them before, during or after the act. We have had to learn to take up  
13   for ourselves and our members. Of course, women came for men, etc.

14           Second, a hopefully not too well known meeting of another  
15   fellowship in Oregon was comprised of drug dealers who all had one  
16   thing in common. They didn't touch the substance they each admitted  
17   addiction to.

18           Third, meetings of N.A. were started again and again in New  
19   Jersey but after two or three young new meetings got started, suddenly  
20   all the newcomers disappeared and the meetings failed. This happened  
21   several times over a period of years. The story given by one of the  
22   members who eventually made major contributions to the effort for our  
23   Basic Text was that members of another organization would come down  
24   into the N.A. meetings to sell pot and the newcomers fell like wheat  
25   before the blade. He was one of them. He got clean in N. A. and let the  
26   cat out of the bag and N.A. in New Jersey has grown steadily since.

27           Unfortunately, I could go on. Notice that all these except one  
28   involve happenings within N.A. meeting places. We have simply had to  
29   learn to take care of ourselves and deal with these sorts of things for

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1 them to stop happening. Since they were forced upon us, our members  
2 can't be 'blamed' for them. Nor would we blame others, even from other  
3 Fellowships. We just had trouble seeing them for what they were and  
4 then it was easier to get around to carrying our message to them.

5 See, they would sound so good. They would be talking about God  
6 and the Twelve Steps, brotherhood, both programs are really the same,  
7 etc. They really get upset when you speak against being merely sober.  
8 Get it? They aren't clean! The disease of addiction is a disease of lies. It  
9 has been supremely difficult to dig into all this and bring the facts to the  
10 surface but we addicts are used to accepting things like this. When it  
11 comes to the disease of addiction, forget about it playing fair! At least  
12 the truth can be accepted and dealt with according to facts which can get  
13 results. It isn't that different from the other varieties of using behavior  
14 we are more accustomed to seeing.

15 There are probably more "elements" than I went into but I realize  
16 that this sort of truth may be disagreeable to some at first. I don't think  
17 I made anything up. I am extremely glad that N.A. gives me a program  
18 I can believe in. If others find recovery elsewhere, I don't mind. I wish  
19 them all well. For our spiritual integrity, we have to be able to get real  
20 and honest about the truth.

21 There is no controversy. It is only the disease of addiction working  
22 to eat away at people's lives and succeeding as long as those who see  
23 what's happening keep quiet.

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26 The best way that a group can carry the message is by always  
27 maintaining an atmosphere of recovery in our meetings. We do this by  
28 upholding the Twelve Traditions; by offering a positive message of hope

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1 that anyone with a desire to stop using can find recovery from the  
2 disease of addiction in N.A., by our active participation in all aspects of  
3 the group meetings; and by helping everyone feel welcome, especially the  
4 new members, with a warm smile, some kind words, and a hug. The  
5 quality of the message we carry as a group is directly related to the  
6 quality of recovery maintained by its members. The best way to carry a  
7 positive message of hope and happiness is to live one. We learn an  
8 application of the Twelve Traditions in our daily lives.

9       On a personal level the Fifth Tradition gives purpose to our lives.  
10 Many of us wandered aimlessly, with no direction as to what we wanted  
11 to be or what we wanted to do. In our searching, some of us joined cause  
12 after cause looking for an answer. Others tried different religions and  
13 spiritual practices, never sticking long with any of them, trying to find  
14 something to fill that empty void in our lives. Most of us turned to drugs  
15 for the same reason and when they stopped working, eventually came to  
16 Narcotics Anonymous. Through our desire to stay clean we are granted  
17 the willingness to become part of a cause that we will pursue the rest of  
18 our recovering lives. To carry the message we need to live the message.  
19 By doing this we pursue our search for spiritual growth and fulfillment,  
20 we form special bonds with people along the way, and we become assets  
21 rather than liabilities to the world around us. Most important, while  
22 helping ourselves we help others. As one member put it, "what nobler  
23 purpose in life, than to alleviate human suffering!" We can have  
24 gratitude today, or we do have a purpose and we can make a difference.

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**WORLD LITERATURE COMMITTEE  
TRADITION REVIEW MATERIAL BOOK - 1988**

**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."*

**Outline**

- I. Tie in with fifth Tradition: the sixth tells us how to preserve and protect our groups so they can fulfill fifth.
  - A. We need this tradition to protect N.A. from legal and financial problems and to avoid controversy.
  - B. Tie in with groups and service committees.
  - C. Endorsement means to sanction, approve or recommend and can be either implied or direct.
- II. N.A. doesn't finance outside enterprises because ownership creates influence and exacerbates our self serving instincts, but also our 7th Tradition funds are for carrying out our primary purpose.
- III. Nonaffiliation
  - A. We don't lend the N.A. name no matter what the value of any other organization because, to do so would have to sacrifice anonymity at individual and group level.

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- 1 IV. Examples of the problems which can result from endorsing,  
2 financing or lending - see blue draft for examples, writer included  
3 some.
- 4 A. Clubhouses.
- 5 B. Using non-N.A. literature, the money goes to support  
6 another organization.
- 7 C. Treatment center holds N.A. meetings in facilities and  
8 advertises.
- 9 D. Other 12 Step Fellowships.
- 10 E. All of these divert us from our primary purpose.
- 11 V. Tradition Twelve ties in.
- 12 A. Addiction makes us all - members and groups - equal.
- 13 B. No group is more prestigious than another, recovery is  
14 available at all meetings.
- 15 C. Endorsing, financing and lending foster self-serving instincts  
16 which are contrary to N.A. philosophy - "anonymity is  
17 selfless services".
- 18 VI. Application of Tradition 6 to members, groups and N.A. as a  
19 whole.
- 20 VII. Summary and lead in to Tradition 7 - Tradition Six provides an  
21 end to controversy and confusion, offering a chance at recovery to  
22 addicts who seek it.
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Blue Review Book Draft

This tradition sets up some guidelines to protect N.A. as a whole and its individual members, and to preserve and ensure our primary purpose: carrying the message to the addict who still suffers. Controversy arises when members endorse or announce outside enterprises, and this damages the atmosphere of recovery in our meetings. Financing, endorsing, or lending our name to outside facilities or enterprises also opens N.A. to legal and financial problems. We must always remember that this is our program - addicts helping addicts. We are not related to facilities that treat addicts, even if we hold our meetings there. Our purpose is not to become rich or influential, but to stay clean and help the addict who still suffers.

The Sixth Tradition tells us to avoid the power struggles associated with endorsement. The underlying principle is letting go of our old ideas of money, property and prestige, and grasping new standards of spiritual and emotional growth.

The Sixth Tradition may seem hard to understand. But when we really take a look and try to understand, its simplicity amazes us. We can see the danger of endorsement, financial support and letting others use our name. We can see how easily such involvements have led to abuse of money, property and prestige, and we have seen the painful results of this abuse.

Let us take a closer look at what this tradition really says. First, a group ought never endorse. To endorse is to sanction, approve, or recommend. Endorsement can either be direct or implied. We see direct endorsements every day in politics and advertising. A direct endorsement is often used to persuade someone to do something, such as

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1 a famous person endorsing a certain product, or a candidate advocating  
2 particular views. An implied endorsement is one that is not stated, and  
3 is harder to define. How many times have we seen a television star  
4 advertise a certain product? The implication is that anyone who buys  
5 the product will be as rich and famous as the television star. Sometimes  
6 athletic equipment is provided to professional athletes to wear because  
7 their fans will believe it is the best, and this benefits the equipment  
8 company's sales. This is not usually stated formally; but in these  
9 examples, the television star and athletes are implicitly endorsing those  
10 products.

11 Many organizations wish to use the N.A. name in connection with  
12 their services. Allowing this would imply endorsement and therefore  
13 violate Tradition Six. Hospitals, recovery houses, and probation and  
14 parole offices are some of the related facilities we deal with in carrying  
15 the N.A. message. These facilities treat addicts, and often refer them to  
16 N.A. Some of us may have undergone and benefitted from treatment,  
17 but we are careful that if we recommend a facility to someone, we make  
18 it clear that we do so personally and not as a member of N.A. We must  
19 be careful that when we cooperate with these organizations, we clearly  
20 state our policy of non-affiliation to everyone concerned. We are a  
21 separate entity, and we do not wish to be associated with any related  
22 facility. Each facility has its own successes and failures. We do not wish  
23 to be applauded or criticized based on someone else's actions.

24 "An outside enterprise is an agency, business venture, religion,  
25 society, organization, related activity or any other Fellowship. Most of  
26 these are easy to identify except for the other fellowships. Narcotics  
27 Anonymous is a separate and distinct Fellowship in its own right. Our  
28 problem is addiction. The other Twelve Step Fellowships specialize in

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1 other problems and our relationship with them is one of cooperation, not  
2 affiliation."

3 In carrying the message of recovery, we must be careful to keep it  
4 simple and within the framework of N.A. Our experience has shown  
5 that sharing an ambiguous message by referring to outside enterprises  
6 can be detrimental to recovery and result in confusion. "The use of  
7 literature, speakers and announcements of other fellowships in our  
8 meetings constitutes an implied endorsement of an outside enterprise."

9 It is best for N.A. not be involved with outside functions because  
10 many problems can arise. We have seen that the best way to avoid  
11 these problems is to steer clear of any situations which may distract us  
12 from our primary purpose. We choose to not participate in conflicts for  
13 power and influence.

14 Narcotics Anonymous does not own or endorse any related  
15 facilities, nor does N.A. finance enterprises of any nature. Ownership of  
16 anything creates influence, which in turn fosters the very self-serving  
17 instincts which are contradictory to the philosophy of the N.A. program.

18 When money or property are involved, we easily lose sight of our  
19 principles. The suffering addict may not seem important if she or he is  
20 compared to getting a large sum of money. When prestige is involved,  
21 people's egos and pride cause problems. We are not concerned with  
22 prestige in N.A. because we reach out to every addict who wants help.  
23 To strive for prestige would be disastrous because it would cause us to  
24 stray from our primary purpose, which is to carry the message to the  
25 suffering addict. After all, our purpose is not to be the most important  
26 or the best, but to stay clean and recover.

27 We allow others, outside of N.A., to struggle for control, while we  
28 concentrate on our priority of recovery. Endorsing or lending our name  
29 to any related facility or outside enterprise relinquishes some of our

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1 responsibility for our own recovery. We've tried the easier ways, and  
2 that's how we got to N.A.

3 It is not difficult to see how the N.A. program could become  
4 diversified, diluted, or misrepresented to fit the need of related facilities  
5 or enterprises. One example of this concerned a meeting held in a  
6 recovery house which was primarily attended by N.A. members who had  
7 once been residents of that recovery house. The recovery house held  
8 regular fund-raising functions for their facility, and announced them at  
9 the N.A. meetings. In-house residents, as well as other new members,  
10 had difficulty distinguishing between which announcements were for  
11 N.A. and which were the recovery house announcements. The non-N.A.  
12 announcements constituted a violation of Tradition Six because they  
13 implied an endorsement of the recovery house.

14 In another area, several members began attending prayer and  
15 meditation groups held at a local church. These members gained much  
16 from the sessions and began telling other N.A. members about them.  
17 Soon many N.A. members became involved in the prayer and meditation  
18 groups and began distributing flyers for them at N.A. meetings. In this  
19 instance, new members often wondered if N.A. was a prayer and  
20 meditation group. Again, this violated the Sixth Tradition by endorsing  
21 an outside enterprise.

22 Another example involved a birthday celebration announced at  
23 N.A. meetings, although the person celebrating the birthday planned to  
24 do so at a meeting of another Twelve Step Fellowship. By announcing  
25 activities planned for another fellowship, this comprised a violation of  
26 Tradition Six.

27 A final example occurred at a large speaker meeting in a rapidly  
28 growing area. This group frequently used speakers from other Twelve  
29 Step Fellowships. The secretary of the group thought it was necessary

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1 because the area contained many newcomers who needed to learn how to  
2 apply the Twelve Steps and practice the principles of the program. The  
3 secretary therefore felt it was important to choose speakers with  
4 considerable clean time and speaking experience. This example  
5 illustrates a violation of the Sixth Tradition, through affiliation with an  
6 outside enterprise.

7         What are some better ways of handling these troublesome  
8 situations? A first step would be to privately approach the individual  
9 involved. Take time to think of an alternative which would be within  
10 the Twelve Traditions before approaching the person. For example, in  
11 the case of the secretary using speakers from other Twelve Step  
12 Fellowships, explain how this violates Tradition Six. Acknowledge that  
13 it is often difficult to find experienced N.A. speakers in some areas, and  
14 suggest that a solution may be to find long-term N.A. members from  
15 another area who are willing to travel to carry the message of recovery.  
16 In the instance of the recovery house, it would be wise to suggest that  
17 the house place a bulletin board outside the meeting room and post its  
18 announcements there.

19         With the members of the prayer and meditation group, consider  
20 sharing about the group verbally on an individual basis, rather than  
21 distributing printed flyers. Announcements could also be posted on a  
22 bulletin board outside of the meeting room.

23         Suggest and encourage the N.A. member celebrating the birthday  
24 in another fellowship to celebrate it in N.A., too. Explain how much you  
25 would appreciate it, how helpful it is for newcomers to see recovering  
26 addicts commemorate recovery birthdays in N.A., and that it gives  
27 newcomers in N.A. hope and inspiration. If the member wants to  
28 celebrate the birthday in another program also, that celebration should  
29 be discussed only in that program. N.A. and other Twelve Step

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1 Fellowships are separate, and activities or meeting events in one should  
2 not become affiliated with the other.

3 We work for an end to confusion and controversy - for recovery  
4 and unity. N.A. needs to remain a separate entity. Lending the N.A.  
5 name or financing other organizations would defeat us in our main  
6 purpose, sap our energy and divide us. N.A. is a place where an addict  
7 can go to be with other addicts and learn the process of recovery. We  
8 want to keep our program as simple as possible, and the Sixth Tradition  
9 ensures this. By keeping financial matters simple, our freedom will not  
10 be impaired.

11 Standing firmly on the principles of the Twelve Traditions and  
12 surrendering to the group conscience becomes a valuable recovery  
13 experience. This cannot be learned by running away. We are  
14 responsible for our recovery and for our actions. We practice the  
15 Traditions for our own welfare and the protection of N.A.

16 Let us never lose sight of this goal. Let us strive to keep the  
17 principles of the program foremost in mind, so that the many addicts  
18 who need and want this new way of life will have a chance to recover.  
19  
20

21 1986/1987 Unpublished Draft

22

23

24 The Fifth Tradition spells out our primary purpose. The Sixth  
25 Tradition tells us how to preserve and protect our groups in certain  
26 important ways so that they will be able to fulfill that purpose.

27 Many of us haven't liked the Sixth Tradition at all. We've found  
28 it too negative, too rigid, the dangers it warns against vastly overblown.  
29 Members who have had good experiences with other Twelve Step

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1 programs, and were stopped from discussing them in N.A. meetings  
2 because of this tradition, have been particularly upset.

3 Yet Tradition Six violations have repeatedly gotten us into serious  
4 difficulties. This is understandable when we reflect that money, property  
5 and prestige are the very things that repeatedly caused us grief when we  
6 were using. They were our obsessions. If we don't take care, they  
7 continue to be--with great harm to ourselves and our Fellowship.

8 The wording of the Sixth Tradition doesn't lend it to a hurried  
9 reading. There's so much to it, in fact, that it helps to examine this  
10 tradition in small bits. What, for instance, does "endorse" mean in this  
11 context? What's a "related facility?" What's an outside enterprise?"

12 To "endorse," the dictionary says, is to sanction, approve or  
13 recommend. Endorsements can be either direct or implied. Many  
14 advertisements in magazines or television commercials carry direct  
15 endorsements--as when a famous actor or sports figure tells us how good  
16 a certain product is. Implied endorsements are harder to define, because  
17 they're a form of indirect persuasion. In some commercials nobody  
18 directly says, "Buy this product"; instead, we see somebody glamorous or  
19 famous using it. The implication is that anybody who uses this product  
20 will also be glamorous or famous. Another example: Sports equipment  
21 and apparel manufacturers sometimes give professional athletes their  
22 products to use. The very fact that the athletes use those products in  
23 public constitutes an implied endorsement. It tells us that the athletes  
24 really like the equipment or apparel.

25 What does all this have to do with us in N.A.? With God's help  
26 we do a very good job of helping people recover from the disease of drug  
27 addiction. Many of the "related facilities" we deal with--hospitals,  
28 recovery houses, probation and parole offices--would like to use the  
29 Narcotics Anonymous name in connection with their services. They

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1 think it's good advertising. But to let them use our name amounts to an  
2 implied endorsement, so we have to say no. Sometimes they're not too  
3 happy about this.

4       Related facilities treat addicts and often refer them to N.A. Some  
5 of our members have personally benefited from them. Having had good  
6 experiences with certain facilities, some of us have wanted to recommend  
7 them to other members. We were told we could make such  
8 recommendations privately, but never as N.A. members or at meetings.  
9 This, too, has provoked some angry reactions. We didn't see any sense to  
10 it.

11       It does make a lot of sense, though. Endorsing any facility, no  
12 matter how good, invites many problems. If we, an N.A. group or  
13 Fellowship, endorsed one facility, other facilities we didn't endorse would  
14 get mad at us. If we endorsed a facility on one member's  
15 recommendation, it would create ill will with other members whose  
16 recommendations we turned down. Also, we would be tied to the success  
17 or failure of any facility we endorsed; if something went wrong there, it  
18 would rebound on us and hurt N.A.

19       From time to time some of our groups have invited knowledgeable  
20 representatives from treatment centers and other related facilities to  
21 speak at N.A. meetings. Some groups have posted announcements or  
22 read notices having to do with treatment centers--for instance, the  
23 opening of a new rehabilitation center. When this is done at N.A.  
24 meetings it's an implied endorsement--and violates the Sixth Tradition.

25       We strive to have good working relationships with treatment  
26 centers, hospitals, recovery houses, referral agencies and other related  
27 facilities. The success of our mailings to such facilities--and the success  
28 of our posting in clubhouses, public display areas and other places--all

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1 depend on how well we cooperate with them. But our policy must  
2 always be cooperation--not affiliation.

3 We can politely say no and explain why when a related facility  
4 wants to use our name; the situation is in our control. If a related  
5 facility uses our name or even a portion of our program without  
6 permission, that's not in our control. It has happened, for example, that  
7 treatment centers with which we had relationships started calling  
8 themselves "Narcotics Anonymous Treatment Center" or something  
9 similar. Some advertised the fact that N.A. meetings took place there,  
10 as a way of attracting new clients. We try to reason with facilities that  
11 capitalize on our name without permission, explaining the confusion and  
12 potential problems this creates.

13 Usually a friendly, reasonable approach brings positive results.  
14 The facility stops using the N.A. name. Occasionally, however, an  
15 organization refuses to cooperate with us. Then we have to trust to God  
16 that our Fellowship will come to no harm. In one case a treatment  
17 center took our Twelve Steps, called them by another name, and  
18 telescoped them into a 28-day program. It was clear to concerned N.A.  
19 members in the area that this approach had little chance of working, and  
20 they tried to get the facility to change it. The members were  
21 unsuccessful. At this point there was little more they could do; no  
22 outside group is bound by our Traditions. But in having tried hard to get  
23 that facility to change its unhelpful approach, they were fulfilling their  
24 Sixth Tradition obligations. And attempting to save lives.

25 Clubhouses run by N.A. members are a particularly sticky issue  
26 insofar as the Sixth Tradition is concerned. Started by members for  
27 members, they bring recovering addicts together for dances, parties and  
28 other social purposes. When we get together socially in a relaxed

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1 clubhouse atmosphere, we're encouraged to build rich friendships and  
2 loving relationships.

3       However, clubhouses have a tendency to call themselves  
4 "Narcotics Anonymous" clubhouses. This gives the impression that N.A.  
5 has lent its name to those clubhouses when it has not. It leaves  
6 newcomers and even some oldtimers thinking the clubhouses are a part  
7 of N.A. when they're not. They are a related facility and the use of  
8 N.A.'s name violates the Sixth Tradition.

9       Some of us haven't been able to see what the fuss is all about.  
10 Since clubhouses are run by and for N.A. members, what difference does  
11 it make if they use N.A.'s name? The difference is that if they do so our  
12 entire Fellowship assumes some responsibility for what goes on there. If  
13 a problem occurs, N.A. gets the blame, the bad publicity, and our  
14 Fellowship suffers. For instance, in one community a clubhouse was  
15 cited for health department violations and the local newspaper reported  
16 that the "Narcotics Anonymous Clubhouse" had done the violating. In  
17 another community a fight broke out between two clubhouses and a  
18 stabbing occurred. When the incident appeared in the paper this  
19 clubhouse was also called by the name it called itself--"Narcotics  
20 Anonymous Clubhouse." Such newspaper accounts do harm our  
21 reputation, and addicts who might want to come to N.A. have second  
22 thoughts about doing so.

23       More complications occur when clubhouses use N.A.'s name and,  
24 as happens, also rent space for N.A. meetings. In many member's  
25 minds, then, the clubhouse and Narcotics Anonymous become one and  
26 the same. This affects how donations are spent. Sometimes they're used  
27 to defray the expenses of a forthcoming clubhouse dance, instead of being  
28 used to further our basic spiritual program. This is a clear violation of

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1 the Sixth Tradition, which prohibits us from financing outside  
2 enterprises.

3 Now and again some enterprising members have appropriated our  
4 name for commercial purposes in a different way. They've taken the  
5 N.A. logo and put it on coffee mugs, T-shirts, jewelry and other items.  
6 They have then sold these items at N.A. meetings and conventions.

7 Entrepreneurship--really, being productive and inventive in  
8 earning a living--is a very positive outgrowth of individual recovery.  
9 Some of our members do well financially after they stop using. But  
10 taking the N.A. logo without permission and making money on it is  
11 contrary to the Sixth Tradition. The reasons: Taking anything without  
12 permission violates our spiritual program and damages our individual  
13 recovery. Too, when a member sells objects marked with N.A.'s name or  
14 logo for private gain other members don't know that. They think the  
15 money they spend for these objects helps to finance Narcotics  
16 Anonymous.

17 After getting clean, some of our members find jobs in drug  
18 treatment or related fields. While they bring a special sensitivity to  
19 their work, both the Sixth and the Eighth Traditions make it essential  
20 that even the appearance of a conflict of interests be avoided. So  
21 members who work in the treatment field make it a point not to hand  
22 out cards or post fliers advertising their facilities when they're at N.A.  
23 functions. Otherwise they would be putting N.A. in the position of  
24 endorsing their facilities or practices.

25 Our hotlines are an important way in which we carry our message  
26 to the suffering addict "out there." We use the hotlines for addicts who  
27 want information about N.A. Such contact often leads to a Twelfth Step  
28 call. But hotlines do create a dilemma for us sometimes in terms of the  
29 Sixth Tradition. Some hotline callers want specific referrals to a hospital

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1 or detox center. The problem is obvious. Those of us manning the  
2 hotline want to help the addict but don't want to make a specific referral  
3 because that would constitute an endorsement of the facility to which we  
4 send the caller. Making an endorsement would violate the Sixth  
5 Tradition--and create potentially serious difficulties for N.A. If we made  
6 a referral and the addict's experience at that treatment center was poor,  
7 for example, we might be held morally and even legally responsible.  
8 Too, if we regularly referred callers to hospitals or treatment centers, we  
9 might be offered money to steer addicts to a particular facility. And we  
10 might be tempted to make a deal, either for personal gain or to help  
11 finance our group's projects. Experience shows that it takes some  
12 members a long time to resist the temptations offered by money,  
13 property or prestige. We had best avoid such temptations as we work on  
14 our personal recoveries.

15 Members who manage the hotlines handle requests for referrals in  
16 ways that are helpful yet in accord with the Sixth Tradition. If the  
17 addict wants a doctor, for instance, they suggest a call to the local  
18 medical society, which keeps a list of available physicians. If the addict  
19 wants a detox or treatment center, they refer him to a state or city-  
20 operated referral service. Many communities have such services. If the  
21 addict insists and the situation warrants it, members manning the  
22 hotline might offer several alternative facilities. However, they would  
23 carefully explain that N.A. can endorse none of them.

24 Yet, the Sixth Tradition notwithstanding, members on the hotlines  
25 also realize they must sometimes use their own judgment, especially if  
26 it's a life-or-death situation. For example, an N.A. member on his  
27 group's hotline received a call from a woman whose husband had just  
28 ingested a large amount of a chemical substance. She feared for his life.  
29 She was quickly given the number for the local poison control center;

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1 there was no time to waste. "I don't think as a rule we should make  
2 referrals of any kind, but I also don't think we should forget our  
3 responsibility to another member of the human race," this member later  
4 said.

5 A hospital or detox center is a "related facility." Then what's an  
6 "outside enterprise?" When we first read the Sixth Tradition, many of  
7 us weren't sure. In talking to members who knew the Twelve Traditions  
8 well we learned that it meant any agency, business venture, society,  
9 organization, religion or fellowship other than N.A.

10 Some of us were troubled by the fact that religion was included.  
11 After all, many of us find great joy in the practice of a particular  
12 religion. In fact, some of us turned to formal religious worship after we  
13 experienced a spiritual awakening in N.A. Every so often a group  
14 decides to turn a step-study (or other) meeting into a Bible study  
15 meeting. This is a violation of the Sixth Tradition because the Bible is  
16 not N.A.-approved literature. Narcotics Anonymous neither endorses the  
17 Bible nor any formal religion. To endorse the Bible, though it's cherished  
18 by many, would alienate those who did not cherish it. To endorse one  
19 religion (as represented by Bible study) would alienate both newcomers  
20 and oldtimers who didn't believe in that religion or in any. They would  
21 stop coming to meetings and our spiritual program would be lost to  
22 them. Alternatively, we would have to give "equal time" to all religions  
23 and to those who choose not to believe in them. Religious or  
24 philosophical discussions would fill the time we need for our program of  
25 recovery.

26 Reading or distributing unapproved literature of any kind--not  
27 only the Bible--constitutes a violation of Tradition Six. That includes  
28 materials produced by drug therapy centers, hospitals, and other  
29 fellowships. The merits of the literature has nothing to do with it.

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1 Whether or not it's controversial has nothing to do with it. Whether it's  
2 self-help or instructional material that could be of great use to our  
3 recovery if read privately has nothing to do with it. Whenever we read  
4 or pass out unapproved literature at N.A. meetings we're putting N.A. in  
5 the position of endorsing both the materials and those who sponsored  
6 them.

7 Over the years many of us have brought literature from another  
8 fellowship into N.A. meetings. When we did so it was usually because  
9 we also belonged to that other fellowship, or had in the past. We  
10 appreciated the help we received in that fellowship and wanted to share  
11 its principles with fellow N.A. members. When this has happened,  
12 though, it has created much dissension. N.A. members with no  
13 connection to any other fellowship have been angered by the introduction  
14 of these materials. N.A. members who want to introduce them, or talk  
15 about their experiences in the other fellowship, have been equally  
16 angered when told they couldn't.

17 If we look at N.A.'s history we can understand more clearly why  
18 feelings run high on this issue. The practice of bringing outside  
19 literature to N.A.--especially from Alcoholics Anonymous and other  
20 Twelve Step fellowships--began long ago. N.A. had little of its own  
21 materials then, and N.A. members improvised as best they could. A  
22 Canadian member recalled how hard a struggle it was to establish an  
23 N.A. group in his area. He didn't even know N.A. had any literature of  
24 its own, so he adapted A.A. materials and paid for the printing of  
25 brochures and booklets that members could study. Those conditions no  
26 longer prevail. Now N.A. has its own abundant supply of literature that  
27 any group anywhere in the world can obtain.

28 The outside fellowship's literature that turns up most often in our  
29 meetings is from Alcoholics Anonymous. When members wish to discuss

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1 their good experiences in another fellowship, it's usually A.A. they're  
2 talking about. Many of our members used alcohol as well as other drugs  
3 and A.A. became their first Twelve Step program. Some can recall  
4 attending A.A. meetings when N.A. was little more than a hope.

5 Typical is an N.A. member who, many decades ago, started the  
6 first N.A. meeting in his area. He had only a few dollars to get started.  
7 When he looked for a likely meeting place, everyone he approached  
8 turned him down. So for a year he held meetings in his cramped home.  
9 Sometimes nobody came. Sometimes addicts who had just quit using  
10 came. Sometimes a lot of users showed up. The founding member felt  
11 very stressed because the survival of the group seemed to depend solely  
12 on him. So, many evenings after his N.A. meeting ended, he rushed to a  
13 nearby A.A. meeting to catch the last half. He gratefully recalled, "I felt  
14 there was some history there, someplace for me to fall into. I felt  
15 supported there, I felt safe."

16 Narcotics Anonymous was founded in 1953 by addicts who had  
17 learned the tools of their trade in A.A. In fact, N.A. was born when  
18 more and more people using heroin, cocaine, pills and other non-alcohol  
19 drugs showed up at A.A. meetings seeking recovery. They too wanted  
20 help and A.A. faced a great dilemma. Its success was based on a single-  
21 minded focus on alcohol; its message was directed exclusively at  
22 alcoholics. It didn't want to alter or dilute that message, but it did want  
23 to help people addicted to other drugs. Concluding that it couldn't accept  
24 into its program those whose primary problem wasn't alcohol, A.A.  
25 generously offered its steps and traditions for adaptation to any group in  
26 a spirit of "cooperation, not affiliation."

27 This far-sighted solution paved the way for N.A.'s birth, but N.A.'s  
28 founders then faced their own dilemma. They needed to adapt A.A.'s  
29 Twelve Steps in a way that addicts using drugs other than alcohol could

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1 identify with. And they needed to create an atmosphere of recovery that  
2 would be welcoming to drug addicts of all kinds--marijuana users as well  
3 as heroin users, those on cocaine as well as those on pills, those who had  
4 been clean for a day as well as those who had been clean for a decade.  
5 N.A.'s founders knew that the differences between various addicts were  
6 great and could create an atmosphere of divisiveness instead of recovery.  
7 They could rip N.A. apart just as it was getting started.

8       Finally, guided by their Higher Power, the founding members  
9 came upon a solution to the dilemma. Not simply converting the First  
10 Step to read, "We admitted that we were powerless over drugs," they  
11 adapted it to read, "We admitted that we were powerless over our  
12 addiction." It was a strikingly intuitive recognition that neither heroin,  
13 coke, pot, tranks or any other drug was our problem--that the disease of  
14 addiction was the problem. And no matter what we used or how much  
15 clean time we had, we were all victims of this disease. For A.A. the  
16 disease is alcoholism; for us the disease is addiction. While we owe A.A.  
17 a profound debt of gratitude, our philosophies are quite different.

18       A number of our members used alcohol as well as other drugs.  
19 Some of them belong to A.A. as well as N.A. Some of our members also  
20 belong to other fellowships, such as Overeaters Anonymous and  
21 Gamblers Anonymous. Membership in other fellowships is no more a  
22 violation of the Sixth Tradition than being a member of the Rotarians or  
23 a local church group. When N.A. members are also in A.A., however,  
24 the situation becomes more complicated because many dual members  
25 tend to have strong attachments to both fellowships. The historical  
26 connection between N.A. and A.A. explains why, but strong attachment  
27 makes us want to emphasize the similarities and disregard the  
28 differences. We're like people in love who can see only the ways in  
29 which they're alike. Being dual members makes it easy to consider

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1 ourselves "dually addicted." But addicted to what? Our N.A. philosophy  
2 and approach tell us that dual addiction is a myth. The disease isn't any  
3 particular drug. The disease is addiction itself.

4 For this reason neither the literature nor the language of another  
5 fellowship really is appropriate in N.A. A number of our members  
6 identify themselves as "addicts and alcoholics," or talk about "sobriety"  
7 and living "clean and sober." Again, the implication is that there are  
8 two diseases and that those members are suffering from both. When  
9 N.A. members talk like that the clarity of our message, the N.A.  
10 message, becomes blurred.

11 None of this means A.A.'s approach is in any way inferior or  
12 superior to ours. Alcoholics Anonymous has been extremely successful in  
13 helping alcoholics recover; we have been successful in helping drug  
14 addicts of all kinds recover. It behooves us neither to adopt a "we're  
15 better than they" attitude or to feel we can't stand on our own.

16 Our members have often slipped into Sixth Tradition violations  
17 without being aware that they were doing so. Nevertheless, violations of  
18 any tradition are harmful to our Fellowship--sometimes extremely so.  
19 But how we attempt to resolve them says something about our own  
20 spiritual development. Having been wrong so often in our lives, when  
21 we spot a tradition violation, it feels good to be "right." Being "right,"  
22 though, can trap us into self-righteousness if we're not careful. Self-  
23 righteousness in turn leads to anger, accusations and attacks. Attacks  
24 lead to counter-attacks. Shouts along the lines of, "You're violating the  
25 traditions!" and, "We have autonomy, we can do what we want!" fill the  
26 air. But nothing gets accomplished.

27 The alternative: To do our best to resolve all violations with open-  
28 mindedness and open discussion. This is in accord with our spiritual  
29 principles of love and compassion. It's also the most difficult approach,

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1 because it requires a great deal of tact and diplomacy, something many  
2 of us have been a little rusty at.

3 In resolving tradition violations it helps to keep in mind that none  
4 of us sets out intentionally to harm the Fellowship. We may at times be  
5 thoughtless. We may at times be willful. But we all need our  
6 Fellowship, we all want it to grow. We don't consciously choose disunity  
7 in N.A. any more than we consciously chose to live miserable lives when  
8 we were actively addicted.

9 Experience shows that tradition violations are best handled by  
10 offering alternatives. When we see a member or a group acting in a way  
11 that's contrary to the Twelve Traditions it's not useful to say, "Stop that  
12 violation!" Instead, we should meditate on the problem and try to figure  
13 out some compromise that will be satisfactory to all. Here are some  
14 examples involving tradition violations and how they were resolved:

15 In one instance, N.A. meetings were held in a recovery house well  
16 regarded by many of our members. The recovery house regularly held  
17 fund-raising functions, which were always announced at the N.A.  
18 meetings. Both N.A. members and recovery house residents had trouble  
19 figuring out which announcements came from N.A. and which came from  
20 the facility. When a few concerned members wanted to do something  
21 about this, they were initially rebuffed by the members who favored the  
22 recovery house.

23 Eventually an alternative solution was worked out: To place a  
24 bulletin board outside the meeting room, where recovery house fund-  
25 raising announcements could be posted.

26 In another situation, a large speaker meeting in a rapidly-growing  
27 area almost always had a speaker from another Twelve Step Fellowship.  
28 The group secretary justified these speakers by explaining that they  
29 were experienced, while most members in his group were newcomers

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1 who didn't yet know the Twelve Steps or the principles of the program.  
2 He insisted that all Twelve Step programs are basically the same and  
3 was initially unmoved by the fact that he was violating the Sixth  
4 Tradition.

5       The alternative solution: It was proposed that N.A. members with  
6 long clean time who lived elsewhere, but were willing to travel, could be  
7 recruited to act as speakers. It was acknowledged that this would cause  
8 the secretary more trouble, but that it was important to have only N.A.  
9 speakers. This worked. A sympathetic, understanding approach is much  
10 more effective in resolving conflicts than to insist, "You have to do it our  
11 way because your way is wrong."

12       A third case involved a member who announced at an N.A.  
13 meeting that he would celebrate his approaching birthday at another  
14 Twelve Step Fellowship. Several members at the meeting protested, and  
15 some harsh words were exchanged.

16       The alternative solution: When things quieted down it was  
17 pointed out to the member that in making his announcement pertaining  
18 to another fellowship he was violating the Sixth Tradition. He was  
19 asked to have a second birthday celebration with his fellow N.A.  
20 members, because they would like that very much. Also, seeing a  
21 commemorative birthday would be an inspiration to newcomers. He  
22 liked the idea.

23       In a fourth situation, a meeting in a well established area drew  
24 several hundred people a week. Some N.A. members who were also  
25 entrepreneurs began to make announcements of sales, set up tables, and  
26 sell jewelry, Hawaiian print shirts and other items to members in the  
27 meeting hall before and after the meetings. Horrified that their favorite  
28 meeting was being turned into a flea market, some members asked the

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1 entrepreneurs to stop. They flatly refused. Nothing that was said would  
2 dissuade them from their selling.

3 The alternative solution: The issue was brought up at the group's  
4 next business meeting. After some dissension, group conscience held that  
5 the hall was rented for N.A. meetings exclusively. No announcements  
6 would be permitted or tables provided--but members who wanted to sell  
7 things could do so outside the meeting hall.

8 A fifth case was very difficult to resolve. A step-study meeting  
9 run by a large group was using literature not approved by N.A. Protests  
10 were useless, conflict escalated. Protesting members appealed to the  
11 area service committee, which voted to let the practice continue. Then  
12 the regional service committee was petitioned. The RSC agreed that a  
13 violation was taking place, and refused to recognize the area service  
14 committee at regional meetings. It also voted to take the offending  
15 group out of the regional directory at the next printing of the directory.  
16 The area responded by deciding to withdraw from the region and print  
17 its own directory.

18 Finally, the region decided to take the matter to the Board of  
19 Trustees, which came up with an alternative solution. The Trustees  
20 agreed that only N.A.-approved literature could be read at N.A.  
21 meetings. But the Trustees also said that if some members wanted to  
22 meet informally before the regular N.A. meeting on a word of mouth  
23 basis, they could read whatever they wanted to without violating the  
24 Sixth Tradition. This was agreeable to everybody.

25 As this case shows, we have formal ways of dealing with tradition  
26 violations when the need arises. Often an issue can be resolved in  
27 business meetings; if not, further action can be taken. However, the  
28 longer the controversy lasts and the larger the number of members

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1 involved, the more intensely emotional things are going to get. The  
2 quicker we can resolve violations, the better off we all are.

3 Resolving violations is a learning process involving lots of trial and  
4 error. As we learned to resolve conflicts in N.A., though, we also found  
5 that we had a useful tool to use in our personal and business  
6 relationships. We found ourselves no longer provoking disputes or  
7 exacerbating them; we did our best to resolve issues instead. We also  
8 found in time that standing firm on principles--as embodied in the Sixth  
9 Tradition and the others--had a positive effect on us. Even if there was  
10 anguish involved and even if we didn't always succeed, standing up for  
11 principles had a strengthening effect on us. We wound up rejoicing in a  
12 new-found sense of responsibility.

13 The Sixth Tradition encourages us to develop and quicken that  
14 sense of responsibility. In protecting N.A.'s good name and reputation,  
15 we make our own recovery more solid and ensure that our new way of  
16 life remains available to all suffering addicts.

17  
18  
19 **Newsline Articles**

20  
21 *This article was written by a member of the Board of Trustees in*  
22 *1984. It represents views at the time of writing.*

23  
24 Questions regarding Tradition violations arise most frequently over  
25 the use of literature and speakers from other Twelve Step Fellowships.  
26 A rereading of our Sixth Tradition and the following words of experience  
27 may be helpful in resolving these problems before they start.

28 Tradition Six: "An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or  
29 lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest

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1 problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary  
2 purpose."

3       Narcotics Anonymous, as we know it today, evolved out of a group  
4 called A.A. for Addicts, which met in the San Fernando Valley. In 1953,  
5 the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous informed this group  
6 that they were in violation of the Traditions of A.A. and that A.A. was  
7 for alcoholics. This group formed the first meeting of Narcotics  
8 Anonymous and since then we have grown from one small meeting in  
9 Southern California to a worldwide Fellowship.

10       We are deeply grateful to A.A. for granting us permission to adapt  
11 their Twelve Steps and Traditions to our program. We have gained  
12 much from A.A. and wish to maintain a spirit of "cooperation, but not  
13 affiliation" with A.A.

14       The World Service Board of Trustees of N.A. has consistently held  
15 that, at N.A. meetings, the use of literature other than N.A. approved  
16 literature constitutes a violation of the Traditions. Further, that  
17 speakers need to talk about the N.A. Steps, the N.A. Traditions, and  
18 N.A. recovery. We need to keep in mind the confusion that can result  
19 for the newcomer attending an N.A. meeting, hearing about how to  
20 recover in another Twelve Step Fellowship. Any member may attend  
21 another Twelve Step Fellowship as part of his or her personal program,  
22 but when speaking in Narcotics Anonymous he or she needs to be able to  
23 talk about their N.A. experience. We are a separate fellowship in our  
24 own right. Under the guidance of a Higher Power, we are growing, we  
25 are getting better; we have our own literature and our own experience of  
26 recovery. We need to have pride in ourselves as such. It is essential  
27 that we adhere to our Traditions including Tradition Six; our survival is  
28 dependent upon our standing on our own and not affiliating with another  
29 Twelve Step program.

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1           There is much available in the nature of self-help literature,  
2 literature from other Twelve Step programs, and inspirational reading  
3 which can be helpful to the individual personally, and can be  
4 incorporated into that person's recovery. However, there is a vast  
5 difference between reading and benefitting from a variety of sources, and  
6 bringing them into an N.A. meeting for others to read or listen to.

7           The use of literature other than N.A. approved literature  
8 constitutes a violation of the Traditions. Speakers for N.A. meetings,  
9 conventions, functions, etc., need to talk about the N.A. Steps, the N.A.  
10 Traditions and N.A. recovery in order to avoid confusion and not be in  
11 violation of our Traditions.

12           If you are concerned about a violation of traditions in your group,  
13 area, or region, we suggest that you approach the individual, or  
14 individuals involved, with a positive and friendly attitude. Every effort  
15 should be made to discuss and resolve possible violations at the time and  
16 place they appear to be generated.

17           Reprinted from: Newsline Vol. 1, No. 6B

18

19           *This article was written by a member of the Board of Trustees, in*  
20 *January 1985. It represents views at the time of writing.*

21           As Narcotics Anonymous continues its maturing process, the  
22 Twelve Traditions assume larger and larger dimensions in the life of our  
23 Fellowship. They become important for the individual member, the  
24 autonomous group, the entire service structure. As we vigilantly  
25 continue to pursue our primary purpose -- to carry the message to the  
26 addict who still suffers -- we must seek to understand the spiritual  
27 guidelines that bind us together.

28           An understanding of the Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous is a  
29 requirement for genuine service to our Fellowship. The Traditions are

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1 the point from which our success has sprung, in bringing our program of  
2 recovery to tens of thousands of addicts. The Traditions cannot be taken  
3 lightly. They are not merely "suggested", nor are they so hopelessly  
4 complex as to be unworkable. Our Basic Text reminds us: "The Twelve  
5 Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous are not negotiable."

6 And while it is impossible to say if one tradition is any more  
7 important than another (as it is similarly impossible to single out any  
8 one step as the most important to recovery), the tradition chosen as the  
9 basis of this discussion is one whose significance looms large on the N.A.  
10 horizon -- Tradition Six. I believe that the obligations that Tradition Six  
11 place on all N.A. members, groups, trusted servants, and service units  
12 are imperative to the continued well-being of Narcotics Anonymous.

13 What is Tradition Six? To begin with, it's the one which says,  
14 "An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to  
15 any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money,  
16 property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose."

17 Tradition Six comes immediately after Tradition Five, which  
18 states, "Each group has but one primary purpose, to carry the message  
19 to the addict who still suffers."

20 The purpose of Tradition Six then would seem to be to enumerate  
21 the things that must be done to ensure the furtherance of N.A.'s primary  
22 purpose. It lists what we must do to preserve and protect the N.A.  
23 Program of recovery.

24 There would be no Narcotics Anonymous if Tradition Six were a  
25 source of casual or continual violation. If there were no Tradition Six,  
26 N.A. might be destroyed from within, or it might be destroyed from  
27 without, but it would most surely be destroyed.

28 What, therefore, does Tradition Six mean? Tradition Six says first  
29 of all that we must never endorse or finance nor lend the N.A. name to a

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1 related facility or outside enterprise. By "endorsement" is meant to be  
2 an official expression of approval. By "finance" is meant to give money  
3 in the name of N.A. "To lend" means just that -- to allow another  
4 group, organization, or entity to use the N.A. name for its own purposes,  
5 however praiseworthy and however close to our own aims. The terms  
6 "money, property, and prestige" speak for themselves and warn us of the  
7 different ways we can be sidetracked from our primary purpose.

8 Possible violations of this Tradition are being constantly brought to  
9 the attention of the Board of Trustees. Questions are always being  
10 asked. It is clear to many N.A. members that to preserve the integrity  
11 of our program, Tradition Six must be rigorously adhered to.

12 Just in the past three months I have been asked to answer  
13 questions such as the following: Can EST literature be read at N.A.  
14 meetings?" "Can the rehabilitation center my group meets at tell people  
15 it is an N.A. approved facility?" "Can we make announcements at  
16 meetings about Hare Krishna?" "About O.A.?" "About the half-way  
17 house a lot of our members live at?" "About the A.A. young peoples'  
18 dance?"

19 A.A. as in ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS? Yes, A.A. -- there, I've  
20 let the cat out of the bag.

21 Alcoholics Anonymous -- the issue that causes more emotion and  
22 more confusion among N.A. members than any other. I believe the time  
23 has come for N.A. to discuss and resolve the issue of its relation to the  
24 A.A. Fellowship. I believe that this discussion and resolution should  
25 occur within the context of our Tradition Six.

26 For many, the answer to this issue is very simple; unfortunately, a  
27 lot of N.A. members do not agree on just what the simple answer is. To  
28 clarify a discussion of the situation, I would like to create two

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1 hypothetical N.A. members – each representing the two most prevalent  
2 positions on the issue.

3 Member #1 believes that the A.A. issue doesn't even need to be  
4 discussed. For him, A.A. is an outside organization to which he doesn't  
5 belong. This member hates the mere mention of A.A. at Narcotics  
6 Anonymous meetings and feels people who are so attached to A.A.  
7 should stay there, since they obviously have no respect for the N.A.  
8 traditions.

9 Member #2 went to A.A. before there was N.A. in his area. He  
10 sees the A.A. Program as being the parent of N.A. and entitled to a  
11 status in the N.A. Program that no other organization has. Since  
12 everybody he knows goes to both N.A. and A.A., he doesn't understand  
13 how talking about A.A. at N.A. meetings could possibly be a violation of  
14 Tradition Six. He ridicules Member #1 for being an "N.A. purist."

15 While perhaps lacking somewhat in tact and sensitivity, Member  
16 #1 is, of course, essentially correct in his interpretation of the Traditions.  
17 While Member #2 has a point of view which comes from his love of the  
18 A.A. Program of recovery, it is essentially in violation of the N.A.  
19 Traditions and therefore an error which really can't be negotiated.

20 Accordingly, this article is not directed at Member #1. It's offered  
21 to Member #2 as an honest attempt to explain the rationale and  
22 importance of Tradition Six. It is also offered to every N.A. member who  
23 has been puzzled, angered, or confused by the A.A. issue.

24 As a beginning to this discussion, I would like to acknowledge as a  
25 historical fact that Narcotics Anonymous is deeply indebted to Alcoholics  
26 Anonymous. N.A. was founded in July 1953, by addicts who had  
27 learned the tools of their recovery from addiction in the A.A. Program.  
28 N.A. freely admits its debt in its literature. It says in our White Book  
29 that "In N.A. we follow a program adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous.

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1 We are deeply grateful to the A.A. Fellowship for pointing the way for  
2 us to a new way of life."

3 But, from the origin of our Fellowship, N.A. members have always  
4 known that it was something different to be in N.A. than to be an A.A.  
5 member -- even if (as many people apparently do) a person belongs to  
6 both Fellowships.

7 When I was preparing this article, I began to wonder if there was  
8 perhaps some new way I could approach a discussion of Tradition Six in  
9 order to more clearly and lovingly explain its spirit and importance. I  
10 realize that it's a difficult thing to ask some N.A. members to leave their  
11 membership in the much-loved A.A. Program outside the N.A. meeting  
12 door. But I knew that I had to find a way of making them realize just  
13 how important this was to N.A. unity.

14 But not only did I want to convince these members who couldn't  
15 distinguish between the N.A. and A.A. Programs; I also wanted to  
16 impart some of the frustration many N.A. members feel. After all our  
17 efforts to explain Tradition Six, we go to our home group and still hear  
18 people identifying themselves as "cross addicted alcoholics" while  
19 expressing their gratitude to the A.A. (but not the N.A.) program for  
20 their "sobriety" (not recovery). Then during the meeting break the latest  
21 A.A. dance is announced. I felt that they needed to know how much we  
22 love N.A. and how Tradition Six violations tear us up.

23 So, what could I say differently this time? I had an inspiration  
24 and found an answer -- an answer at least to the issue of a new  
25 perspective. The answer has to do with history.

26 I wonder how many realize that both N.A. and A.A. have complex  
27 roots and that both of these Fellowships grew and changed to their  
28 present shapes? That A.A., for instance, didn't just happen, and like  
29 N.A. has its origins in another, "parent" organization? And that the

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1 genius of the A.A. founders lay in their ability to synthesize material  
2 already there.

3 I bet that not too many people know the details behind some of  
4 the above statements. Most people (even A.A. members) seem to believe  
5 that Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Armstrong -- the founders of Alcoholics  
6 Anonymous -- were inspired by absolutely new ideas which had no  
7 relation with anything that had ever happened before.

8 This belief, however, is not true and if they were still alive would  
9 be contradicted by Bill and Bob themselves. In his book, A.A. Comes of  
10 Age, Bill Wilson explained where some of the ideas came from. He  
11 discussed, for instance, the medical theories of William D. Silkworth and  
12 the pragmatic philosophy of William James as providing a context for  
13 the A.A. Program.

14 Wilson also extensively discusses the relation of the early A.A.  
15 groups to a Protestant evangelical religious movement called the Oxford  
16 Group -- with its precepts of "confidence, confession, conversion, and  
17 continuance" -- so crucial that for the first two years of A.A. existence  
18 (1935-1937), in order to join A.A. a person had to join the Oxford Group.

19 Bill Wilson makes no bones about A.A.'s debt to the Moral  
20 Rearmament movement and to other sources. He acknowledges, for  
21 instance, that when he wrote the Twelve Steps that "most of the basic  
22 ideas had come from the Oxford Group, William James, and Dr.  
23 Silkworth."

24 In 1955, at its General Convention, A.A. received a special visitor.  
25 They were addressed by an Oxford Group clergyman, a non-alcoholic  
26 named Samuel Shoemaker, who was instrumental in starting many early  
27 A.A. groups. Bill Wilson expresses his gratitude for Sam Shoemaker in  
28 the following passage from A.A. Comes of Age:

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1            "It was from Sam Shoemaker that Dr. Bob and I, in the  
2 beginning, had absorbed most of the principles that were afterward  
3 embodied in the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. A.A. got its  
4 ideas of self-examination, acknowledgement of character defects,  
5 restitution for harm done, and working with others straight from the  
6 Oxford Groups and directly from Sam Shoemaker, their former leader in  
7 America, and from nowhere else. He will always be found in our annals  
8 as the one whose inspired example and teaching did most to show us how  
9 to create the spiritual climate in which we alcoholics may survive and  
10 then proceed to grow. A.A. owes a debt to friends in the days of A.A.'s  
11 infancy."

12            In 1937 a remarkable event occurred. Despite the great love and  
13 dependence early A.A. had for the Oxford Group, the two split. As Bill  
14 Wilson later wrote, "we most reluctantly parted company with these  
15 great friends."

16            What happened? The answer is plain: A.A. recognized that in  
17 order to survive as a Fellowship it had to assert its independence, it had  
18 to concentrate on its primary purpose, it had to be affiliated with no  
19 other group, it could neither endorse nor lend its name to anything or  
20 anyone -- not even its beloved parents. In other words, Alcoholics  
21 Anonymous decided to follow the Traditions.

22            My purpose in telling you this is not to diminish the respect that  
23 we all have for A.A., but to ask you to see the parallels in the situation:  
24 Here were two groups working closely together, possessing similar  
25 methods and aims, having members belonging to both, with one group  
26 functioning as the "parent" of the other, and with many members  
27 sentimentally attached to the original group although the benefits  
28 derived from the "child" group were their true reason for joining.

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1           The point, I hope, is clear: Some N.A. members who also belong  
2 to and love A.A. are probably in the same position as some early A.A.  
3 members who belonged to and loved the Oxford Group. Where does one  
4 group end and the other begin?

5           The experience of A.A. and the Oxford Group speaks directly to  
6 the issue. The answer for A.A. was found in the development of the  
7 spirit of Tradition Six. With that principle in mind, the early A.A.  
8 members could continue to belong to the Oxford Group if they wished  
9 (and many did), but they had to realize that their Oxford Group  
10 membership was separate from their A.A. membership and the Oxford  
11 Group had to stay outside the A.A. meeting door.

12           N.A. sees both the wisdom and the irony of being guided by A.A.'s  
13 experience with the Oxford Group. We believe in this principle so much  
14 that we are willing (as A.A. was willing) to apply it to our parent  
15 organization. Narcotics Anonymous cannot endorse, lend, nor join its  
16 name to Alcoholics Anonymous. A.A. should be mentioned at N.A.  
17 meetings as frequently as the Oxford Group is mentioned at A.A.  
18 meetings.

19

20           Reprinted from: Newsline Vol. 2, No. 1

21

22           *This article was generated by the Board of Trustees in November*  
23 *1985 in response to the needs of the Fellowship. It represents the views*  
24 *of the Board of Trustees at the time of writing.*

25

26           The question of just how Narcotics Anonymous relates to all other  
27 Fellowships and organizations is one which generates a good deal of  
28 controversy within our Fellowship. In spite of the fact that we have a  
29 stated policy of "cooperation, not affiliation" with outside organizations,

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1 much confusion remains. The most sensitive issue of this nature involves  
2 our relationship to the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. A constant  
3 stream of letters is received by the World Service Board of Trustees  
4 asking a variety of questions about this relationship. The time has come  
5 for another *Newsline* article to shed some light on this important subject.

6 Narcotics Anonymous is modeled after, though not identical to,  
7 Alcoholics Anonymous. Nearly every N.A. community in existence has  
8 leaned to some degree on A.A. in the N.A. group's formative stages. Our  
9 relationship with that fellowship over the years has been very real and  
10 dynamic. Our Fellowship itself sprang from the turmoil within A.A. over  
11 what to do with the addicts knocking on their door. So we will look at  
12 those roots for some perspective on our current relationship to A.A.

13 Bill W., one of A.A.'s co-founders, often said that one of A.A.'s  
14 greatest strengths is its single-minded focus on one thing and one thing  
15 only. By limiting its primary purpose to carrying the message to  
16 alcoholics and avoiding all other activities, A.A. is able to do that one  
17 thing supremely well. The atmosphere of identification is preserved by  
18 that purity of focus, and alcoholics get help.

19 From very early on, A.A. was confronted by a perplexing problem:  
20 "What do we do with drug addicts? We want to keep our focus on  
21 alcohol so the alcoholic hears the message, but these addicts come in here  
22 talking about drugs, inadvertently weakening our atmosphere of  
23 identification." The steps were written, the Big Book was written --  
24 what were they supposed to do, rewrite it all? Allow the atmosphere of  
25 identification to get blurry so that no one got a clear sense of belonging?  
26 Kick these dying people back out into the streets? The problem must  
27 have been a tremendous one for them.

28 When they finally studied the problem carefully and took a stand  
29 in their literature, the solution they outlined possessed their

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1 characteristic common sense and wisdom. They said that while they  
2 cannot accept addicts who are not alcoholics as members, they freely  
3 offer their steps and traditions for adaptation by any groups who wish to  
4 use them. They pledged their support in a spirit of "cooperation, not  
5 affiliation." This farsighted solution to a difficult problem paved the way  
6 for the development of the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship.

7 But still the problem that they wished to avoid would have to be  
8 addressed by any group who tried to adapt those principles to drug  
9 addicts. How do you achieve the atmosphere of identification so  
10 necessary for surrender and recovery if you let all different kinds of  
11 addicts in? Can someone with a heroin problem relate to someone with  
12 an alcohol or marijuana or Valium problem? How will you ever achieve  
13 the unity that the First Tradition says is necessary for recovery? Our  
14 Fellowship inherited a tough dilemma.

15 For some perspective on how we have handled that dilemma, one  
16 more look at A.A. history will be helpful. Another thing Bill W. used to  
17 frequently write and speak about was what he called the "tenstrike" of  
18 A.A. -- the wording of the Third and Eleventh Steps. The whole area of  
19 spirituality vs. religion was every bit as perplexing for them in those  
20 days as this unity issue has been for us. Bill liked to recount that the  
21 simple addition of the words "as we understood Him" after the word  
22 "God" laid to rest that controversy in one chop. An issue that had the  
23 potential to divide and destroy A.A. was converted into the cornerstone  
24 of the program by that simple turn of phrase.

25 As the founders of Narcotics Anonymous adapted our steps, they  
26 came up with a "tenstrike" of perhaps equal importance. Rather than  
27 converting the First Step in the most natural, logical way ("We admitted  
28 that we were powerless over drugs..."), they made a radical change in  
29 that step. They wrote "We admitted that we were powerless over our

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1 addiction..." Drugs are a varied group of substances, the use of any of  
2 which is but a symptom of our disease. When addicts gather and focus  
3 on drugs, they are usually focusing on their differences, because each of  
4 us used a different drug or combination of drugs. The one thing that we  
5 all share is the disease of addiction. It was a masterful stroke. With  
6 that single turn of phrase the foundation of the Narcotics Anonymous  
7 Fellowship was laid.

8 Our First Step gives us one thing to focus on, so we can do that  
9 one thing supremely well. We carry the message to the addict who still  
10 suffers. As a bonus, this wording of Step One also takes the focus of our  
11 powerlessness off the symptom and places it on the disease itself. The  
12 phrase "powerless over a drug" does not go far enough for most of us in  
13 ongoing recovery -- the desire to use has been removed -- but "powerless  
14 over our addiction" is as relevant to the oldtimer as it is to the  
15 newcomer. Our addiction begins to resurface and cause problems in our  
16 thoughts and feelings whenever we become complacent in our program of  
17 recovery. This process has nothing to do with "drug of choice." We  
18 guard against the recurrence of our drug use by reapplying our spiritual  
19 principles before our disease takes us that far. So our First Step applies  
20 regardless of drug of choice, and regardless of length of clean time. With  
21 this "tenstrike" as its foundation, N.A. has begun to flourish as a major  
22 worldwide movement, clearly appropriate to contemporary addiction  
23 problems. And we've only just begun.

24 As any given N.A. community matures in its understanding of its  
25 own principles (particularly Step One), an interesting fact emerges. The  
26 A.A. perspective, with its alcohol-oriented language, and the N.A.  
27 approach, with its clear need to shift the focus off the specific drug, don't  
28 mix very well. When we try to mix them, we find that we have the  
29 same problem as A.A. had with us all along! When our members

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1 identify as "addicts and alcoholics" or talk about "sobriety" and living  
2 "clean and sober" the clarity of the N.A. message is blurred. The  
3 implication in this language is that there are two diseases; that one drug  
4 is separate from the pack, so that a separate set of terms is needed when  
5 discussing it. At first glance this seems minor, but our experience clearly  
6 shows that the full impact of the N.A. message is crippled by this subtle  
7 semantic confusion.

8         It has become clear that our common identification, our unity, and  
9 our full surrender as addicts depends on a clear understanding of our  
10 most basic fundamentals: We are powerless over a disease that gets  
11 progressively worse when we use any drug. It does not matter what  
12 drug was at the center for us when we got here. Any drug we use will  
13 release our disease all over again. We recover from this disease by  
14 applying our Twelve Steps. Our steps are uniquely worded to carry this  
15 message clearly, so the rest of our language of recovery must be  
16 consistent with those steps. Ironically, we cannot mix these fundamental  
17 principles with those of our parent Fellowship without crippling our own  
18 message.

19         Does this mean that A.A.'s approach is inferior to ours, and based  
20 on denial or half measures? Of course not! A casual, cursory glance at  
21 their success in delivering recovery to alcoholics over the years makes it  
22 abundantly clear: Theirs is a top notch program. Their literature, their  
23 service structure, the quality of their members' recovery, their sheer  
24 numbers, the respect they enjoy from society, these things speak for  
25 themselves. Our members ought not embarrass us by adopting a "we're  
26 better than them" posture. That can only be counterproductive.

27         The simple fact is that both Fellowships have a Sixth Tradition for  
28 a reason: to keep them from being diverted from their primary purpose.  
29 Because of the inherent need of a Twelve Step Fellowship to focus on

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1 "one thing and one thing only so that it can do that one thing supremely  
2 well," each Twelve Step Fellowship must stand alone, unaffiliated with  
3 everything else. It is in our nature to be separate, to feel separate, and  
4 use a separate set of recovery terms, because we each have a separate,  
5 unique primary purpose. The focus of A.A. is on the alcoholic, and we  
6 ought to respect their perfect right to adhere to their own traditions and  
7 protect their focus. If we cannot use language consistent with that, we  
8 ought not go to their meetings and undermine that atmosphere. In the  
9 same way, N.A. members ought to respect our own primary purpose and  
10 identify ourselves at N.A. meetings simply as addicts, and share in a  
11 way that keeps our fundamentals clear.

12 As a Fellowship, we must continue to strive to move forward by  
13 not stubbornly clinging to one radical extreme or the other. Our  
14 members who have been unintentionally blurring the N.A. message by  
15 using drug-specific language such as "sobriety," "alcoholic," "clean and  
16 sober," "dope fiend," etc., could help by identifying simply and clearly as  
17 addicts, and using the words "clean," "clean time," and "recovery" which  
18 imply no particular substance. And we all could help by referring to only  
19 our own literature at meetings, thereby avoiding any implied  
20 endorsement or affiliation. Our principles stand on their own. For the  
21 sake of our development as a Fellowship and the personal recovery of our  
22 members, "our approach to the problem of addiction" must shine through  
23 clearly in what we say and do at meetings.

24 Our members who have used these sound arguments to rationalize  
25 an anti-A.A. stand, thereby alienating many badly needed stable  
26 members, would do well to re-evaluate and reconsider the effects of that  
27 kind of behavior. Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual Fellowship. Love,  
28 tolerance, patience and cooperation are essential if we are to live up to  
29 that.

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1           Let's pull together our energies into our personal spiritual  
2 development through our own Twelve Steps. Let's carry our own  
3 message clearly. There's a lot of work to be done, and we need each  
4 other if we are to do it effectively. Let's get on with it in a spirit of N.A.  
5 unity.

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7 Reprinted from: *Newsline* Vol.2, No.6

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10           *This article was generated by the Board of Trustees in August,*  
11 *1987 in response to the needs of the Fellowship. It represents the views*  
12 *of the Board of Trustees at the time of writing.*

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The Relationship of Narcotics Anonymous to Nar-Anon and  
Families Anonymous:

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18           The Board of Trustees has received many inquiries during the past  
19 few years which have asked specific questions about how to go about  
20 cooperating without affiliating when it comes to Nar-Anon and Families  
21 Anonymous. The need to address this issue arose from a confusion  
22 between the letter of our Twelve Traditions, and the spirit of love,  
23 understanding, and caring which we all feel as individuals.

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It has become clear to us that the phrase "cooperation not affiliation" is no longer suitable for Narcotics Anonymous. Undoubtedly this attitude and these words have served us over many years, but it appears that the growth and development of our Fellowship demands a revised expression. In consulting the dictionary, "cooperation" means "the act of working together to a common end or the association of a

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1 number of people together in an enterprise, the benefits of which are  
2 shared." This definition can present a problem in addressing our  
3 relationship with any other organization, including Nar-Anon and  
4 Families Anonymous. Strictly speaking, the object or goal of our  
5 Fellowship is not the same as any other fellowship. In this respect, it is  
6 impossible to cooperate without also endorsing or affiliating.

7 The Board of Trustees believes that a policy, or attitude, or phrase  
8 which serves our purpose best and guides our Fellowship well is "a policy  
9 of non-affiliation." This clearly conveys the fact that we do not associate  
10 with, connect with, or adopt any other organization or purpose.  
11 Traditions Six (*"An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the*  
12 *N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of*  
13 *money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose"*) and  
14 Ten (*"N.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought*  
15 *never be drawn into public controversy"*) refer to these issues, and there  
16 can never be any formal relationship between Narcotics Anonymous and  
17 any other Fellowship or organization.

18 As individuals, we have tremendous respect for these other  
19 Fellowships and support the need for them. As grateful recovering  
20 addicts, we carry intense and genuine love and understanding in our  
21 hearts.

22 Adherence to our Twelve Traditions does not preclude or negate  
23 these feelings. We must remember, however, that Narcotics  
24 Anonymous, Nar-Anon, and Families Anonymous are separate  
25 Fellowships, each with its own purpose. These organizations are not  
26 enmeshed with each other, nor are they interdependent.

27 We believe that by reflecting back upon our own paths, we can  
28 find the way to convey this respect, love, and support, without endorsing  
29 or affiliating with other Fellowships. Our family members and loved

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1 ones were often instrumental in allowing us to face the consequences of  
2 our addiction by not helping us! We now have the opportunity to  
3 support them by not interfering and also by simply pursuing our own  
4 purpose as guided by the spiritual principles of Narcotics Anonymous.  
5 While we all may have our own way of supporting our loved ones, N.A.  
6 can only remain true to our primary purpose (Tradition Five: "*Each*  
7 *group has but one primary purpose--to carry the message to the addict*  
8 *who still suffers*") and the guidance provided in Traditions Six ("*An*  
9 *N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any*  
10 *related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or*  
11 *prestige divert us from our primary purpose*") and Ten ("*N.A. has no*  
12 *opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn*  
13 *into public controversy*"). Consistent Fellowship action which is guided  
14 by these principles is the kindest and most loving path for us to follow,  
15 both for ourselves and our family members and loved ones. This helps  
16 these other Fellowships to address their own needs in a sensible,  
17 appropriate, and non-dependent manner.

18 Our relationship as a Fellowship with Nar-Anon and Families  
19 Anonymous, as with treatment centers, clubhouses or any other  
20 organization or enterprise can then be simply and clearly defined as one  
21 of providing information. We do, and are willing to, provide information  
22 about what we do, where we do it, where our meetings are held, where  
23 our conventions are held, etc. We are pleased to provide this information  
24 to anyone or everyone who requests it, while at the same time avoiding  
25 any type of affiliation or special treatment for any people or organization  
26 outside of Narcotics Anonymous.

27 The Board of Trustees believes that many of the practices which  
28 we have engaged in as a Fellowship do not constitute adherence to our  
29 Traditions. The intent of these actions was usually sound and it has

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1 taken many years of experience and study to evaluate them with respect  
2 to our Twelve Traditions. These include listing Families Anonymous and  
3 Nar-Anon meetings in N.A. directories, on flyers for N.A. conventions, or  
4 in N.A. registration forms, and the practice of obtaining meeting places  
5 for these other Fellowships at conventions or other N.A. activities.  
6 Additionally, utilizing speakers from the Nar-Anon and Families  
7 Anonymous Fellowships is a practice which does not adhere to our  
8 Traditions. However, we encourage phonline workers to use common  
9 sense and good judgment in making known to family members that N.A.  
10 is for the drug addict and that family members may find family-oriented  
11 recovery fellowships to be beneficial.

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13 Reprinted from: *Newsline* Vol.4, No.6

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**General Input**

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18 Should I get into the problem of hot lines and when callers ask  
19 about detox centers? What's N.A.'s official position on this, if any, and  
20 does discussion belong in the book?

21 This would be a good place to state some of the points being  
22 brought to light on current WSC Public information work and Handbook.  
23 We, of course, follow Tradition Ten which makes clear that we have no  
24 opinion on outside issues. It seems like we recommend the "Yellow  
25 Pages" for treatment centers and try to carry our message by  
26 encouraging the caller to attend an N.A. meeting.

27 We cannot recommend a treatment center or detox without endorsing  
28 them.

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1 Tradition Six points out a dangerous pitfall for groups and N.A. as  
2 a whole. Namely, that money or outside enterprises can easily become  
3 obsessions that can direct our attention away from carrying our message  
4 of recovery to other addicts.

5 Endorsements of outside facilities, etc., can be direct or implied. A  
6 recommendation could be implied if we allowed outside literature to be  
7 used in our meetings, or made announcements from another Twelve Step  
8 program, or by inviting a speaker from another Twelve Step program to  
9 address a regular N.A. meeting.

10 The obvious example of a "related facility" is a clubhouse, and the  
11 funding and administration of such a place is outside the jurisdiction of  
12 Narcotics Anonymous.

13 Certainly as individuals we may belong to other programs, attend  
14 treatment programs or work in rehabilitation centers, etc., but we must  
15 not allow these institutions to use the N.A. name in their advertising or  
16 funding campaigns, nor to state or imply that Narcotics Anonymous has  
17 "approved" or "certified" their treatment facility.

18 To me this is saying, "Keep it simple." We cannot solve the  
19 world's problems; we cannot be all things to all people so let's do one  
20 thing and do it well. Thereby avoiding controversy that could split us  
21 up.

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24 Our public relations policy represents Narcotics Anonymous. This  
25 Tradition is a guideline that can prevent us from doing anything that  
26 might be "devastating" to members or "disastrous" (Basic Text p. 65) to  
27 N.A. This becomes entirely possible if we allow our personal desires to  
28 influence our services. "This Tradition is the basis for our policy of non-

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1 affiliation and is extremely important to the continuation and growth of  
2 Narcotics Anonymous." (Basic Text p. 63).

3 An enterprise is defined as "any effort with a purpose." An  
4 "outside enterprise" is one that is not N.A. With the guidance of this  
5 principle we can assure ourselves that our works are "not promotion,"  
6 without the pretense that N.A. is something it is not. It implies for the  
7 addict, the group, or the service committee, that solutions can be found  
8 within our program. They have been provided for. Group Conscience is  
9 an example of this.

10 Our policy of cooperation is guided to fulfillment by this Tradition.  
11 The success of our mailings to treatment centers, hospitals, recovery  
12 houses, referral agencies, probation and parole offices, our postings in  
13 club houses, at our meeting places, public display areas, and in phone  
14 books, are dependent upon our cooperative efforts with these "related  
15 facilities" or "outside enterprises."

16 Placing our P.S.A.'s, or announcements of our meetings or  
17 activities, (media coverage can be expected at our conventions. Our  
18 primary purpose, group autonomy and personal anonymity can be well  
19 protected by knowledgeable P.I. work), are working examples of our  
20 efforts to cooperate. Our public relations policy exists at its best through  
21 earnest cooperation with the media. To imply that there is any  
22 favoritism involved, that there will be any return other than our sincere  
23 gratitude for a job well done, or that there will be any kind of exchange,  
24 would not be in keeping with our spiritual goals.

25 This principle promises fulfillment when we become entirely ready  
26 to present the N.A. message without distractions, without detracting

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1 from the beauty of that message, allowing it to remain strong and stand  
2 on its own. A clear statement of our recovery.

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5       The Sixth Tradition protects us from ourselves. As we come  
6 together in Narcotics Anonymous from different backgrounds and walks  
7 of life, it would be easy to allow the influences that shaped our lives  
8 outside of N.A. to enter in and cause other members to feel  
9 uncomfortable and unwanted. This outside endorsement can come in  
10 many forms. Non-N.A. literature pertaining to recovery or spirituality,  
11 N.A. members talking about a particular church or religion at meetings,  
12 endorsing a treatment center or another Twelve Step recovery  
13 Fellowship at meetings are all examples of falling short of our spiritual  
14 principles. We are not saying that there is anything wrong with, or bad  
15 about, other recovery or spiritual sources. We quite simply are not  
16 saying anything at all about them. By not endorsing anything, anyone,  
17 or any ideas other than recovery from addiction "the N.A. way," we  
18 relieve ourselves of the burden of passing judgment.

19       This same spiritual principle applies to personal recovery as well.  
20 If we hear something that helped our recovery at a speaker meeting or  
21 from an "old-timer" and want to share what we've learned with others,  
22 we try to remember a simple truth. By sharing what was said, rather  
23 than who said it, we avoid making heroes out of certain members thus  
24 setting them apart from the rest of us. The Sixth Traditions also warns  
25 us not to get so lost in the desire for "money, property, and prestige"  
26 that we forget about our primary purpose. For the N.A. member, our  
27 primary purpose is achieving recovery on a daily basis by working the  
28 steps, attending meetings, and relying on our Higher Power to guide us

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1 each moment in every situation. Many of us came into Narcotics  
2 Anonymous financially destitute.

3 As the miracle of recovery began to work in our lives, our pocket  
4 books began to "recover" as well. Things like new cars, homes, and  
5 savings accounts that seemed so unachievable once, often become a  
6 reality in time. If we look at these in the same way as our clean time,  
7 we realize they are gifts resulting from the same miracle rather than  
8 anything "we earned." This focus gives us gratitude rather than pride.

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**TRADITION SEVEN**

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

**Outline**

- I. Introduction - Self support definiton.
  - A. The importance of being fully self-supporting.
    - 1. Historical Background(perspective).
    - 2. Insures autonomy.
    - 3. Promotes recovery and self worth.
- II. Self support:
  - A. Meeting group's financial needs through prudent financial practices.
  - B. Responsible election of Trusted Servants (T.S.'s).
  - C. Time and money.
  - D. Meeting attendance.
  - E. Consistent Participation.
  - F. Emotional Support of T.S.'s.
- III. Declining outside Contributions.
  - A. Insuring a loving God directs us and not some outside organization.
  - B. We stand on our own (spiritual ownership).
  - C. Avoiding Pitfalls.

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- 1 IV. Application of Tradition Seven to members, groups, and N.A. as a
- 2 whole.
- 3 IV. Lead in to Tradition Eight.
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Blue Review Book Draft

Each group in N.A. has certain monetary obligations which are necessary in fulfilling its primary purpose. Some of these include rent for the meeting site, refreshments and literature for the members. In order for a group to survive, funds must be obtained. Where do they come from? They come from the members of the group. As members, we donate what we can financially to help the group meet its monetary commitments. As members of Narcotics Anonymous, we remember what was given to us freely, and we consider it a privilege to give back freely.

This may seem somewhat paradoxical, because there is no requirement in N.A. that an addict contribute anything - financially or otherwise - to an N.A. group. We know from experience, however, that the individual giving to the support of the whole is basic to the spiritual growth of us all. By contributing to the group, we begin to feel more a part of that group. This also seems to aid in our individual participation within the group.

To be self-supporting financially is also to keep in line with the other traditions. In Tradition Four, we discussed the principle of each group functioning autonomously except in matters that affect other groups or N.A. as a whole. By being self-supporting, we maintain our autonomy. In Tradition Six, we explored the necessity of N.A. maintaining a policy of non-affiliation with organizations outside of our Fellowship.

Independent of outside support, we begin to rely on ourselves for our continued existence. It frees us from the temptation to become caught up in power, property and prestige. At the same time, it protects us from compromise from within or without. The Fellowship of Narcotics

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1    Anonymous is, quite simply, supported by itself. This is true not only in  
2    terms of financial donations, but also in terms of personal commitment.

3            Being self-supporting as a group has personal value to the  
4    individual member. Giving instead of taking, paying our own way  
5    instead of cheating, and doing our share instead of tagging along are  
6    often for many of us, our first real attempts at becoming responsible.

7            Some people do not have money at times. This is understandable.  
8    However, we as a Fellowship must be aware that we cannot continue to  
9    allow others to pay our way in our recovery. When we contribute to our  
10   group to the best of our ability, we make our Fellowship stronger and  
11   participate in our own recovery. We are a part of N.A. This makes the  
12   group more important to us. We know that when we work for  
13   something, it means more to us than something just given to us. While  
14   we do not buy our way into N.A., we choose to support it with our time  
15   and money, because the price of accepting outside support is too high.

16           Our N.A. groups support themselves primarily because experience  
17   has taught us that nothing else works. When we deviate from this  
18   policy, we begin to undermine the simple effectiveness of one addict  
19   helping another. Dependence upon outside contributions carries the  
20   danger of stripping away the independence of the Fellowship. No matter  
21   how well-meaning outside benefactors might be, any outside aid cripples,  
22   then ultimately removes the self-worth developed by our own support.

23           Nowhere does it seem easier to become obligated than to someone  
24   to whom we are financially indebted. To become dependent on outside  
25   financial support is to risk outside influence. This creates danger,  
26   however subtle, to compromise, to curry favor, to divert our primary  
27   purpose. The people who want to help us are frequently interested in  
28   our success. N.A. offers them an answer to the tragedy of an addicted  
29   member of their own family or association. We have found that many of

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1 our would-be benefactors have their own perspective of how N.A. should  
2 function. These "strings" sooner or later would choke us. There have  
3 been many examples of our groups accepting this seemingly necessary  
4 help, only to find their primary purpose or their autonomy threatened.

5 One group accepted free rent of a church basement and  
6 experienced pressure to call the God of our understanding by a certain  
7 name. One group was invited to carry the N.A. message to a local detox  
8 center on the condition that the N.A. members help the residents with  
9 their job and apartment hunting upon release. Another group accepted a  
10 cash gift from a member's parents, but later was expected to guarantee  
11 that their daughter would not cause any further trouble. One group  
12 accepted items from a department store for their raffle, only to feel  
13 pressured to help with the store's advertising. Yet another group was  
14 offered free publication of their meeting times and telephone number in a  
15 local newspaper if they would just agree to a feature article with  
16 pictures. These are clear violations of our traditions.

17 There are other instances, more subtle and harder to define, that  
18 ask us to depart from our traditions. Our purpose here is not to discuss  
19 the integrity of our would-be benefactors, but to emphasize that N.A. can  
20 not be disrupted by outside control, or we each stand to lose all we have  
21 received through N.A. We acknowledge that funding from outside  
22 endowments might seem beneficial, but we must maintain our freedom  
23 to help addicts the N.A. way. We do not accept outside contributions  
24 because we want to hold on to the freedom we have. We decline all  
25 outside contributions for our own sake.

26 Another consideration is that addicts are often overly dependent  
27 people by nature. One of the reasons we practice the Twelve Steps is to  
28 recover from a lifetime of sick dependencies on people, places and things.  
29 We learn to depend on a Higher Power, Narcotics Anonymous, and

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1 ourselves for our new way of life. Group practice of the Seventh  
2 Tradition weans us of dependency on others to meet our needs. We  
3 would do our Fellowship woeful disservice if we sold our groups to  
4 anyone outside the Fellowship in order to obtain the support which we  
5 can and should provide for ourselves.

6 When financial existence is independent of outside contributions, it  
7 creates motivation, self-esteem, caring and pride in our Fellowship. By  
8 supporting our local meetings or assisting in an N.A. fundraiser, we are  
9 also contributing to our personal recovery.

10 Some people maintain that as long as we uphold these principles  
11 in general, we can afford an occasional exception. After all, couldn't we  
12 carry the message farther if we had all the money needed to stock our  
13 groups with literature, to rent better meeting places or to publicize N.A.?  
14 In fact, aren't there N.A. groups who cannot even afford to fulfill the  
15 most modest financial responsibilities? Sometimes the offers of free rent,  
16 refreshments, transportation or donations for our fundraisers from  
17 outside the N.A. community seem like windfalls to us. But our  
18 experience disproves this. Accepting these offers clearly violates this  
19 tradition.

20 Tradition Seven does not say, "declining outside contributions  
21 except free refreshments for our dance, or except good prizes for our  
22 raffle." No; it says, "declining outside contributions." There are no  
23 exceptions! We have found that with prayer and ingenuity we can find a  
24 way to stay in operation within the definition of this tradition, and avoid  
25 losing our independence. It is better to struggle and trust that our  
26 Fellowship will grow in God's time, rather than violate one of our most  
27 important traditions by depending on sources outside of N.A.

28 We know of one group, for example, that resolved prohibitive rents  
29 by agreeing to pay one-third of their monthly collection instead of a fixed

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1 amount. Another group does routine chores for the church in lieu of  
2 rent. Another situation involved a group meeting in a facility which  
3 could not accept monetary compensation for rent. Possible solutions  
4 include donating N.A. literature as rent, or considering the meeting as a  
5 Hospitals and Institutions meeting. If a church or community center  
6 won't accept money for rent, we can donate a new coffee pot or replace  
7 some furniture. In other instances, when total payment is not possible, a  
8 token compensation should be made to stay within the principle of the  
9 Seventh Tradition. However we do it, the important point is that we  
10 must be "fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

11 In our discussion of the Seventh Tradition, we have referred  
12 mostly to the N.A. group. The groups and members are the foundation  
13 of Narcotics Anonymous. However, the larger service structure of N.A.  
14 is created by the members and groups and is directly responsible to  
15 them. These service committees also have the Twelve Traditions as their  
16 spiritual basis and rely on the groups' contributions of time and money  
17 for their existence and operation. The members support the groups, who  
18 support the areas, who support the regions, who ultimately support the  
19 World Service Conference.

20 Let's see how this happens: when a couple of recovering addicts  
21 get together and start an N.A. group, especially in a locale where N.A. is  
22 new, the group is usually broke and without most of the basic necessities.  
23 If the group secures a meeting place, it might do so on a promise to pay  
24 the rent as the money comes in. The group members borrow a coffee pot  
25 and scrape together some N.A. literature. They may rely on public  
26 service announcements on local radio and T.V. to announce their  
27 meetings. They may post flyers on bulletin boards of community centers  
28 and laundromats. Many groups have been very imaginative in their low-  
29 budget methods of carrying the message. The first N.A. telephone

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1 number usually belongs to one of the members, who soon begins to  
2 wonder if his or her privacy will ever be returned! At first, everything is  
3 done for nominal sums.

4 In spite of these hardships, the group eventually gets underway.  
5 They meet regularly, attract new members, choose trusted servants, pass  
6 the hat, and bank the meager collections. Whatever money the group  
7 collects is spent on rent, literature and refreshments. The group  
8 establishes a prudent reserve as soon as possible.

9 When the group expands and splits into other groups, an Area  
10 Service Committee is needed. This committee may operate a helpline,  
11 print meeting lists and stockpile literature. Now the members are not  
12 only participating in their recovery by contributing to their own group,  
13 but also supporting their area.

14 The area then joins a region and begins offering it support.  
15 Regions provide public information services, contact and compile listings  
16 of hospitals and institutions that might treat still-suffering addicts,  
17 participate in WSC committees, and sponsor conventions. These services  
18 promote unity in the region.

19 Through communications provided through the region, the areas  
20 become aware of services needed and provided at the world service level  
21 that cannot be practically provided by the members and groups  
22 individually. These include the World Service Conference, the World  
23 Service Office and the World Service Board of Trustees. The World  
24 Service Conference provides a forum for exchanging information between  
25 regions and subcommittees, and tabulating results of issues requiring  
26 Fellowship-wide group conscience. Our World Service Office is the  
27 central contact and distribution point of N.A., linking our widespread  
28 members and groups into a single Fellowship. This contact is  
29 maintained through correspondence and our newsletters. The Trustees

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1 contribute to the continuation and growth of N.A. as a whole and serve  
2 as a resource for our Fellowship. The costs of these services (telephone,  
3 rent, printing and mailing) are dependent on contributions channeled  
4 from members to groups to areas to regions to the world service level.

5 "Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining  
6 outside contributions." In this tradition, we have looked at the positive  
7 values that participation in our recovery engenders, the dangers of  
8 making ourselves vulnerable to outside influence, and the expansion of  
9 the concept of the N.A. group to include the entire N.A. structure.

10 The primary emphasis of Tradition Seven is on financial self-  
11 support. This principle has a wider application in our local groups and in  
12 our Fellowship. There is no maximum amount of support for any N.A.  
13 member to give to this Fellowship. Each of us has a lot to give - our  
14 strength, caring, wisdom, time, energy, money or hospitality - and there  
15 is always an addict somewhere who needs and wants what we have to  
16 offer. Looking for ways to give rather than to receive is the difference  
17 between feeling helpful instead of helpless. As our understanding of the  
18 spirituality of our traditions develops, we see more clearly that one  
19 addict helping another is the effort each of us makes to assure that the  
20 help which was here for us will be here for those after us seeking  
21 recovery. Through this effort, we ensure that we ourselves continue to  
22 recover.

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27 The Seventh Tradition emphasizes the principle of financial  
28 independence. As such, it dovetails with many of our other principles

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1 and traditions. When we decline outside contributions for the  
2 maintenance of our groups, we affirm again the enormous benefit to our  
3 recovery when we rely solely on ourselves. Self-sufficiency is as  
4 important to the healthy growth of our groups as it is to our own growth  
5 as individuals. As our recovery deepens, we learn that being self-  
6 supporting isn't just a necessity--it's a privilege. It makes us feel very  
7 good.

8 When we depend solely on ourselves, our membership, other good  
9 things result. Our unity and common welfare, the heart of the First  
10 Tradition, are enhanced. Unity is always strengthened when we work  
11 together collectively to provide services for newcomers and for members  
12 in general. Then there's Tradition Five, which addresses our primary  
13 purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. No  
14 outsiders can further our primary purpose for us. It's something we need  
15 to do by ourselves, for ourselves--by donating money, time, and energy to  
16 our groups, and by passing a portion of our funds along to our areas,  
17 regions and the World Service Conference. Not only our local groups but  
18 our entire service structure needs to be self-sufficient if we're to adhere  
19 to the principles of the Seventh Tradition. Tradition Four, with its  
20 emphasis on autonomy, also ties in. Clearly, by remaining strictly self-  
21 supporting, we maintain our autonomy rather than placing it in jeopardy  
22 by accepting outside help.

23 There's another important reason why the Seventh Tradition  
24 needs our constant attention and concern. Money has always been an  
25 explosive issue with most of us. As active addicts we worked, stole,  
26 conned, begged and sold ourselves for it. Yet the more money we got,  
27 the more we needed. There was an emptiness inside ourselves that no  
28 amount of dollars and cents could fill. The way we handle money, both

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1 as individuals and as N.A. members, therefore is fraught with  
2 significance for us.

3 Just as we took it for granted in our early days as members in  
4 N.A. that meetings would take place as scheduled, so we gave little  
5 thought to the expenses involved in running a meeting. If we thought  
6 about it at all, we simply assumed the money was coming from  
7 "somewhere." Even when the chairperson preceded the passing of the  
8 basket with a few words about N.A. being entirely self-supporting, we  
9 didn't pay much heed. Surely Narcotics Anonymous, with all its  
10 members and its great service structure, received government funds. Or  
11 corporate contributions. When we were interested enough to find out  
12 that N.A. really didn't accept funds from outsiders, some of us found this  
13 foolish. If we belonged to small new groups struggling to stay alive, we  
14 appreciated the Seventh Tradition even less. We even heard some long-  
15 time members refer to the tradition in a way that made it seem more of  
16 an obstacle than a help.

17 Many of us learned to respect the Seventh Tradition more as we  
18 saw what happened when it was violated. We cherish our autonomy--  
19 and put that autonomy at risk if, for example, we accept funding from a  
20 government agency, corporation, related facility, or other non-N.A.  
21 source. Some of those potential funding sources would be glad to give us  
22 money to finance some of our projects. But the moment we accept such  
23 funds we are, in effect, affiliating ourselves with the donor, which is  
24 contrary to the principles discussed in Tradition Six.

25 Affiliation inevitably means interference with the N.A. way. An  
26 outside organization may say, "We'll give you money for this or that and  
27 we'll promise not to interfere. No strings attached." The promise is  
28 sincerely made. But then a situation comes along that makes the donor  
29 feel it has a right to tell us what to do. And we begin to feel that the

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1 donor has this right. The reason is that nowhere does it seem easier to  
2 become obligated than to someone to whom we are financially indebted.  
3 To become dependent on outside financial support is to risk outside  
4 influence. This creates danger, however subtle, to compromise, to curry  
5 favor, to divert our primary purpose. The people who want to help us  
6 are frequently interested in our success. N.A. offers them an answer to  
7 the tragedy of an addicted member of their own families or associations.  
8 We have found that many of our would-be benefactors have their own  
9 perspective of how N.A. should function. These "strings" sooner or later  
10 would choke us.

11         There have been many examples of our groups accepting this  
12 seemingly necessary help, only to find their primary purpose or  
13 autonomy threatened. For example, one N.A. group accepted free rent  
14 of a church basement--but then was pressured to call the God of our  
15 understanding by a specific name relating to that church's belief.  
16 Another group was invited to carry the N.A. message to a local detox  
17 center--on the condition that members help the residents with their job  
18 and apartment hunting upon release. A third group accepted free items  
19 from a department store for their raffle--but later was expected to help  
20 with the store's advertising.

21         A fourth group accepted a substantial cash gift from a member's  
22 parents--but then the parents wanted the group to guarantee that their  
23 daughter wouldn't cause them any more trouble. This is an example of  
24 how the offer of an outside contribution can be detrimental to our unity.  
25 In that particular group there was a great deal of dissension both while  
26 the parents' offer was being considered and after it was accepted. Some  
27 members were enthusiastic about the offer, others were just as  
28 vehemently opposed to it. Also, and equally importantly, acceptance of  
29 the parents' money destroyed the daughter's anonymity. She was no

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1 longer just another addict, another member; with everybody knowing of  
2 the contribution her mother and father made, she became "special." As  
3 a result, N.A. was no longer a safe place for her to recover.

4       As these examples show, we should always be vigilant and make  
5 sure we refuse gifts and donations from non-N.A. sources. We must  
6 retain the right and responsibility to make our own decision. No matter  
7 how small the contribution offered, we must not look upon it as a trifle.  
8 It's never a trifle when we're under outside pressure. And if we do  
9 accept funds from the outside in the mistaken belief that "this won't hurt  
10 anything," we can never be sure. Nicely but firmly, outside gifts should  
11 always be refused or returned. In one situation where money was  
12 returned, a treatment center approached an N.A. group and suggested  
13 the group start up a meeting at the center. The center said it would  
14 take care of all the expenses involved, and that the group could pay the  
15 money back later. The group agreed. Almost immediately there was  
16 trouble. The center started to control the N.A. meeting, which it wanted  
17 for its aftercare program. It also began to charge for attendance.  
18 Basically, its aim was to have its own program under the N.A. banner.  
19 This caused an uproar in the N.A. group, which realized it had made a  
20 mistake and voted to reimburse the center for the expenses that had  
21 accrued. Eventually this group was able to pay rent and hold meetings  
22 at the treatment center without interference, but a lot of turmoil could  
23 have been avoided if the Seventh Tradition had been heeded.

24       In another case, a few N.A. members started a much-needed  
25 meeting in a hospital. Because financing the meeting was a problem, the  
26 hospital agreed to provide space and coffee for free. The N.A. members  
27 agreed to this proposal, promising to begin paying meeting room rent as  
28 soon as they could.

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1           The meeting eventually became very popular. As many as one  
2 hundred people sometimes came. A couple of years went by like that,  
3 but the group never paid rent.

4           Then a big controversy rocked the relationship between the  
5 hospital and the meeting. Somebody was allegedly slipping drugs to one  
6 of the N.A. members at the meetings, and hospital officials intruded on a  
7 meeting. They told the member to leave or they would call the police.  
8 This action incensed the N.A. group, which felt that the hospital's action  
9 had violated N.A.'s Third and Fourth Traditions. But when they  
10 protested to the top hospital administrator, she demanded to know why  
11 the membership was following the traditions selectively. She referred to  
12 the Seventh Tradition, pointing out that the group had never paid rent.  
13 The N.A. members were taken aback. They did an inventory and  
14 realized that they couldn't expect the hospital to respect the Twelve  
15 Traditions if they didn't respect the traditions themselves. The outcome:  
16 they voted to begin paying rent.

17           The Seventh Tradition protects our autonomy; it also helps us to  
18 grow, both individually and as a Fellowship. It is, in fact, a powerful  
19 therapeutic tool. As active addicts we were highly dependent. With the  
20 help of our drugs we might have pretended to be fiercely independent--  
21 but that was as far as our independence went. We were highly  
22 dependent on our drugs. We were dependent on "people, places and  
23 things" to carry us through life. We leaned on others in all kinds of  
24 ways we couldn't see at the time, but which were very much a symptom  
25 of our addiction.

26           When we came to N.A. our lifestyles were challenged at every  
27 turn. The very First Step, so hard to do, demanded a painful  
28 reappraisal. Far from being independent, we were powerless. We were  
29 powerless over our addiction--but that admission unraveled the whole

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1 thread of our lives. We were forced to see, sooner or later, how badly the  
2 disease of addiction had forced us to fool ourselves. Most of us hadn't  
3 stood on our own feet at all; our feet were made of clay.

4 In its essentials our program of recovery is a reclamation project.  
5 It leads us, with God's help, to reclaim ourselves. It leads us to bring out  
6 the "I" we were unable to acknowledge before--the good, strong,  
7 thoughtful, compassionate and loving selves we were underneath the  
8 distortions for which our disease was responsible. The Seventh Tradition  
9 does much to help us with our reclamation project. In its insistence that  
10 we be self-supporting as a Fellowship it forces us to change our image of  
11 ourselves. Here are a bunch of addicts, very dependent people, who have  
12 managed to forge themselves into a strong, effective, worldwide  
13 Fellowship--and have done so without outside contributions. It's a  
14 powerful role model of self-sufficiency. It inspires us to become self-  
15 sufficient on a personal level, as well. So, as we work the Twelve Steps  
16 and begin recovering from our addiction, we find jobs and careers, better  
17 our lives, and reach out to help others better theirs.

18 The basket we pass around at meetings is a symbol of our  
19 determination to be self-supporting. The nickels, dimes and dollars we  
20 put in help to defray our home groups' expenses and further N.A. as a  
21 whole. Those contributions also say, "I'm assuming my responsibility  
22 towards my Fellowship, instead of leaving it to others." We're forced,  
23 then, to see ourselves and our relationship with the world in a new,  
24 healthier light.

25 As newcomers we weren't all alike by any means in our reactions  
26 as the basket was passed around. Some of us were immediately  
27 delighted to contribute what we could. That reaction was much more  
28 likely to come from new members who immediately felt "at home" in  
29 N.A. and grateful to be there. As one member recalled, "I was so glad to

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1 be able to give something. I'd had so many relapses and was in such  
2 terrible shape physically and emotionally. I didn't have anything else  
3 but a little change to give. I couldn't talk in meetings and I couldn't do  
4 any service work and no newcomers wanted to talk to me and nobody  
5 wanted me to sponsor them--but putting a little money in the basket was  
6 something I could do."

7 A lot of us didn't feel that way at all. We felt frightened and  
8 uncomfortable in N.A. We resented being at meetings. We felt so needy  
9 we didn't think we had anything to contribute--and, indeed, some of us  
10 showed up at our first meeting with not even a place to crash. As  
11 addicts we might have been big spenders, grandiosely picking up the tab  
12 for everyone in a restaurant or bringing drugs for everyone at a party,  
13 but now we didn't want to give anything. Far from being responsible--  
14 yet--we felt victimized. We felt the world owed us something. We  
15 wanted to be taken care of.

16 Even when we got ourselves out of that extreme dependency, our  
17 responses to giving were sometimes very narrow. The change from  
18 giving nothing to giving something was certainly dramatic, and led some  
19 of us to think we were making a more significant change than we  
20 actually were making. An example: One group in a far western state  
21 met in a place that had no free parking. Some members needed parking,  
22 because they came a considerable distance and had cars. A number of  
23 these members were, despite their car ownership, living marginally;  
24 every dollar counted. Other members were local ones who walked to the  
25 meeting or used public transportation. At a business meeting it was  
26 decided that donations would have to cover the parking fees of members  
27 who drove to the meetings. The locals heatedly objected, protesting that  
28 they wouldn't benefit. They had lost sight of the message of recovery,

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1 which requires us to do all we can to make recovery available to  
2 everyone who comes to our doors seeking it.

3       Because of the financial realities involved, it's often a hard fight to  
4 start a new group, keep it going, expand its services, do a more effective  
5 job of carrying the message to the addict who still suffers. It can be a  
6 real struggle to scrape together money for rent--or even for a coffeepot  
7 and a few pieces of literature. Many addicts who want to start a new  
8 group are broke or nearly so: they're just beginning to get their lives  
9 together.

10       Under the circumstances, some addicts throw up their hands and  
11 say, "It can't be done." Others aren't willing to be that helpless. Many  
12 of us recognized that in active addiction we sometimes used a  
13 tremendous amount of ingenuity to get our drugs. We recognized that  
14 we could apply our ingenuity on behalf of our recovery. Thus some new  
15 groups have made temporary arrangements to get a meeting room in  
16 exchange for painting the room or cleaning the carpets or fixing the  
17 furniture. One new group arranged to give the church renting them a  
18 room a third of the donations collected at each meeting, regardless of  
19 how much or how little that was.

20       Some of us had revealing experiences in relation to the Seventh  
21 Tradition. When we followed it faithfully things generally went well.  
22 When we didn't, our good intentions came to naught. A group of addicts  
23 in a European city, for example, wanted to start a group. But money for  
24 a meeting place was a huge problem, so they accepted a sympathetic  
25 restaurant owner's offer of a free back room. And a friendly newspaper  
26 owner allowed them to place small notices in his paper without charge.

27       Despite all this cooperation, the group never got off the ground.  
28 For quite some time hardly any other addicts showed up. Finally the  
29 founding members meditated on the problem. The only thing they could

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1 figure out was that ignoring the Seventh Tradition was somehow  
2 connected. So they thanked the restaurant owner and the newspaper  
3 publisher, found a small meeting room they could afford, and started to  
4 pay for meeting announcements. Then a strange thing happened--their  
5 group began to grow as it never had before. Yet it wasn't really strange  
6 at all. When they were being handed everything for free the founding  
7 members didn't put their heart and soul into the effort of making the  
8 group work. But once they began to pay the expenses they became  
9 much more involved in it and worked much harder to carry the message  
10 to other addicts.

11         Some of us found ourselves wanting to bargain with the Seventh  
12 Tradition. We'd done a lot of bargaining when we were addicts--"I'll just  
13 use once a day," we'd said, or, "I'll only use this drug, never that one"--  
14 so we were very good at that kind of thing. As our new groups took hold  
15 and we wanted to see them expand, therefore, some of us bargained  
16 again. We promised ourselves and each other we'd uphold the Seventh  
17 Tradition in general, and if we did that, an occasional exception wouldn't  
18 hurt. We justified ourselves by insisting that the ends were worthwhile--  
19 we needed more money to stock our group with literature, to rent better  
20 meeting places, start a hotline, whatever. Maybe we didn't accept cash  
21 but we compromised by accepting offers of refreshments, free photocopies  
22 or donations for our fund-raisers from outside sources.

23         We were fooling ourselves. Tradition Seven doesn't say, "N.A.  
24 ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions except  
25 for free refreshments for our dance or prizes for our raffle." A single  
26 exception can bring us great problems. A single exception disproves our  
27 self-reliance. And what starts out as a just-this-once exception readily  
28 leads to another and another.

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1           What we finally came to understand was that even the most  
2 worthy of projects will have to wait if we don't have the money to  
3 support it. This is a very difficult lesson for many of us to learn. When  
4 we want to do something for N.A. but can't, we tend to be thrown back  
5 to the days when we were using. It was very much a mark of our  
6 addiction to expect constant gratification; we refused to wait for  
7 anything. We didn't want to wait in doing things for N.A., either, and  
8 we could justify our impatience by the goodness of the cause.

9           It's this impatience that prompts some of us to rationalize saying  
10 yes to outside funding. "We need a hotline," our inability to wait might  
11 lead us to say, "and that's more important than where the money comes  
12 from." Once we temper our impatience, though, we come to an  
13 understanding of timing. If the timing is wrong the project in question  
14 won't be on a solid footing even if immediate funding for it is somehow  
15 found. It will be shaky, always in some danger of going under. If the  
16 timing is right, however, the project will have sufficient group support to  
17 give it solidity.

18           One area committee, for example, wasn't receiving sufficient  
19 contributions from groups to pay the area phone service bills. Yet the  
20 area's phone calls were increasing, as was the cost of service. The  
21 solution wasn't to sit back and wait for God to raise the money. The  
22 solution wasn't to throw a fund-raiser, which would at best have been a  
23 temporary expedient. The solution wasn't to solicit outside contributions.  
24 The solution was for group service representatives to let members know  
25 what the problem was, why more money was needed. As soon as the  
26 members understood how those expensive phone calls were being used--  
27 to carry the message to the addict who still suffers--group conscience  
28 readily supported the idea of increased donations to cover the area's  
29 phone bills. The episode had a unifying effect on the membership, as

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1 well, because the members participated jointly in finding a solution to  
2 the problem.

3       Because the need is there, an N.A. group can start out with  
4 practically nothing and have a remarkable growth. Often a group begins  
5 with two or three recovering addicts getting together, maybe meeting in  
6 somebody's home at first. They post flyers in appropriate places and  
7 perhaps get a local radio or television station to announce their meetings  
8 as a public service. The first N.A. telephone number for that new group  
9 often belongs to one of the members, who gives up his privacy for a time.

10       In spite of these hardships the group gets underway. New  
11 members come, a regular meeting place is found. The group expands  
12 and more donations are collected. Now the group can establish a  
13 prudent reserve for unexpected expenses and more services. Members  
14 grow in number. The group joins with other groups to form an area  
15 service committee. The area establishes a hotline, prints meeting  
16 schedules and performs other services of benefit to its groups. The area  
17 service committee joins a regional committee which itself is linked to  
18 N.A.'s service structure at all levels. Thus a group that started with a  
19 couple of near-broke addicts is now a large, active body with strong  
20 bonds to the entire Fellowship.

21       No matter how large a group becomes, though, it still depends on  
22 the support it gets from individual addict members. When its members  
23 continue to contribute--not only money but time, experience and  
24 particular talents--the group continues to grow stronger and more  
25 effective.

26       All groups, all committees, our entire service structure to and  
27 including world service, are bound by the Seventh Tradition. None can  
28 accept funds from outside sources. All moneys for all our services at

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1 every level come from individual member's donations, literature sales,  
2 and similar activities.

3 Not all members, though, are aware of the far-reaching effects of  
4 their contributions. Some of us have been in groups where the evening's  
5 chairperson simply said, "Now we're going to have the Seventh  
6 Tradition," and began passing the basket. But the basket isn't the  
7 Seventh Tradition and we were left with the impression that most of the  
8 money we put in simply goes for rent, coffee and cookies. Experience  
9 shows that members respond much more readily to the passing of the  
10 basket when they're told exactly how the money is spent, how it helps in  
11 carrying out our primary purpose. The more we understand how the  
12 Seventh Tradition works, experience shows, the more generously we  
13 respond. As in so many other ways, it's addict helping addict.

14 Each N.A. group has a financial responsibility to itself and to the  
15 larger Fellowship. Our groups keep prudent reserves to meet unexpected  
16 outlays and to be sure there's enough money for rent on hand if  
17 donations fall short. Beyond this reserve we contribute to the "fund  
18 flow"--meaning that a portion of our groups' donations go to further the  
19 work of the area, the region, and world services. It's this fund flow that  
20 keeps N.A. as a whole functioning.

21 That Narcotics Anonymous has grown so large and so well attests  
22 to the fact that most of our groups cooperate in this way. They recognize  
23 that without a steady flow of funds it would be impossible to operate as a  
24 vigorous international Fellowship dedicated to carrying the message of  
25 hope and recovery whenever possible.

26 Some groups do not, however, feel as connected to the entire  
27 Fellowship. They show it by keeping an extremely large prudent  
28 reserve--an entire year's worth of expenses, for example--or allow none of  
29 their funds to flow out. The motivation for hanging on to large sums is

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1 understandable. A group may have had a really tough struggle to begin  
2 and survive; now that it's successful it wants to hang on to its money as  
3 a kind of security blanket. It follows the old maxim, "Charity begins at  
4 home."

5 While it's true that charity--really, our recovery program--begins  
6 with our home groups, without an ongoing flow of funds our links to each  
7 other everywhere would be broken. Our overall structure would stop  
8 functioning and the Fellowship would fall apart. At best we would  
9 remain a collection of small, isolated groups. That would be contrary to  
10 the intent and spirit of the Seventh Tradition. Carrying the message to  
11 the addict who still suffers means carrying it everywhere, to the best of  
12 our abilities. Suffering addicts everywhere are our brothers and sisters.

13 From another standpoint, too, it's unwise for groups to keep large  
14 sums available. Temptation can too easily be awakened when lots of  
15 money is around and there's easy access to it. Every so often it happens  
16 that a member with access to group funds takes some for his own  
17 purposes--or "borrows" group funds with every intention of repaying but  
18 never does. A trusted servant who was in a group where funds were  
19 taken later concluded, "Money has a certain magic in it for us. No  
20 matter how honest we are, there's that urge--`just let me feel it.' I can  
21 have a pocketful of cash, but let me feel a boxcar full. It just seems to  
22 have that kind of draw, and if the money isn't there I don't have to  
23 worry about it. The worst combination is a large prudent reserve and  
24 poor accountability. Don't put Fort Knox in my living room."

25 The Seventh Tradition calls upon us to be careful and responsible  
26 with our group's funds. We're expected to use the money in a way that  
27 conforms to our spiritual program and further it. Treasurers and other  
28 trusted servants designated to collect and disburse the money are  
29 expected to do so in a prudent and responsible way. Most of the time

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1 groups and trusted servants live up to these expectations in an  
2 exemplary manner. Occasionally not. Occasionally sizable sums  
3 entrusted to a treasurer have disappeared. Occasionally convention  
4 funds have been used to buy flowers and candy for certain participants--  
5 which is a frivolous use of N.A. money, having nothing to do with  
6 carrying the message to the addict who still suffers. Occasionally those  
7 who arrange conventions and other large meetings have requested  
8 kickbacks from vendors or otherwise manipulated the funds.

9 For us to view money casually is tantamount to viewing our  
10 disease of addiction casually. We can't afford to do that, either to  
11 ourselves or to N.A. When group money is used in unauthorized,  
12 dishonest or unwise ways it diminishes our ability to help addicts. It also  
13 jeopardizes the survival of those of us who have acted irresponsibly with  
14 the Fellowship's money. Many a trusted servant who has taken money  
15 from the membership has used it to buy drugs--or, beset with feelings of  
16 guilt, went back to using later. When trusted servants have taken  
17 money from the membership they've often used it to buy drugs. Even  
18 when they've used the stolen money for other purposes, the feelings of  
19 guilt that are generated usually drive them to use again. Guilt drives  
20 them to use, shame keeps them from returning to N.A. When we fail to  
21 adhere to our spiritual program, it's inevitable: we always "pay the  
22 dues."

23 In a spirit of love and compassion, therefore, we must use  
24 reasonable care in electing those trusted servants who handle our groups'  
25 funds. In a spirit of love and compassion we should not ask members  
26 with little clean time to handle funds, even if those members are skilled  
27 accountants or bookkeepers. We should not ask members who are in dire  
28 straits financially or emotionally to handle funds. We should not re-elect  
29 to the treasurer's post members who have shown less than total

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1 responsibility in handling funds, though this sometimes happens. We  
2 should elect only the most stable and responsible members to positions  
3 that require the administration of funds. Just as important, all groups  
4 should set up reasonably strict accounting procedures. This creates a  
5 safe atmosphere both for the treasurer and the group as a whole.

6 As we work the program for a while, and our lives evolve in  
7 happier, sounder ways, many of us find ourselves becoming financially  
8 stable. It may be for the first time in our lives. It may be for the first  
9 time in years. Either way, it makes us feel very good about ourselves to  
10 know we've become this self-sufficient. Some of us go on to make fairly  
11 substantial sums of money, either in careers or as entrepreneurs. We're  
12 filled with gratitude to N.A. and to the Higher Power that led us to its  
13 doors. We feel we owe the Fellowship a great debt. Then, in the spirit  
14 of giving back that which was given to us, we contribute relatively large  
15 sums to N.A.

16 Yet from the standpoint of the Seventh Tradition, it's also possible  
17 for N.A. members to give too much of their time and other resources.  
18 This sometimes happens. There are new members who become wildly  
19 enthusiastic about the possibility of recovery in N.A. They give up their  
20 jobs or ignore their families, devoting themselves wholly to service.  
21 Enthusiasm for N.A. is vital to our success. But going to extremes, no  
22 matter what the circumstances, has the opposite effect of the one these  
23 members seek. Our recovery depends on leading a balanced life. When  
24 we devote so much of ourselves to N.A. that we neglect other important  
25 facets of our lives, our recovery suffers. In fact, ironical as it may seem,  
26 doing too much for N.A. is bad for everybody concerned, the members  
27 who do the giving and the members who are collectively on the taking  
28 end. For instance, in some cases newly-developing regions have  
29 depended on certain well-off members to support them financially--

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1 members who paid the phone, printing and other bills almost entirely out  
2 of their own pockets. Such reliance on one or two members reawakens  
3 our tendency to be so dependent on others. It diminishes the individual  
4 self-reliance our program seeks to encourage. It denies other members  
5 the opportunity also to serve. Most important of all, it does harm to  
6 principles vital to N.A.'s survival--autonomy, anonymity and unity.

7 Our anonymity is threatened because members who contribute  
8 more than their fair share often tend to begin viewing their groups as  
9 "theirs"--begin to expect the right to set policy. It's a kind of  
10 subconscious arrogance, the message being "I've paid my dues so I'm  
11 entitled to run the show." In one such instance a region wanted to open  
12 a central office but lacked the necessary funds. Rather than waiting  
13 until it had them, it accepted one generous member's offer to put up the  
14 money. Once the office was established, that member wanted to run it  
15 his way. Much conflict resulted, disrupting the unity in that region.

16 Not all members who contribute beyond any reasonable measure  
17 of fair share want to take over and run things. Some strike an attitude  
18 of martyrdom. Their thinking goes, "I give so much and I'm not really  
19 appreciated." A trusted servant recalls how, for a number of years, she  
20 insisted on paying her own airfare and hotel bills even though she had  
21 little money and the Fellowship wanted to take care of her expenses. As  
22 she later realized, she'd had a need to see herself as "special": "I carried  
23 the financial burden of committee meetings like a cross. I was so good; I  
24 cared so much for my beloved program; I began to believe in my most  
25 secret heart of hearts that my recovery must be much deeper than that  
26 of others because `I give so much.'"

27 This member came to understand, in time, that feeling special  
28 means being different. And being different puts us in danger of thinking  
29 like an addict once again, not bound by the laws, rules and principles

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1 that apply to others. Feeling different runs counter to the spirit of the  
2 Twelfth Tradition, the spirit of anonymity in which each of us is simply  
3 one addict among many.

4 When she gained these insights, this member was able to accept  
5 the Fellowship's payment of her expenses. Then she made another  
6 discovery: "I felt it as a miracle that "I" was no longer doing the work.  
7 The Fellowship was doing the work. I became equal to all the other  
8 members. I was still giving my time, my love and my mental abilities to  
9 my Fellowship, but I was no longer needing to buy myself a special place  
10 in N.A."

11 Groups follow the Twelve Traditions best when all members  
12 contribute what they can based on their financial resources. When we  
13 all give our fair share--not significantly less or overwhelmingly more--  
14 we're truly a Fellowship of equals as described in the Twelfth Tradition.  
15 While members with adequate financial resources may want to put  
16 something extra into the basket from time to time, or make a  
17 contribution for a special purpose, this is most sensibly done  
18 anonymously whenever possible. When we give in order to serve, not to  
19 gain power or play the martyr's role, it's in keeping with God's intent.  
20 And then it doesn't matter if no one specifically knows of our generosity.

21 We need to keep in mind, too, that the Seventh Tradition can be  
22 interpreted too narrowly. It's about money, but it's about more than  
23 money. For our groups to be self-supporting they must count on  
24 members' support in a variety of ways. We donate financially what we  
25 can. We give our time and energy. We work on projects. We don't rely  
26 on just a few members to carry the load; we all pitch in however we can,  
27 with whatever skills we can contribute.

28 As for would-be benefactors, people and organizations who not  
29 infrequently want to donate money to us, our purpose here is not to

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1 discuss their integrity but to emphasize that N.A. must not be allowed to  
2 be disrupted by outside control. Sometimes the offer of free rent,  
3 refreshments, transportation or donations for our fund-raisers from  
4 outside the N.A. community may seem like windfalls to us. But our  
5 experience clearly disproves this. Accepting such offers is clearly  
6 contrary to the Seventh Tradition. We must maintain our freedom to  
7 help addicts the N.A. way.

8 We do not accept outside contributions because we want to hold on  
9 to the freedom we have. We decline all outside contributions for our own  
10 sake. The more we in N.A. give of our strength, caring, wisdom, time  
11 and energy, the more the Fellowship becomes "ours." The more it  
12 becomes "ours" the more strength we can draw from it to help other  
13 addicts and to ensure the continuation of our recovery.

14  
15  
16 **Newsline Articles**

17  
18 *This article was written by a member of the Board of Trustees in*  
19 *1984. It represents views at the time of writing.*

20  
21 "Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining  
22 outside contributions." Not only is there an obligation but a duty of  
23 every recovering addict to support both through effort and monies the  
24 things that will help N.A. grow.

25 It is sad that in our efforts to recover we take great reversals of  
26 attitudes and actions, from high-rolling, grandiose, free-spending people  
27 to tight, selfish individuals with great rationalization and justification for  
28 our actions.

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1           With this pious and noble attitude, we point at others or say "let  
2 George do it, he is more qualified and has more money."

3           We forget that every one of us had to support our own habits by  
4 whatever means we could find. If we could give just a small percentage  
5 of the monies or efforts we spent for drugs, how well we would be able to  
6 carry the message of recovery to those many unfortunate addicts who  
7 have not yet found N.A.

8           Just think for a moment how much could be accomplished if every  
9 addict in N.A. would pledge one cent a day to one service arm of N.A.  
10 Greater numbers of people would hear the message of N.A. and be given  
11 a chance of recovery.

12           It seems that in our recovery, memory returns very slowly. We  
13 forget where we came from, the way it was, and how we obtained the  
14 message of recovery. It was freely given, but there was work and money  
15 involved that came from somewhere.

16           There is work being performed by people who feel that sense of  
17 responsibility to their fellows. Phone calls cost money, the printed  
18 material that is given away for free costs money, the rent must be paid  
19 at a central location so we may be located by those seeking recovery.  
20 When the phone rings we want someone to be at the other end; they  
21 must be paid. The postage for the letters you write and responses to  
22 those letters also costs money.

23           Remember the work you don't see being done is usually being  
24 accomplished by a mere few who ask very little in return. Those few  
25 cannot do it alone, without the help of all members in the Fellowship in  
26 some small part, contributing towards their recovery and the recovery of  
27 those to come.

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1           The survival of N.A. depends on us all. That little something we  
2 don't give might be the difference between one addict dying or surviving.  
3 That addict could be you.

4           Reprinted from: *Newsline*, Vol. 2, No. 3

5  
6           *This article was written by member of the Board of Trustees in*  
7 *November 1985. It represents views at the time of writing.*

8  
9           This is a program of attraction rather than promotion. One of my  
10 first attractions to this program was when I heard "you are a member  
11 when you say you are," and that it didn't cost anything to join.

12           When they passed around the basket I was skeptical; then  
13 someone reassured me that I didn't have to put anything in, and if I  
14 needed some, I could even take some out. Well, I never did take any out  
15 but it was a long time before I ever put anything in.

16           When I realized that we were self-supporting from our own  
17 contributions, that we paid for our coffee and paid rent for the meeting  
18 room, I figured it would only be fair to pitch in. So I'd throw a quarter  
19 in the basket, figuring that would cover my share. Oftentimes, I would  
20 contribute nothing. I didn't have much money, and I wasn't going to  
21 give what I had.

22           I knew someone had to be covering the main bill at the WSO, the  
23 phone, literature and the WSC. It just somehow didn't feel like it should  
24 be my responsibility.

25           As I grew and became more involved in the program, and as I  
26 started to make more money, I worked my way up to putting in a dollar  
27 when I felt I could afford it. Eventually, after I had been clean a long  
28 time, I made a commitment to put in a dollar whether I felt I could  
29 afford it or not.

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1           In my region when we first decided to open up a phone line and  
2 hire a 24-hour answering service, a bunch of us members made a  
3 commitment to see that the phonedlines stayed open. We were willing to  
4 put up the money each month if the rest of the Fellowship didn't  
5 contribute enough. It was the first major thing we had done as a region.  
6 For years before that, certain members had been the main N.A. contacts.  
7 For some reason, we never did have to come up with the money, and the  
8 bill got paid every month through our contributions.

9           We did pretty much the same thing with our central office. Quite  
10 a few of our members put up pledges that could be called upon if there  
11 was not enough money coming in from the basket. But the money came  
12 in and the pledges were not needed.

13           We, like so many other regions, were experiencing such  
14 tremendous growth that we barely had the resources within our  
15 Fellowship to keep up with its demands. We had to look at what our  
16 expenses were, and how much money was actually being donated by the  
17 groups. It was plain that the groups weren't donating enough money for  
18 us to be self-supporting. Our expenses for literature were skyrocketing.  
19 Our hospital and institution committee had become active as never  
20 before, and its need for literature was never ending, yet its primary  
21 purpose to carry the message to the addict who is locked up couldn't be  
22 ignored. Our public information committee was also getting more and  
23 more requests from the public, and that meant more money.

24           At the world level, it's astronomical. They literally cannot keep  
25 up with the demand. This year alone [1985] the Conference passed a  
26 budget of over \$150,000 -- up from \$60,000 last year [1984].

27           What I am trying to get at is that it seems as though it is through  
28 our fund-raisers that we meet our financial needs. Time and time again

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1 at our local ASC meetings we see that it's been the fund-raisers that  
2 have pulled us through.

3 My concern for our future and the concern of many other members  
4 I have talked to is this: Where are we headed with these fund-raisers?  
5 We frequently become dependent upon them as the means by which we  
6 are self-supporting.

7 We are a worldwide spiritual Fellowship. We take great pride in  
8 our Seventh Tradition, that we pay our own way and decline the offer of  
9 outside contributions. It has given us a sense of integrity about  
10 ourselves and protects us from outside influence. Yet through many of  
11 these fund-raisers, a lot of money is generated from people outside of our  
12 membership.

13 Some of this might be unavoidable, yet the trend towards reliance  
14 on these fund-raisers as the means by which we support a lot of our  
15 service structure can lead us down a perilous path. The primary object  
16 of these functions is to carry the message to the addict who is still  
17 suffering and to enhance the quality of our own program through unity,  
18 love and service.

19 Last year it was mentioned that if each member in the Fellowship  
20 donated \$2.00 a year to the WSC, that it would finance its budget. Just  
21 locally in my region we estimate that if each one of our members would  
22 contribute \$4.00 a month to our area service committee, it would support  
23 our local services. It is not mentioned enough at meetings about what  
24 our Seventh Tradition really is or what our needs are. I put \$2.00 in the  
25 basket at each meeting, not that I've got the bucks, but because someone  
26 told me that that's what it basically takes for each member to contribute  
27 for this Fellowship to be self-supporting. Now, I wouldn't have come up  
28 with that on my own, because I'm basically cheap when it comes to

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1 people passing around collection plates. It's an old idea that I've had to  
2 get rid of.

3 Interestingly enough, my God as I understand Him has always  
4 provided me with that \$2.00 at each meeting, whereas before, when I  
5 wasn't even aware of our needs, I never seemed to have it. For myself  
6 and many other addicts, there is nothing more fulfilling than being  
7 involved with putting on a function for this Fellowship that is geared  
8 towards carrying the message and financially breaking even.

9 Reprinted from: *Newsline* Vol. 2, No. 5

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11

12

**General Input**

13

14 I believe any discussion of this subject must begin in the Eleventh  
15 Tradition with the words, "Our public relations policy is... "followed with  
16 the last part of the Fifth Tradition language,"...to carry the message to  
17 the addict who still suffers." Maybe if the Tradition had been written  
18 that way it would have helped our understanding. Even though it is not  
19 written that way, the current issue before PI and the full Fellowship rest  
20 on those concepts.

21 The duty of the PI committee is to accomplish the tasks quoted in  
22 the Eleventh and Fifth Tradition without violating the Sixth and  
23 Seventh Traditions. It is possible to look at this duty with two  
24 perspectives, one that is impractical and operates with strong restraints  
25 and one that is practical with a more open interpretation.

26 The approach with strong restraints would require that all PI  
27 efforts be conducted directly by members and in person. This perspective  
28 would avoid any controversy, as the only way our PI efforts would be

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1 accomplished is by one addict talking personally to another addict or a  
2 member of the public or groups of the public. This would mean one on  
3 one meetings between our members and other addicts or with  
4 professionals, or at meetings that our members attend and we pay for  
5 the meeting space.

6 The only permissible indirect or media PI efforts would be those  
7 that were completely paid for by N.A. If we took out advertising space  
8 and we paid the full commercial cost in a newspaper, magazine, bus  
9 bench, billboard, radio or TV media then the strong restraints concept  
10 could be followed. Using this approach we would have to refuse  
11 discounts and free time or space. Most likely our efforts would be pretty  
12 limited. The majority of our efforts, because they would be limited by  
13 our finances, would be direct mail efforts of committees trying to target  
14 people who influence others or in limited radio or bus bench-type  
15 advertising.

16 The simplicity of this approach is appealing. I am sure that if the  
17 Fellowship decides to adopt this perspective, that after the bloody  
18 learning period, we would be able to follow the policy. The job of PI  
19 would be less nerve racking and become much easier.

20 This approach would prohibit us from using any media at all  
21 unless we paid for it: no signs, no radio, no TV, no newspapers, no  
22 magazines, no bulletin boards. There are other prohibitions, but you get  
23 the point.

24 If we had followed this approach from the beginning, I believe  
25 there are thousands of addicts who would not be alive today. Very few  
26 addicts really see a TV spot or hear a radio PSA or read an N.A. sign  
27 and then search us out, get clean and become members. It simply does  
28 not happen very often. What does occur are two other things. Family  
29 members and the public learn of N.A. then begin to push the addict

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1 towards our public knowledge and public faith in our program. Without  
2 the latter, the former does not take place.

3         There will come a time when N.A. is as well known by the general  
4 public as is that other organization. The confidence level in our  
5 dependability and reputation will be a major factor in the acceptance by  
6 using addicts to take the advice of family and friends that they should  
7 join N.A. Until that confidence level is achieved, we will have to keep  
8 proving ourselves to every addict. Even after the confidence level is  
9 high, the new addict must find identification with other addicts when  
10 they come to their first meetings.

11         If we do not have the ability to use the media without having to  
12 pay for the full costs ourselves, then there will continue to be thousands  
13 of addicts who never learn of N.A. and continue using. Many will die.

14         The approach described above is based on the assumption that  
15 N.A. is the recipient of a donation when a media outlet publishes or  
16 broadcasts something about N.A. Fortunately this is not the case.  
17 When a media outlet publishes or broadcasts something about N.A., it is  
18 the general public interest that is the beneficiary. N.A. just gets more  
19 work to do.

20         A large percentage of our society is concerned about the general  
21 welfare of our society. Of course it is the government who is primarily  
22 concerned about the general welfare and they continue to pursue efforts  
23 to upgrade the general welfare. Government agencies, public  
24 organizations and private companies all find expression of their civic  
25 duty in ways that improve the general welfare of society.

26         For example, heart and lung associations broadcast messages  
27 against smoking and eating certain foods. The government and some  
28 private companies do the same thing. These messages are presented as  
29 part of their public relations policy to inform about the dangers they

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1 have first hand knowledge of and to raise the public confidence level in  
2 their organization.

3 Sometimes these messages are paid for by the company or agency  
4 making the PSA. Sometimes the messages are provided free by the  
5 media outlet. An example to look at would be the professional football  
6 players association and their support for United Way and more recent  
7 efforts to cast drug use in a negative light. Both messages were  
8 professionally made at the expense of the players association, but the  
9 stations do not charge for their air time. The revenue lost by the TV  
10 station is passed on to an individual sponsor or averaged out among all  
11 their sponsors as an element of their overhead expense.

12 In this example, how do the football players individually or  
13 collectively benefit from the TV station, the individual advertiser or all  
14 advertisers who paid for the air time? They do not benefit in a personal  
15 way other than the satisfaction that the public interest is served by such  
16 efforts and their reputation as public spirited persons is enhanced.

17 Who is benefited from the broadcast of N.A. public service  
18 announcements? The public is the beneficiary. The message is available  
19 to improve the general public welfare because N.A. produced the PSA  
20 and cooperated with the station to have it broadcast. There are others  
21 involved in this cooperative effort, the advertisers who use the station.

22 In recent months we have had some confusion about this issue.  
23 Some have concluded that N.A. receives a contribution when N.A. public  
24 service announcements are broadcast. Unless someone is receiving  
25 money and we have not been told about it, I believe we have not  
26 received any outside contributions. It is the general public interest that  
27 receives the benefit of the contribution. The person who learns from  
28 those football player spots that smoking is potentially dangerous and

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1 stops smoking is the person who benefits. They are the one who  
2 obtained the contribution.

3 The same is true of our PSA spots. The addict who learns about  
4 N.A. directly from seeing the PSA or from another person who did see  
5 the PSA is the beneficiary, they received the contribution. But since  
6 thousands or millions may have received the same message, it is  
7 considered that the general welfare is the recipient of the contribution.

8 The recent discussions in our PI committee have confused this  
9 issue and we need to get it corrected. Many of our members didn't give  
10 the issue much thought but we went ahead using a variety of indirect  
11 methods to "carry the message" thinking that it was free. Perhaps too  
12 many of us thought that God was putting money in the cash box for  
13 those companies who owned the radio or TV stations or bus companies or  
14 billboard companies so the companies didn't have to pay the cost  
15 themselves.

16 God doesn't put money in the cash box of anybody. But things do  
17 get done for the general welfare of the society. Here is how it works.  
18 The media companies are in business to make money. Free time is an  
19 expense, so they pass the expense on to someone. They average it out  
20 among all their advertisers or allow a company to pay for some specific  
21 time. But is it really the company that pays for the time? Not really,  
22 they pass the cost of the time on to the consumers of their products. So  
23 the truth is consumers pay higher prices for products, which pays for  
24 public service time that benefits the general welfare of the society. Does  
25 N.A. get a contribution out of this? No.

26 As an incentive from the government for companies to involve  
27 themselves in this circle effort of the consumers to help pay for  
28 information distribution that benefits the general welfare, the  
29 government allows companies to obtain a tax reduction for sponsoring

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1 public service time. We may want to become involved in that  
2 relationship as a matter of our Sixth Tradition efforts, but even that  
3 requires some investigation.

4 As a Sixth Tradition matter the issue is understanding the  
5 relationship of the company that pays the media outlet (and obtains the  
6 tax deduction). That relationship may be the same as a treatment  
7 center, public park, library, club house or hospital that has N.A.  
8 meetings on their property. The question this presents is, does the fact  
9 that N.A. has a meeting in a certain facility mean we are related to that  
10 facility in violation of our Sixth Tradition? Generally the answer is no.

11 The answer is generally no, because of the way in which we inter-  
12 relate as a result of having a meeting on the property that is owned by  
13 someone else. The basis of that relationship is in the Tenth Tradition:  
14 "N.A. has no opinion on outside issues,..." and in the spiritual purpose of  
15 the final words in the Sixth Tradition, "... lest problems of money,  
16 property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose." As a Tenth  
17 Tradition matter, our Fellowship concerns itself only with the program of  
18 recovery that our members have developed. As a Fellowship we have no  
19 interest in becoming involved in other matters, regardless of whether or  
20 not it is the concept of a particular treatment center, a taxation problem  
21 of the library or park system or how the government gives tax breaks to  
22 companies that advertise in public media outlets. When we get drawn  
23 into such controversy we should extricate ourselves as quietly and fast as  
24 possible.

25 The spiritual issue here is freedom for N.A. to believe what we  
26 choose to believe. By avoiding concepts and issues of other organizations  
27 we retain our independence of thought. The same concept is embedded  
28 in the Sixth Tradition with the admonition to never endorse or lend our  
29 name lest we be diverted from our primary purpose. Here again the

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1 matter of our spiritual independence from others is the key. If we get  
2 tied to a treatment program it is possible for people who do not know  
3 better, to assume that N.A. endorses the concepts they foster in their  
4 treatment modality. The same could be true of the relationship of N.A.  
5 to companies that pay for advertising time allocated to the N.A.  
6 messages. If the public is led to believe that our message of recovery, or  
7 N.A., is sponsored by a certain company then there is a clear problem.

8 This would be true if a treatment program where an N.A. meeting  
9 is held implied the same relationship concerning the N.A. meeting. If  
10 they say the meeting is sponsored by them or imply that N.A. is  
11 sponsored by them, then there is a clear Sixth and Tenth Tradition  
12 problem.

13 In these cases the solution is the same and very clear. Every  
14 reasonable effort should be made to obtain assistance from the company  
15 or treatment center to cease promoting incorrect information about the  
16 relationship between N.A. and their company or organization. If this  
17 fails, then, in the case of the treatment center, the meeting should move  
18 and delete reference to that address in meeting directories.

19 In the case of media advertisers, the media outlet and the  
20 advertiser should be asked to cease implying they sponsor N.A. If they  
21 persist, then the media outlet should be asked to discontinue using the  
22 public service announcement and return all copies to N.A. We retrieve  
23 the media material tape, video tape or other material by letter.

24 An important point needs to be made at this place. The materials  
25 provided by the WSO for the Fellowship are copyrighted material. We  
26 (N.A.) provide these materials to the media company owners for their  
27 use, but not ownership rights. We could legally demand the return of  
28 these tapes or materials, or their destruction if cessation of the offensive  
29 relationship to us does not occur.

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1           This is an important reason why WSO does copyright our PSA  
2 materials. The material is provided by us as an element in benefiting  
3 the public interest and we do, by copyright ownership, retain some legal  
4 control over their use. It is not likely it would be necessary to resort to  
5 legal measures but they can be done by the WSO if requested and if  
6 appropriate.

7           An overall aspect of the Sixth and Seventh Tradition issue as it  
8 relates to P.I. and our meetings is the spiritual foundation upon which  
9 these traditions is based. The Traditions tell us to remain independent  
10 of thought concerning our recovery concept. It tells us to remain true to,  
11 and concentrate on, recovery and not other things or events.

12           We cannot allow others to tell us what recovery is. This is our  
13 program and our collective groups' conscience decides on its content.  
14 Outsiders would confuse our message, they would change our concepts or  
15 tarnish our spiritual independence if we affiliated with others or became  
16 indebted.

17  
18

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19           Our Seventh Tradition is our statement of abundance and sharing,  
20 fulfillment and support; our supply to the newcomer, the addict who still  
21 suffers and to oursevels. Our first seven traditions are inherent to the  
22 complete individual group; the final six inherent to the complete  
23 corporation. Our Seventh Tradition is inherent to the complete corporate  
24 group, the complete corporation, the structure of both, and the  
25 participation and growth of the individual member into the complete  
26 corporate individual, participating to produce the complete corporate  
27 group - fully participant to the corporate structure. Corporate is a  
28 spiritual word indicating fulfillment through unity within a body.

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1           Our Seventh Tradition is provisional, pivotal and productive. It is  
2 where reciprocity is most obviously active, providing the infrastructure or  
3 inner strength of our Fellowship.

4           Our Seventh Tradition is provisional in nature, pivotal in function  
5 and productive of itself when shared. It becomes active through sharing  
6 the fruits of our recovery in a physical, mental and spiritual manner,  
7 duplicating the manner in which we receive them; receiving and sharing  
8 from the abundance of our newfound abilities and in doing so, improving  
9 and increasing those abilities, giving us the tools to provide and share  
10 the spiritual, mental and material wealth that enable us as a Fellowship  
11 to stand ready; to attract and provide to those we attract the minute  
12 intrinsics that as a whole become hope, the fulfilling implement of a  
13 desire so necessary for us to remain here and to recover.

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16           In our recent struggle to carry the message it has become  
17 apparent as to an existing problem that we seem to have in Narcotics  
18 Anonymous. Although it would be nice if we, as a Fellowship, would  
19 never have to discuss the issue of finances, reality dictates that we need  
20 to if we are to continue to carry the message and to continue to provide  
21 the services that we do.

22           We struggle locally to continue to keep our helplines in operation  
23 and our H&I meetings supplied with literature, and to continue to  
24 provide meeting lists and public information on a wider scale. The World  
25 Service Conference is presently (dated July, 1987) in the hole some  
26 \$40,000 to \$50,000. We continue to provide a great portion of our  
27 services through the money we generate from conventions and "fund-

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1   raisers" instead of through the spiritual principle of self sacrifice that is  
2   the foundation of our Seventh Tradition.

3           One area in another region increased the amount of funds to help  
4   provide their services by 800% by reading a statement similar to the one  
5   below in all their group meetings. Please consider using it in your group.

6           "7th Tradition Time

7           Read: The 7th Tradition has its foundation in the spiritual  
8   principle of self sacrifice, something most of us were not good at in our  
9   active addiction but try to cultivate in our recovery.

10          Gratitude is not something we say, it is something we do. When  
11   we practice the principle of self sacrifice in any way we show  
12   appreciation for the ability to regularly participate in the miracle of  
13   recovery and try to carry the message to those who do not.

14          The funds that make it to our basket provide: our group's rent,  
15   literature and refreshments, meeting lists, telephone helplines, literature  
16   for our H&I committees, public information and other services on our  
17   area, regional and world levels. We keep what we have only by giving it  
18   away. Newcomers are asked not to contribute. All others are privileged  
19   to do so."

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22          This is the tradition with which we are most familiar because we  
23   hear it at almost every meeting as the basket is passed around.  
24   However, nobody's membership is dependent upon his/her contribution  
25   when the basket comes around.

26          The amount, too, is not important. It is the act of giving, even if  
27   it is only a dime, that carries the weight.

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1           Financial independence is an important part of our new way of  
2 life. It demonstrates the changes in us as individuals and as groups. At  
3 last, we are learning responsibility, and adherence to this tradition  
4 proves it.

5           I would call your attention to the wording of this tradition,  
6 "Groups ought to be..." Even here, in this very important area, each  
7 group may choose to follow this tradition. It is not written as a law, but  
8 worded as a strong suggestion and based on past experience.

9           If we were to accept gifts or loans from outside sources, they could  
10 have hidden price tags attached. It is well known that "he who pays the  
11 piper calls the tune." Anything, be it favors, recognition, endorsements,  
12 support, anything that diverts us from our primary purpose, or violates  
13 another tradition, is too much for us to risk by accepting a contribution  
14 from an outside source.

15           Even a member giving more than his/her fair share can lead to  
16 controversy and disharmony.

17           Where does our money go? Each group has to pay rent, buy  
18 coffee, tea, etc., buy literature, key tags and sometimes cakes. Any  
19 amount in excess of the group's immediate needs plus a small reserve, is  
20 given to the area service committee, which in turn pays rent, supplies  
21 literature and refreshments to Hospital and Institution meetings, and  
22 pays our N.A. phone bill. We try to send little care packages of  
23 literature to new groups starting up and finance the task of informing  
24 the community at large that N.A. is alive and well, ready to help other  
25 addicts. Engaged in similar functions on a larger scale are our Regional  
26 and World Services, both of which depend on our contributions here at  
27 the group level, for their very existence.

28           Think, if you will, how much it cost you to join N.A. I know of  
29 other recovery groups that impose a fee to join. What if N.A. had asked

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1 that of you when you joined? Would you have been able to afford to  
2 join? I couldn't and my addicted friend in New York couldn't either.

3 When the basket is being passed, not just tonight, but every night,  
4 please think about what N.A. has done for you, how it was here when  
5 you needed it and if you want N.A. to be here in the future--please give.  
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8 We have found there is more to being self supporting than  
9 providing enough money to pay for things. Carrying out the  
10 responsibilities that money brings with it are self supporting gestures in  
11 themselves. We do not provide the money for our services, the groups  
12 do, and as a committee we cannot be "fully self supporting."

13 The groups and the Fellowship are obliged to be. As servants we  
14 carry out services for the groups and remain "directly responsible to  
15 those we serve." In order to preserve our primary purpose, protect the  
16 groups' autonomy, and assure the personal anonymity that our  
17 Traditions indicate as necessary, we should accept the obligation this  
18 responsibility brings with it, and assure the Fellowship's need to be fully  
19 self supporting. "Being self supporting is an important part of our new  
20 way of life" (Basic Text p. 65).

21 In P.I. work we receive many generous offers of assistance. T.V.  
22 stations may offer to make tapes for us. We may be offered donations by  
23 cooperating organizations to help us in our work. Regardless of their  
24 intentions, we cannot accept this type of help. "In N.A. our groups not  
25 only stand on their own, but demand the right to do so" (Basic Text p.  
26 65).

27 Some of the basic gestures we can make are drawing a good set of  
28 guidelines and setting up realistic budgets. When accepted, they define

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1 our responsibilities to us and the groups, and support our efforts with  
2 much needed direction.

3 New projects arise in P.I. that sometimes exceed the limits of our  
4 budget. It may become necessary at these times to stage special fund  
5 raisers to obtain the money. These can become unifying for the  
6 Fellowship. They strengthen the ties that bind us together with a  
7 common purpose. They may also serve as a guide to the Fellowship  
8 conscience. The success of the fund raiser can tell us if there is total,  
9 limited, or very little approval of the project. We learn to accept  
10 conscience. Sometimes the answer is no.

11 The ability of the fellowship to support our services financially is a  
12 valid indicator of how ready we are to proceed with a responsibility.  
13 Even if the P.I. sub-committee were able to succeed with a new project,  
14 perhaps the local Fellowship would not be ready to support the needs  
15 and influx of new members it would bring with them. In P.I. we learn to  
16 look at what we don't have, rather than what we have.

17 Supporting new groups with in-fellowship P.I., supporting fund  
18 raisers, conventions, and spiritual celebrations; traveling to and sharing  
19 in Fellowship activities and learning days in other areas and regions;  
20 regular attendance and sharing recovery in the meeting place, attending  
21 and sharing in the Tradition discussions and business portions of our  
22 service meetings, continuing to recover through the N.A. program and  
23 contribution to the conscience of the Fellowship; a commitment to  
24 sharing and communicating within the service structure, and  
25 volunteering to do work in our service center; all can be considered  
26 Seventh Tradition contributions.

27 "We all have to pull together, and in pulling together we learn  
28 that we really are part of something greater than ourselves" (Basic Text  
29 p. 66).

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1           Money is an important part of our existence. Learning to deal  
2 with it and its responsibilities are equally important parts of "facing life  
3 on its own terms." (Why are we here) P.I. is an area that seems to  
4 require a stronger sense of discipline within our Traditions. Our ability  
5 to accept personal responsibility is a reflection of our recovery. Our P.I.  
6 work is a statement of N.A. recovery.

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9           Lots of different opinions on propriety of fundraising. Any official  
10 position?

11           There has been increasing concern among our members about  
12 using our activities as fundraising occasions exclusively with little  
13 emphasis on celebrating the miracle of recovery. Additionally,  
14 fundraising takes away the important role our groups play in passing on  
15 their collection after expenses to support area, Regional and World  
16 Services. Our need to be self-supporting is the important factor here.  
17 Without the `basket' support, the feeling is that `service' is remote to  
18 group affairs and should be self-supporting.

19           In Narcotics Anonymous we are guided by general consensus and  
20 group conscience rather than `official positions' which would imply the  
21 power of enforcement. Our SERVICE structure services the needs of our  
22 Fellowship by their direction and through their support, not the other  
23 way round.

24           I had a hard time accepting that some of our trusted servants,  
25 especially at the World Level, were provided plane fare and hotel fare to  
26 travel to other parts of the World for committee meetings and  
27 conferences. I became a member of a world level committee and  
28 continued to work extensively at the regional level. I had a kind of pride

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1 that, even though I was not making a lot of money, I always paid my  
2 own way to committee meetings. Twice my region helped me out  
3 financially, but their funds were very limited and I felt a little guilty  
4 accepting even a small amount toward an expensive trip.

5 I was judging others for accepting money so I judged myself doubly  
6 hard. I carried the financial burden of committee meetings like a cross.  
7 I was so good; I cared so much for my beloved program; I began to  
8 believe in my most secret heart of hearts that my recovery must be  
9 deeper than others because "I give so much."

10 Near the end of my commitment, I was on a committee which  
11 needed me at a meeting. My plane fare and hotel were paid by the  
12 Fellowship. The miracle that happened for me is that it was no longer  
13 "I" who was doing the work. The Fellowship was doing its own work. I  
14 was just the member the Fellowship was using to get the work done. I  
15 became equal to all the other members, the ones on the committee who  
16 were also "just members the Fellowship was using," and the other  
17 members at home. I was still giving my time, my love, and my mental  
18 abilities to my Fellowship, but I was no longer buying myself a special  
19 place in N.A.

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22 Our groups are self-supporting in ways other than the obvious  
23 financial aspects. We don't have expert "N.A. counselors" hired to treat  
24 our disease. We utilize only our own N.A. experiences with recovery in  
25 our literature, our meetings, and interpretation of the Twelve Steps and  
26 Twelve Traditions. By declining outside contributions, both monetary  
27 and philosophical, we keep the N.A. message free from outside pressure  
28 and influence.

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1           If we are to be fully self-supporting, then how do we provide the  
2 necessary services? The answer is, of course, from our members. Who  
3 better to support Narcotics Anonymous than the people that owe their  
4 lives to this Fellowship and will benefit directly from the services  
5 provided? With freedom comes responsibility. When the basket is  
6 passed at our meetings, we contribute based on our ability and our  
7 gratitude for what we've been given here. There is no set amount that is  
8 proper. For some, a dollar or two per meeting is more than they have.  
9 For others this amount is far too small. When our donation is enough  
10 that we feel we are "giving up something" or doing without some luxury  
11 we want in order to contribute, rather than giving our "spare change" or  
12 what is "left over," we develop a deeper sense of belonging and gratitude  
13 within ourselves. This comes from unselfish acts of sacrifice.

14           In addition to monetary contributions, this same principle of  
15 spiritual growth applies to our contributions of time and service as well.  
16 For those that can't afford to contribute much financially (and those that  
17 can!), selfless service can be a key to our recovery. It is an exercise in  
18 humility, a statement of gratitude, and a lesson in personal  
19 responsibility.

20           Another way we apply the Seventh Tradition to ourselves is to  
21 become "fully self-supporting" in our own lives. In our addiction, most of  
22 us were always looking for a "free ride." We may have accomplished  
23 this by stealing, sponging off friends and family, collecting government  
24 aid when work was available to us, finding a "lover" to support us, or a  
25 host of other schemes. As the steps become a reality in our daily living,  
26 these options are no longer available to us. We strive to "earn our way"  
27 and become "responsible, productive members of society." Although this  
28 may seem hard at times, we pray for willingness and would really have

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1 it no other way. The satisfaction gained from being an asset rather than  
2 a liability makes all our efforts worthwhile.

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**TRADITION EIGHT**

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

**Outline**

- I. Introduction.
  - A. Why is this tradition important?
- II. Non professionalism.
  - A. Define professionalism and non-professionalism.
  - B. Professionalism and our role as NA members contradict each other.
    - 1. Anonymity.
    - 2. Unity.
    - 3. Professional implies organization (Tradition 9).
  - C. This non-professionalism compliments our spiritual principles of giving, self sacrifice, humility, "I can't, we can", sponsorship, empathy (attitude toward authority), caring and sharing, identification.
  - D. Volunteer service structure (not professional).
    - 1. Limitations of volunteer trusted servants (human, not professional, not getting paid).
    - 2. Volunteers serve at their convenience, special workers serve at their employer's convenience.
    - 3. Trusted servants and special workers.
      - a. Similarities and differences.
      - b. What is their relationship to the Fellowship?

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- 1    **III. Special Workers.**
- 2        **A. Need (special workers free members to do what they alone can**
- 3            **do).**
- 4        **B. Function (special workers do specific tasks).**
- 5        **C. Accountability and responsibility.**
- 6        **D. Addict and non-addict special workers.**
- 7    **IV. Service Centers.**
- 8        **A. Definition (center of service).**
- 9        **B. Types of service centers (area, regional offices, WSO, etc.).**
- 10   **V. Application of Tradition Eight to members, groups, areas, etc.**
- 11   **VI. Summary and lead in to Tradition Nine.**
- 12
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1 individual members are challenged to work and be of service in any way  
2 a Higher Power sees fit to direct them.

3 Tradition Eight does not say: "N.A. members may not be  
4 professionals"; it says: "Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever  
5 non-professional." The Eight Tradition gives our members the freedom  
6 to work in any professional or non-professional field outside of Narcotics  
7 Anonymous. However, those who work in the professional field of drug  
8 rehabilitation use the Twelve Traditions to guide them in their  
9 relationship with Narcotics Anonymous. They are careful not to use the  
10 name of Narcotics Anonymous to attract members into a particular  
11 hospital or recovery house, because this would affiliate N.A. with an  
12 outside enterprise. Nor do they use the N.A. name to solicit funds for  
13 their professional work.

14 It is our experience that N.A. members employed in the  
15 rehabilitative professions must take care to ensure that they do not  
16 confuse their work activities with Twelve Step work. Specifically, eight  
17 hours of paid labor--even in the field of recovery--does not and cannot  
18 become synonymous with effort given from the heart to carry the  
19 message of recovery in serving N.A. Aside from our professional  
20 endeavors, it is tantamount to our recovery that we freely give what  
21 was freely given to us.

22 To complete our examination of Tradition Eight, we need to define  
23 an N.A. service center. It may be at the area, regional or world level.  
24 Service centers serve the groups in the geographical area which supports  
25 them. Their function is that of a business office--a central point for  
26 referral of Twelve Step calls, distribution of public information,  
27 maintaining an inventory of literature, and operating a telephone  
28 helpline.

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1           In carrying the message, many tasks need to be done. Volunteer  
2 work is the backbone of our service, but volunteers work only to the best  
3 of their abilities. Some of us offer our services to N.A. as committee  
4 members, coffee makers and so forth. We volunteer our talents to  
5 benefit Narcotics Anonymous. If we have the ability to type, keep track  
6 of funds or otherwise be useful to the Fellowship, we gratefully do so to  
7 partially repay the debt we feel we owe to N.A. Some of us, however, do  
8 not have skills to perform some of these tasks. The principle of the  
9 Eight Tradition takes this into consideration and tells us that we may  
10 employ special workers in our service centers. If no member in our area  
11 has the skills or is able to volunteer services for these necessary  
12 functions, it may be necessary to hire a special worker so we can  
13 effectively carry the message of N.A. Without the help of these special  
14 workers, we might be unable to respond to many addicts who reach out  
15 for help.

16           In their enthusiasm, some of our members give too freely of what  
17 they don't have--money--in copying materials to distribute, opening  
18 postal boxes for N.A., etc. So, in the course of carrying the message, it is  
19 sometimes necessary to reimburse trusted servants for unusual expenses  
20 incurred. These may include monetary burdens resulting from tasks  
21 assigned by service boards or committees at the group, area, regional, or  
22 world level. It is the responsibility of the service boards or committees at  
23 the group, area, regional or world level to develop their own procedures  
24 and policies concerning the expenditures through the application of the  
25 Second Tradition principle of group conscience.

26           The Eighth Tradition addresses the use of paid help in our service  
27 centers. In our infancy, we used volunteers. But as we grow, we need  
28 such professionals as answering services, typists and clerical workers to  
29 carry out the administrative needs of our Fellowship. The purpose of

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1 service centers is to provide administrative and logistical assistance to  
2 our Fellowship, in order to further our primary purpose. Service centers  
3 are also a contact point for addicts seeking recovery and for individuals  
4 outside the N.A. community.

5 The one-to-one relationship of an addict helping another is the key  
6 to understanding the Eighth Tradition. One addict carrying the message  
7 to another addict is a volunteer commitment, and should never be done  
8 for financial gain. We are simply recovering addicts helping other  
9 addicts to recover.

10 Because of the Eighth Tradition, the gift of recovery we receive in  
11 Narcotics Anonymous is free. When we consider our new life and all  
12 that we have to be grateful for, we become even more grateful when we  
13 realize that it was freely given to us. This realization inspires us to  
14 guard the Twelve Traditions carefully, ensuring that the miracle of  
15 recovery is freely available to all addicts who seek it.

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18 1986/1987 Unpublished Draft

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20 There are two main parts to Tradition Eight: the non-  
21 professionalism of Twelve Step work, and the technical needs of our  
22 service workers. Being forever non-professional means that we never  
23 hire psychologists, psychiatrists, or mental health workers of any kind.  
24 It means we don't employ drug counselors or operate treatment centers.  
25 It means we rely on our volunteer efforts, affirming the principle of self-  
26 sufficiency as stressed in the Seventh Tradition. We depend solely on  
27 each other. Our "treatment" mode is, and always will be, addicts  
28 helping addicts. Our survival depends on it.

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1           When we think about the Eighth Tradition we come to see that  
2 it's a very spiritual one. While professionals offer their services for fees  
3 or salaries, we give freely of our time, energy and expertise, doing so out  
4 of the love and concern we feel for our brother and sister addicts. When  
5 we work together as volunteers to further our primary purpose, we  
6 simultaneously strengthen our unity and reinforce the importance of our  
7 primary purpose. When we contribute to the growth and the work of our  
8 groups, and do so without pay or even personal credit, we give  
9 recognition to the importance of anonymity. In N.A. no member is more  
10 "professional" than any other; we're all the same, all recovering addicts.

11           No matter what our paid work on the outside might consist of,  
12 even if it's deemed "professional" by the outside world, in N.A. that  
13 doesn't count. In N.A. no member is more of an expert than any other.  
14 In some important ways, moreover, all of us can rightly call ourselves  
15 experts. We're experts on how the disease of addiction has affected us  
16 personally. We're experts on the insidiousness of this disease--how it  
17 takes over, how it distorts our lives, how it destroys us. We're experts,  
18 each of us in our own way, on the struggles addiction imposes--the  
19 struggle to hang on to drugs, to admit our powerlessness over addiction,  
20 to stop using and stay clean.

21           It follows that we're terrific authorities on how to rationalize and  
22 excuse drug use, how to ignore self-destructive character traits like  
23 egoism or grandiosity and make them seem like virtues. Nobody knows  
24 better than we how the disease makes addicts lie, cheat, steal, run away  
25 from the truth. We've been there. We know all the pretenses, the  
26 explanations, the evasions, the manipulation that comes so easily to  
27 addicts.

28           All this expertise, which we've so painfully and at such cost  
29 acquired, we make available to newcomers. We can instantly see

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1 through them as other people often can't. We can confront them as  
2 addict to addict. We can also give them the all-important message of  
3 hope and recovery, because we're living examples of users who went  
4 from lives of suffering to lives of fulfillment. And if a newcomer or a  
5 long-standing member needs us, we're always on call--at meetings, over  
6 coffee, on the phone. We're available twenty-four hours a day, one or  
7 the other of us, to listen and to help.

8 This holds true for all of us in N.A. No individual member is  
9 better qualified than any other to carry the message of spiritual recovery  
10 from addiction. We don't hire therapists or group leaders, and none of  
11 our members is paid to attend meetings or do service work. Instead, we  
12 share from our hearts that which has been given freely to us. In return,  
13 we are given the gift of life.

14 None of this means that we're "better" than professionals. We  
15 need not and should not adopt a holier-than-thou attitude. Professionals  
16 enjoy a high status in our society, often deservedly so. They spend years  
17 studying their professions in order to qualify for the academic degrees  
18 that give them their professional credentials. After receiving their  
19 degrees many continue to build their expertise, not only in professional  
20 practice but in more study. We recognize the need for professionals and  
21 admire them. A number of our members have benefited from certain  
22 kinds of professional intervention. Some were in drug treatment  
23 programs and came to N.A. because the professionals in these programs  
24 referred them to us. Some members receive helpful counselling or  
25 psychotherapy for emotional and family problems.

26 Yet, despite the respect we have for professionals, N.A. must  
27 remain determinedly non-professional. If we employed professionals to  
28 run our organization, to make policy and the like, the whole structure of  
29 our Fellowship would change. Policy and direction would not be decided

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1 by group conscience; God's will would no longer play a central role in our  
2 recovery. Volunteer service would take second place and that  
3 unparalleled therapeutic tool for recovery--giving freely to others that  
4 which has been freely given to us--would be lost. Very likely some  
5 members would even demand pay for the services they had been  
6 contributing. But then we would lose everything money can't buy. As  
7 one member said, "Money can't possibly give me the spiritual  
8 remuneration I get by contributing, doing service work. It's what keeps  
9 me clean and feeling good about me."

10       Once they stop using and go on to build solid careers, some of our  
11 members become professionals themselves. Some of these professionals  
12 build their expertise in the area they know best--the drug addiction and  
13 drug treatment fields. With solid professional credentials in hand, they  
14 bring a special sensitivity to their work. They know addiction in a way  
15 even the most experienced non-professionals can't know.

16       Nothing in the Eighth Tradition makes it a violation for N.A.  
17 members to become professionals in drug treatment or related fields.  
18 The tradition doesn't say, "N.A. members should not become  
19 professionals," it says, "N.A. should remain forever non-professional."  
20 This places a burden of special responsibility on our members who work  
21 in professional fields, especially those encompassing drug treatment and  
22 mental health. The image of a coat may serve to explain this. When  
23 engaged in their professional duties they wear the coat--that is, they're  
24 performing professionally and are recognized by those around them as  
25 being experts in their fields. When attending N.A. meetings and  
26 functions they should take off that coat--become ordinary members, "just  
27 plain addicts."

28       Realistically, this means that our professional members refrain  
29 from analyzing newcomers (or other members) in a professional way. It

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1 means not using professional language. It means not passing out  
2 business cards or otherwise advertising their professional availability  
3 while they're attending N.A. functions. It means not setting themselves  
4 up as "authorities" or "gurus" in matters that concern N.A. Humility  
5 and anonymity are essential to our recovery, whether we're professionals  
6 or non-professionals.

7       Members who work in professional fields related to drug addiction  
8 and treatment also have to be careful not to confuse their professional  
9 activities with their membership activities. Some such members adopt  
10 the attitude, "I don't want to be with addicts day and night," and stop  
11 coming to meetings regularly. To counsel addicts professionally, though,  
12 is not the same as fulfilling the responsibilities of N.A. membership. We  
13 all need to work the program in order to survive. In God's eyes we're all  
14 addicts striving to be clean, stay clean, and carry the message to other  
15 addicts.

16       The Eighth Tradition insists upon N.A. being wholly non-  
17 professional, but it allows us to set up service centers where we may  
18 employ special workers. Service centers serve the groups in the  
19 geographical area that supports them. They function as a business  
20 office. They're a central point for referral of Twelve Step calls,  
21 distribution of public information, the maintenance of an inventory of  
22 literature, and operation of a hotline.

23       Many of us are clean and recovering today because of the work  
24 earlier members did in setting up service centers. All the authority of  
25 our service centers is derived from group conscience. In fact, the  
26 autonomy emphasized in the Fourth Tradition, while applying to all our  
27 groups, does not apply to any of our service centers. The reason is that  
28 the work our service centers do always affects N.A. as a whole. Our  
29 service centers are expressly set up to carry out the mandate of the Fifth

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1 Tradition--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. In N.A.'s  
2 early days members didn't think about service centers or about hiring  
3 outside employees, special workers. There was so little money available,  
4 and so much community antagonism to N.A.'s very existence, members  
5 fought, prayed and struggled simply to keep their little groups alive.  
6 They often began by holding meetings in their own homes. Years ago  
7 the extent of N.A.'s paid help was one part-time shipping clerk. The  
8 struggle was hard, but members were few and N.A.'s structure was very  
9 simple.

10 As the years passed, God's will enabled N.A. to grow strong and  
11 large--to the point where our Fellowship has groups in many countries  
12 and is still expanding. We had a few thousand members; now we have a  
13 few hundred thousand members. Volunteer service is as it was, our  
14 spiritual program's lifeblood. We give what we can of our talents and  
15 skills. We give what we can of our time; many N.A. members spend  
16 three or four hours a day and sometimes longer, nearly every day of the  
17 week, in service to the Fellowship.

18 N.A.'s first office manager worked out of the back room of his  
19 house, and did much of the routine office work--typing, filing and so on--  
20 himself. He also relied on volunteers who couldn't always be counted on  
21 when our Fellowship was so young; sometimes they showed up,  
22 sometimes they didn't. The office manager spent as much time as he  
23 could on the phone with inquiring addicts all over the country, and it  
24 became more and more difficult to run things from his home. So  
25 eventually, our Fellowship opened a little storefront office in Sun Valley,  
26 California and hired our first part-time worker.

27 As our Fellowship has grown, so have our offices. As our offices  
28 provide more services, more addicts join our Fellowship. This requires  
29 our offices to expand further, and so we keep increasing in size. Our first

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1 full-time office manager was hired in 1983, and our delivery of services  
2 to the membership became more stable and efficient than before. A  
3 steady stream of literature now goes out to all who request it. Hundreds  
4 of starter kits have been provided to addicts all over the world; as a  
5 result, many new groups have started. Today we have a full-time office  
6 staff available to handle inquiries and otherwise do the work that the  
7 Fellowship requires.

8         Volunteers can do some of this work but not all of it. To provide  
9 efficient and effective services to our ever-growing Fellowship we've had  
10 to supplement volunteer work with skilled help not always available  
11 among the membership. There are many examples of this. Areas and  
12 regions sometimes need to hire attorneys to help them with "not-for-  
13 profit" applications and other legal matters. The demand for literature  
14 distribution is always high and can't always be met by volunteers. The  
15 countless hours needed to respond to inquiries by phone or mail can't  
16 always be given by members who have work and family obligations, as  
17 well as obligations to the Fellowship.

18         Consequently, we've established service centers--N.A. offices--to  
19 meet the needs of our ever-growing membership. Set up at area,  
20 regional and world levels, they can't always rely solely on volunteer work  
21 for all the typing, printing, bookkeeping and other tasks necessary on a  
22 routine basis. Though volunteers are available, they don't constantly  
23 have the time or the exact skills required. It's in recognition of this fact  
24 that the Eighth Tradition enables us to employ special workers to keep  
25 our service centers staffed and operating.

26         When we first heard that N.A. employs special workers, people  
27 who get paid for their work, some of us were taken aback. When we  
28 learned that some of these special workers were also N.A. members, we  
29 were even more surprised. Some of us reacted with resentment,

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1 demanding to know why these N.A. members get paid for doing some of  
2 the same kinds of work other members do as service. It took us awhile  
3 to realize that if a service center needs to fill a full-time typist job, for  
4 instance, it can't very well expect a skilled typist who's also in N.A. to  
5 put in an eight-hour stint for nothing. That typist needs to earn a living  
6 like everybody else. After we put our resentment aside we could also see  
7 that sometimes it was desirable to hire skilled office workers who were  
8 also N.A. members, depending on the circumstances. They would bring  
9 a special understanding to their work, and therefore be better able to  
10 meet addicts' needs.

11 Special workers' salaries are comparable to those paid by non-  
12 profit organizations generally, but they have no special privileges.  
13 They're expected to do their jobs as any other employees would be. If  
14 volunteers don't show up for service because they're feeling down or have  
15 pressing personal matters to attend to, the service center has to accept  
16 it. The work may get delayed, but volunteers can't be fired. Special  
17 workers can be fired as can any other paid employees, regardless of  
18 whether or not they're also N.A. members.

19 The Eighth Tradition requires us to be very clear about the  
20 differences between special workers and trusted servants. Special  
21 workers who aren't addicts can't be members of N.A. Special workers  
22 are hired by our service centers and, while generally responsible to the  
23 membership, are directly responsible to the area or other employer.  
24 Trusted servants, on the other hand, are directly responsible to the  
25 membership. Special workers are hired for the skills they possess--skills  
26 then needed by their N.A. employers. Trusted servants are selected on  
27 the basis of their experience, strength and hope for recovery--and on the  
28 depth of their understanding of the Twelve Steps and Traditions. While

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1 special workers get paid for their services, trusted servants consider it a  
2 privilege to "give."

3 Occasionally special workers who are also N.A. members become  
4 confused about their roles. They provide help and information to addicts  
5 throughout their workday. At times they may even take a few minutes  
6 off, in a conversation with a desperate addict, to carry the message of  
7 recovery. So they may come to see themselves less as special workers  
8 and more as trusted servants. This is inappropriate. Trusted servants  
9 are elected by group conscience; they can be voted out of office by group  
10 conscience. Their function is to make policy decisions that will further  
11 the Fellowship's goals. Special workers are hard working, conscientious  
12 employees who also further the Fellowship's goals, but on a different  
13 level and in a more limited way. It's important to keep the distinction  
14 between special workers and trusted servants always in mind.

15 The Eighth Tradition enables us to have the best of both worlds.  
16 As N.A. members we're always "amateurs" in the best sense of the  
17 word--non-professionals who nevertheless have much expertise and who  
18 make the miracle of recovery freely available to all addicts who seek it.  
19 As a Fellowship that's continually expanding we have the right to hire  
20 the kinds of support services we need. Having both volunteers and  
21 special workers enables us to meet the needs of members and addicts still  
22 seeking recovery as effectively and efficiently as possible.

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**General Input**

26

27 This tradition refers mainly to our Twelfth Step, carrying the N.A.  
28 message of hope to other addicts, and this is the task which must be kept

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1 non-professional. A member does Twelfth Step work for personal and  
2 spiritual growth, not for money.

3 Neither do our members attend meetings in a professional  
4 capacity, even though they may be researchers or counselors in the  
5 addiction field. Our past experience and special understanding of the  
6 disease of addiction may especially suit some of us for work as  
7 counselors, etc., but we must not confuse our jobs with the program.

8 Within N.A. we are all equals, co-addicts with the same needs and  
9 responsibilities. Designating certain members as professionals would  
10 destroy our unity and possibly set up a dangerous hierarchy.

11 In our "White Book," a service center is defined as "a place where  
12 N.A. services are offered on a continuing basis." Our World Service  
13 Office in California is a good example.

14 A clubhouse should not be confused with a service office. Clubs  
15 are separate facilities, operated on the principle of cooperation, not  
16 affiliation.

17 Our service centers, however, must hire individuals to run them.  
18 Accountants, clerks, typists, janitors, etc., are needed for any office to  
19 run efficiently, and N.A. is no exception.

20 These "special workers", as Tradition Eight calls them, are not  
21 paid for their Twelfth Step work, even though in the course of their jobs,  
22 they may answer inquiries and questions or help someone come into the  
23 program or a treatment facility. They may be professional secretaries,  
24 editors or accountants for Narcotics Anonymous centers, and they are  
25 not professional Twelfth Step workers or professional members of N.A.

26 All of these employees work within the bounds of our Twelve  
27 Traditions and answer to a service committee which ensures that they  
28 are "directly responsible to those they serve".

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2           Earlier on, some of our areas and regions found it necessary to  
3 hire attorneys or advisors to aid us with application for "not-for-profit"  
4 status. They found this status to be unavoidable in acquiring checking  
5 accounts, mailing permits and post office boxes.

6           As we progressed and expanded we found it necessary to employ  
7 telephone answering services that would free our available members to  
8 do the actual Twelfth Step work and provide the twenty-four hour  
9 services necessary to be productive in that capacity. ("For the  
10 therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel".)  
11 (How it works.)

12           With the exciting expansion of our Fellowship and the advent of  
13 service offices around the world, it is becoming necessary to employ more  
14 special workers. An increase in areas and regions indicates the necessity  
15 for more central offices.

16           These offices can play a vital role in our work by handling calls  
17 from people interested in P.I. services, receiving mail and mailing out  
18 literature to addicts and people who come into contact with addicts, and  
19 providing a center and work space for our other activities. Special  
20 workers can handle most of our day to day work load. They can provide  
21 and reproduce materials that carry our message to addicts throughout  
22 the world. "The difference between professionals and special workers  
23 should be defined with clarity. Professionals work in specific professions  
24 which do not direct services of N.A. but are for personal gain.  
25 Professionals do not follow N.A. Traditions. Our special workers, on the  
26 other hand, work within N.A. Traditions, and are directly responsible  
27 always to those they serve, to the Fellowship" (Basic Text, p. 67).

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1           "Many other organizations wish to ride on the N.A. name. To  
2 allow them to do so would be an implied endorsement..." (Basic Text, p.  
3 64). "A clubhouse or halfway house, or similar facility, is not an N.A.  
4 service center and is not affiliated with N.A. An N.A. service center is,  
5 very simply, a place where N.A. services can be offered on a continuing  
6 basis" (p. 67). They exist solely to help us carry out our services in aid  
7 of our groups. Our continuing existence is based on a simple spiritual  
8 maxim. We have to give it away to keep it.

9           "We are simply addicts of equal status freely helping one another"  
10 (p. 68). Organizations have been known to offer us travel expenses,  
11 and/or stipends to speak to them about N.A. We can be offered money  
12 by a cooperating organization to help us in our work. "Our policy  
13 concerning money is clearly stated. We decline any outside  
14 contributions. Our Fellowship is fully self supporting. We accept no  
15 funding, endowments, loans and/or gifts. Everything has its price,  
16 regardless of intent" (p. 67). The services N.A. offers outside of N.A. are  
17 at no cost and free from implications. In the past we have been living  
18 examples of the price for being spiritually unfulfilled.

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22           One special worker was hired part-time to run the regional service  
23 center. She slowly found herself putting in more and more hours. At  
24 the beginning she was able to keep the office running smoothly,  
25 providing the Fellowship with a valuable service. With the additional  
26 hours, slowly she found her attitude changing. She felt her ego and  
27 pride telling her that if she wasn't there the phones wouldn't be

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1 answered, the letters mailed, etc. She no longer looked forward to the  
2 calls or visits, they had become intrusions on her "domain."

3 She knew that something just wasn't right, she felt disconnected.  
4 After discussing the Eighth Tradition with her sponsor, writing, and  
5 praying, she redefined her purpose there. She found that her serenity  
6 was restored. She cut back to her original part-time commitment and  
7 the office ran even better than before!

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**Input on Special Workers**

**Essay #1**

16 How are special workers different from trusted servants within the  
17 N.A. service structure? Are the roles of trusted servant and special  
18 worker by their nature mutually exclusive? That is, can the same  
19 person function in both roles at the same time, or is there necessarily a  
20 role conflict there. These are the questions which we have been asked to  
21 address, and which this essay seeks to explore.

22 The obvious difference between a special worker and a trusted  
23 servant is that the former is employed by a service unit of the Fellowship  
24 and the latter is a volunteer member of one of those service units. As  
25 such, the trusted servant is in a leadership role, as defined by our Second  
26 Tradition, and a special worker is hired to bring some special skill or  
27 training to bear to carry out the will of a service board of committee.

28 In exploring whether the roles are mutually exclusive, four areas  
29 of possible conflict of interest come to mind. First, are the service  
30 position and the job both involved in the same category of service? For  
31 example, is the employee working on the job and as a service position in  
32 the same field of work: H&I for example. Second, at what level of  
33 service--i.e. group, area, region or world--does the special worker wish to

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1 hold a position? Third, at what level is the special worker employed by  
2 the service center--i.e. management, clerical, shipping? Finally, is the  
3 service position one of the "group conscience representative" positions,  
4 such as GSR, ASR or RSR?

5 It seems evident that management level staff should never take a  
6 position within the area of service that they work. That would constitute  
7 far too much influence in one local area's activities in that category of  
8 service, and therefore compromise the employee's commitment to serve  
9 in an even-handed way. I will have more to say about undue influence  
10 by virtue of the position a bit later. For purposes of this point, it seems  
11 clear to me that employees with such conflicts should be required to  
12 relinquish any service positions within their particular category of  
13 service, and to refrain from accepting any during their employment.

14 As to the second point, the level of the service position, it seems to  
15 be self-evident that none should hold any service positions at the world  
16 level. For those already functioning as parts of one of the three branches  
17 of World Service, to cross over to another would not seem to be sound.  
18 We must retain our objectivity as we serve those service boards and  
19 committees. Also, there is a clear distinction between the trusted  
20 servant's role as a leader ("our leaders are but trusted servants") and the  
21 special worker's leg-work in implementing the trusted servants  
22 directives. We should be restricted by our personnel policy from holding  
23 any world level service positions.

24 At levels below the world level, things become less clear. At the  
25 regional level and below (getting progressively less problematic as you  
26 move toward the group level) all four points must be considered together  
27 when looking for a role conflict. Besides the concern about the category  
28 of service discussed in point one above, it is here that the final two points  
29 should be considered.

30 I think it is more potentially troublesome for a management level  
31 staff member to get involved in service than for a support level staff  
32 member. A secretary or warehouse worker, for example, would not  
33 likely have any role conflict as secretary of the area, and perhaps not

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1 even as ASR. The job responsibilities do not differ greatly from any  
2 other similarly employed person who is not a special worker of the  
3 Fellowship. A management employee, on the other hand, does work  
4 directly with philosophical and developmental issues of the Fellowship,  
5 and therefore may experience a role conflict when addressing those same  
6 issues in a local service environment.

7 For a management level staff member, it seems to me to be  
8 unwise to serve in a service representative role. He would then be a link  
9 in the conduit of the same Fellowshipwide group conscience that he must  
10 objectively follow on the job. In addition, such an employee would likely  
11 exert undue influence in discussions up for a vote. While this may not be  
12 all bad--after all the special worker has access to a lot more good  
13 information than perhaps anyone else in the Fellowship--it is not all good  
14 either, because he may wittingly or unwittingly use that information to  
15 sway the vote in favor of his philosophical position. Such a well-  
16 informed, potentially influential person would do better to function in an  
17 objective consulting capacity when asked, and steer clear of direct  
18 involvement in the grass-roots decision-making process..

19 It seems to me that any special worker should feel free to hold  
20 service positions at the group level and at the area level when the above  
21 noted conflicts of interest are not present. Such service is an integral  
22 part of many members spiritual program of recovery, and no element of  
23 the Fellowship should be given the authority to restrict their rights as  
24 members of N.A. to express their recovery in that way. Only when a  
25 direct role conflict can be established should any such restrictions apply.  
26 In those cases the special worker should accept the limitations as "part  
27 of the territory," willingly surrendering certain privileges for the overall  
28 best interests of the Fellowship.

29 In summary, there are only two cases in which I feel the personnel  
30 policy should restrict employees from engaging in service, but in those  
31 two cases I feel it is appropriate for the rule to be hard and fast. These  
32 two are: 1) No WSO employee should hold a world service position; and

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1 2) No WSO employee should hold a position in a committee that  
2 corresponds to that employee's WSO department.

3 Management level employees should be asked to be particularly  
4 conscientious and avoid exerting undue influence by virtue of their jobs.  
5 They should also avoid group conscience representative positions or high  
6 profile positions for that reason. Support level staff members should not  
7 be restricted from participation in the local service structure unless they,  
8 in consultation with their sponsors, perceive a conflict of interest.

9 Special workers are first and foremost recovering addicts, and  
10 should be allowed to fully participate in N.A. as such, unless an  
11 identifiable conflict of interest would make such participation unwise.

12  
13  
14 **Essay #2**  
15

16 Regardless of the specific position, a special worker's job involves a  
17 mixture of job skills, work ethics, knowledge of the N.A. Fellowship  
18 (addicts and non-addicts), experience in service and recovery (addicts),  
19 and common sense.

20 Ideally, a job description will serve to guide the special worker in  
21 making decisions about crossover between recovery, service, and job.  
22 When a job description is not specific, it falls upon the individual to use  
23 all resources available in examining these situations.

24 Special workers do work for the Fellowship, however they do not  
25 work for any one N.A. member, group, or service committee. Specific  
26 assignments may be given to provide services to certain members,  
27 groups, or committees. In these situations, the worker should devote  
28 his/her skills, knowledge, and experience to the job and not to the  
29 person(s).

30 Special workers who are also N.A. members do not become non-  
31 members during working hours or after hours. There is, however, a  
32 definite need to understand and reflect job performance and job duties as  
33 having definite priority over personal opinion and personal involvement.

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1 An addict special worker will reflect his/her experience and recovery in  
2 the performance of duties, but must also be able to perform these duties  
3 without allowing personal issues to BECOME the same as job duties.  
4 An N.A. member may never be asked to give up or set aside the Twelve  
5 Steps of N.A. in the work setting as a special worker, just as a non-  
6 addict special worker must never be asked to set aside their personal  
7 values. If these situations result in inadequate performance or  
8 conflicting ideas about job duties, then it becomes clear that  
9 administrative evaluation is necessary (as opposed to program or  
10 recovery evaluation).

11 All special worker positions (management, clerical, addict, non-  
12 addict, area, regional, world service office, etc.) result from Fellowship  
13 and Group Conscience action in one way or another. Monitoring,  
14 managing, and evaluation of these positions likewise follow the same  
15 process. It is important to outline this and follow this process in order to  
16 avoid the non-spiritual and self-defeating situations in which special  
17 workers serve any individual(s). Special workers work for the Fellowship  
18 under the guidance and management of their supervisor(s). These  
19 supervisor(s) report to the committee or board who is responsible for  
20 administering the service center. This committee or board is accountable  
21 to the Fellowship who elected them. It is this channel of communication  
22 and responsibility which provides the integrity and safeguards called for  
23 in Traditions 8 and 9.

24 The "trust" referred to in Tradition 2 means that the N.A.  
25 members who elect trusted servants trust the people to utilize our  
26 principles and trust the process for accountability. It does not imply that  
27 if trusted servants make mistakes, they have violated this trust. The  
28 trust is that they will use the principles of N.A. in motivation and  
29 learning from honest mistakes or mis-judgements. If people are elected  
30 or hired who demonstrate repeatedly that they are not willing or capable  
31 of this approach, the Fellowship has grounds for removal.

32 Trusted servants, likewise, do not serve special workers. The  
33 relationship between trusted servants and special workers is one of true

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1 "cooperation" (working jointly with common purpose and goal) as  
2 opposed to subservience of any kind. The only time this relationship  
3 takes on different characteristics is when the committee or board  
4 hires/fires/manages the special workers. Even this aspect of the  
5 relationship is pervaded by our principles (Traditions 2, 8 & 9). In other  
6 words, the employer/employee relationship is not subject to personalities  
7 or personal issues because of the channel of responsibility/accountability  
8 outlined above.

9 As an N.A. member and a special worker, the avenue is always  
10 open to give personal input to groups or service committees. If we trust  
11 the program and structure, we can do this and have faith that the input  
12 will be processed according to Fellowship needs and desires. This  
13 eliminates the need to attempt consciously or unconsciously to add  
14 further influence. The involvement of a special worker in other service  
15 aspects of the N.A. Fellowship can be clearly defined and guided by  
16 personnel policies. Where not possible, the individual must rely on their  
17 Higher Power, the 12 Steps, and other workers and members to find  
18 guidance.

19 If a committee or group chooses to elect a person to a position, it is  
20 incumbent upon the person and on those who elect him/her to evaluate  
21 the person with respect to qualifications and also to the possible  
22 ramifications of his/her special worker position. It then becomes the  
23 individual's responsibility to decide whether to accept or not, and also to  
24 determine how best to achieve their own need and desire to be of service.  
25 Circumstances change over time and it is unrealistic to write specifics  
26 about what methods or positions in service do or do not conflict with  
27 common welfare and unity.

28 The fact that special workers are paid money for their time and  
29 skills does not alter any of the above. It can be a source of personal  
30 issues which complicate the understanding of the relationships.

31 Special workers must necessarily find ways to set realistic limits in  
32 terms of hours worked and devotion to job, just as trusted servants must  
33 also. There is such a thing as work or service "beyond the call of

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1 realisms," and it can render special workers and trusted servants  
2 ineffective, non-productive, and inefficient in their health, job, recovery,  
3 service, and personal life. This can have profound negative effects on the  
4 Fellowship and to the members. It is this concept which demands that  
5 members, trusted servants, and special workers devote their best efforts  
6 to understanding, nurturing, and developing these relationships within  
7 our Fellowship.

8  
9  
10 **Essay #3**  
11

12 Speaking solely from my own personal experience, I must view  
13 this situation as one having multi-facted ramifications.

14 In the involvement of my recovery I had the opportunity to serve  
15 my Fellowship on many levels as a "trusted servant" prior to my  
16 employment, as a special worker.

17 In the very beginning of my tenure at the office I continued my  
18 service involvement at the regional level on two separate committees.

19 On one committee, because of its low profile, there was little or no  
20 problem with my involvement other than personal "burnout"...I had  
21 been on said committee for over four years.

22 The other committee posed a distinctly different problem because  
23 of its "high profile." On this committee, I was frequently looked at as  
24 "the" source, period. No matter how anonymous or member oriented a  
25 posture I took, I was never accepted in such a light. Often my comments  
26 were twisted and distorted, and in every case it became the "office's  
27 view," not my personal opinion based on my own experience in service  
28 and recovery.

29 I would like to say, yes, restrict special workers from participation  
30 in service, but deep in my heart I know it would be sounding a death toll  
31 to many of us in our recovery. What has provided the springboard of  
32 growth for many addicts in their personal growth in recovery would be  
33 shut off, and many of us would no doubt wither and die on the vine.



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1 service committee, and in a very limited way at a regional level. Neither  
2 of these was comfortable at the time.

3 Many people perceived that I would be able to bring more and  
4 better information to the service committee meetings. That is, in part,  
5 true. However, the information provided by anyone is always slanted by  
6 personal bias and perception and, in the same way, is always perceived  
7 by others based on their personal bias and perception. My case, I'm  
8 sure, is no different. Yet, my comments are taken by many as being  
9 more accurate than other member's opinions or experience, simply  
10 because of the fact that I have direct contact with a wider element of the  
11 Fellowship. That wouldn't make me as uncomfortable, I don't think, if I  
12 was a world level trusted servant, representing N.A. group conscience,  
13 but that's not the case.

14 Sitting at area service committee meetings, even in the back row,  
15 trying to be inconspicuous, has led to requests for my opinions and input  
16 on various topics and/or decisions. Of course, some of that is based on  
17 the fact that I have been involved in service and have some years clean.  
18 However, the weight given my comments, sometimes seems to go beyond  
19 that would be given based only on clean time and service experience.  
20 Even at a group level, I have encountered similar situations. The most  
21 recent example is that of being asked to participate in an adhoc meeting  
22 of one of my regular meetings, to discuss approval literature. I decided  
23 I'd like to share my feelings and said okay. The immediate response was  
24 something like, "Oh, great. We know that you have all the information  
25 about what's been going on with It Works." I decided to attend the  
26 adhoc meetings anyway, but tried to confine my remarks specifically to  
27 personal thoughts about the literature involved. There were others  
28 involved in that adhoc committee who serve at a world level (not as  
29 special workers) and they did bring up happenings around the world  
30 regarding this literature. Although, I would not have initiated those  
31 discussions personally, they did not seem to cause any problems once  
32 they were begun.



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1 workers could prevent these possible negative outcomes. On the other  
2 hand, it could be argued that special workers might make excellent  
3 trusted servants and may gain in their personal recoveries through  
4 service activity. It is my feeling that the first concern outweighs the  
5 second.

6 I feel it should be boiled down to a policy something like what  
7 follows:  
8

9 Management level office staff would be recommended to take part  
10 only in group level service, excluding GSR. Participation in H&I panels  
11 is okay, but in the service committee it is not. Working on a convention  
12 committee is okay. If requested, as a member, to speak about personal  
13 recovery at conventions or meetings, these workers may participate.  
14

15 Secretaries, clerical staff, shipping staff, and accounting personnel  
16 may participate in group or area level service, but not be ASR.  
17

18 No special worker should participate at regional or world levels of  
19 service. In addition, the following guideline should be considered. We all  
20 know that many members of Narcotics Anonymous, at times, have a  
21 high profile in service even though they may not have a position. Part of  
22 the reason for these policies for special workers is to prevent a special  
23 worker from assuming a high profile. In addition to suggesting the  
24 above guidelines for special workers participation in specific service  
25 activities, it is suggested that special workers remain low key in the  
26 service structure of Narcotics Anonymous. Any special worker may  
27 submit input to the service structure on matters that N.A. is dealing  
28 with. However, due to the inevitable development that although they  
29 mean to be speaking as just another member, they would still be seen as  
30 a special worker, these guidelines are proposed.

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**Essay #6**

The following is my input for consideration on the Special Worker issue:

There is no defined relationship for Special Workers to a local service body. It is often stated that we relinquish our rights to serve when we accept a position as a Special Worker. I do not believe that this should be the case. I don't believe that any members rights to serve can be relinquished simply by deciding to work for the Fellowship.

I believe that a Special Worker's service should come into question when and only when there is an obvious conflict with that members position. A member should never be dictated to about his/her service commitments. These are personal decisions that should not be interfered with. Our positions as Special Workers are not our recovery. Service commitments do play a vital role in our personal recovery. This could never be dictated or controlled. If any type of documentation is going to be done on this issue then it should center on the obvious conflicts of personal service as it relates to the operation of the office. There should be no definitive statement forbidding certain types of service, but rather, some suggestions about the levels of service that we get involved with and their relationships to the function of the office.

**Essay #7**

The employment of special workers is a relatively new application of the Eight Tradition and there still exists, within the worldwide Fellowship, some differences of opinion about special workers and their roles in Narcotics Anonymous. Many members still believe that being paid for service related work somehow makes it unspiritual or not really service. But, then it's also said that if you're a special worker you shouldn't hold a trusted servant position, because there's a conflict of interest.

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1           Since our employment at the WSO, each of us has come to a  
2 personal decision to not be involved in general service. These decisions  
3 were based on two major concerns.  
4

- 5           1. That members in our area and region tend to look to us as the  
6 "keepers of all knowledge" and put far too much weight on our  
7 opinions; OR they exhibit fear and jealousy and feel that the  
8 WSO is trying to take over N.A. by having their employees  
9 hold positions in the service structure. In either case, it didn't  
10 do us or the Fellowship any good.  
11
- 12           2. That, as special workers, we already hold a service position,  
13 we are part of the service structure of N.A. True, we are  
14 employed at a particular job, but it is more than just a job.  
15 We each have a personal investment in our work here at the  
16 WSO that is different from that experienced at any other job,  
17 because we too are members of N.A. A part of our job is being  
18 of service to N.A. as a whole, and it may actually be more  
19 than we would normally provide in an elected position.  
20

21           We came to a general agreement that it is inappropriate, and  
22 unnecessary, to hold more than one general service position within  
23 Narcotics Anonymous. Therefore, since we felt that our jobs here as  
24 special workers are a service position, we do not feel it desirable to hold  
25 another position in general service.

26           This, however, applies only to general service, positions beyond the  
27 group level, including GSR. There are plenty of other ways in which we  
28 can be of service on a personal level. Unanimity was strong on this  
29 topic, each of us felt the need to provide personal service.

30           Until hearing from the entire staff, we could not reach unanimous  
31 agreement regarding whether or not the job position at WSO should  
32 determine or limit an employee's options in accepting positions in the  
33 service structure. For example, should the recommendation to stay out  
34 of other service positions apply only to coordinators and other staff  
35 members who have direct contact with conference committees? Or, does  
36 any job position at the WSO result in being looked at differently by other  
37 members? Also, can every job position at WSO be said to be a service  
38 position within the Fellowship and, if so, should every employee be asked  
39 not to hold another service position? And, since this concept is still

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1 somewhat new within the Fellowship and just now finding its way into  
2 our literature and service manuals, do we have the right to mandate  
3 that members hold only one position?

4 In general, we agreed that no special worker should hold another  
5 position within N.A. general services. This is a real new concept to most  
6 of us. Some of us felt fear and discomfort, even anger at first, simply  
7 because it's new and different. We all feel that being of service is an  
8 important part of our recovery, it's near and dear to our hearts. Also, as  
9 addicts, we react strongly at the suggestion that we might be prevented  
10 from doing something we want to do. We spent a couple of hours talking  
11 before we came to a conclusion that was generally acceptable to us all.  
12 We explored spiritual principles and how we apply them in every area of  
13 our lives. We looked at our motives and shared our experiences with  
14 each other. This was a good process because we all came away with a  
15 better understanding.

16 Although non-addict special workers are not faced with this  
17 problem, the contribution they make to the N.A. Fellowship is no less.  
18 The viewpoints of all special workers are important. After you have  
19 read this, if you would write your own brief essay, sharing your thoughts  
20 and feelings, then we can have a discussion among all the staff members.

21

22 "Thoughts on the N.A. Literature Process"

23

24 The following letter contains the conscience of the C&P Regional  
25 Literature Committee on the topics of the use of a professional writer in  
26 our literature process and some thoughts on the current status of the  
27 World Literature Committee. This was written out of concern that  
28 maybe we could do better in the future. Please consider some of our  
29 suggestions and discuss them and send us your thoughts.

30 The term "professional writer" as a title is a violation of our  
31 Eighth Tradition. If this person were a "special writer," and employed

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1 just like a special worker, this would conform with our traditions. The  
2 concept of the other non-NA affiliated persons. In some way, a liberal  
3 interpretation of the Eighth Tradition has been used so that we could  
4 employ the services of a "professional writer".

5 The Eighth Tradition is vital to the stability of N.A. as a whole.  
6 In order to understand this tradition we need to define "non-professional  
7 service centers" and "special workers." With an understanding of these  
8 terms, this important tradition is self-explanatory.

9 In this tradition we say we have no professionals. By this, we  
10 mean we have no staff psychiatrists, doctors, lawyers, counselors, etc.  
11 Our Program works by one addict helping another. By employing  
12 professionals in N.A., we would destroy our unity. We are simply  
13 addicts of equal status freely helping one another.

14 We recognize and admire the professionals. Many of our members  
15 are professionals in their own right. It is just that there is no room for  
16 professionalism in N.A.

17 A service center is defined as a place where N.A. service  
18 committees operate. The World Service Office or local regional and area  
19 offices are examples of service centers. A clubhouse or halfway house, or  
20 similar facility, is not an N.A. service center and is not affiliated with  
21 N.A. A service center is, very simply, a place where N.A. services are  
22 offered on a continuing basis.

23 "Service centers may employ special workers." This statement  
24 means that service centers may employ workers for such skills such as  
25 phone answering, clerical work, or printing. Such employees are directly  
26 responsible to a service committee. As N.A. grows, the demand for these  
27 workers will grow. Special workers are necessary to ensure efficiency in  
28 an ever-expanding Fellowship.

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1           The difference between professional and special workers should be  
2 defined for clarity. Professionals work in specific professions which do  
3 not direct services of N.A., but are for personal gain. Professionals do  
4 not follow N.A. Traditions. Our special workers, on the other hand,  
5 work within our Traditions and are directly responsible always to those  
6 they serve, to the Fellowship.

7           In regards to our Eighth Tradition, we do not single out our  
8 members as "professional"; by not placing professional status on any  
9 member, we insure that we remain "forever non-professional".

10           True group conscience cannot be expressed by any one individual,  
11 contracted outside the Fellowship. Whenever possible we should employ  
12 the services of an N.A. member. We feel that someone who is not an  
13 addict (a professional outside the Fellowship), cannot possibly understand  
14 what we go through. They can sympathize with our situation, but  
15 cannot empathize, as we can with each other.

16           If we are to use a "Professional Writer" in Narcotics Anonymous,  
17 this committee feels that it has a workable solution. This person could  
18 sit in on the committee meetings and advise on punctuation, continuity,  
19 flow, and grammar, that would better express what it is we want to say.  
20 The writer should be utilized more as a consultant and humble  
21 participant - without a title such as Advisor (this might imply status).  
22 Some questions remain unanswered if this were to be implemented:

- 23           1) Do we want this person at all literature committee functions, or  
24                 just on major works (such as IT WORKS: HOW & WHY);  
25           2) Are we hiring a service, or the person performing the service;  
26           3) Can this idea be used in other committees?

27           This committee has formed some answers regarding the work, IT  
28 WORKS: HOW & WHY - THE 12 STEPS. Instead of any of the three  
29 options presented in the 1987 WSC Agenda, we would like to return to

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1 the blue book review and input form and have no time constraints (other  
2 than the normal nine months review and input period followed by a one  
3 year approval period) be placed on when to have the book ready for  
4 approval. Seeing the flaws in the white copy, we decided to look at the  
5 reasons why and how it happened. We have a question as to exactly  
6 how this writer was chosen, and who instructed them on what and how  
7 to write. The idea that an individual (professional or not) can pull  
8 together the divine conscience of N.A. is debatable. The white copy  
9 clearly expresses a selectiveness of thought in which the group conscience  
10 of N.A. is omitted; therefore, the white copy is terminally flawed and no  
11 amount of patchwork will rescue its intent. The premise of using a  
12 professional writer to create unbiased, God-conscious literature of N.A. is  
13 also flawed. It is felt that through this process, the opinions of an  
14 individual have crept into our literature.

15 Through the discussion, it was realized that changes in the WLC could be  
16 made to:

- 17 1) Make it a more productive committee; and
- 18 2) Make sure that this situation does not happen again.

19 It is felt by some of the members that literature submitted to the  
20 WLC from members and member regions is "disappearing in the  
21 shuffle," while we are seeing literature (for review and input and  
22 approval) that has not come from the Fellowship.

23 We discussed the way the WLC performed its functions in the  
24 past. Two levels of input were used to write the BASIC TEXT: one was  
25 from members attending the workshops and submitting written and oral  
26 input - group conscience unanimously approving the writings of the  
27 many individuals; another way was Fellowship-wide input on what had  
28 been written. This was done in open committee meetings. Over time,

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1 the WLC required that for members to be considered Registered Active  
2 Members (RAMs), they must meet the following requirements:

- 3 1) Three to five years clean;
- 4 2) Previous World Literature experience;
- 5 3) Doing enough work to be considered "active."

6 As the process evolved, fewer people and a narrower committee  
7 was reviewing input and literature. Many previous members were not  
8 encouraged to continue supporting the committee. Many of the newer  
9 committee members have come to believe that there was room for an  
10 outside professional to write N.A. literature. We feel that the process  
11 could be opened up to include more people and better serve the  
12 Fellowship.

13 The process of "farming out" literature to member regions has  
14 become an under-utilized tool of the WLC. If the WLC receives a piece  
15 of literature (such as "UNITY" or "IN LOVING SERVICE") or an idea  
16 (a meditation book), from members or regions, it should then give a  
17 participating region (other than the one that submitted the material) a  
18 chance to have a workshop on it. Then, when work is completed, send it  
19 out for Fellowship review and input, etc. Our committee has asked the  
20 WLC on a few occasions for work, but has never been guided as to what  
21 to do. We came away from this workshop more informed and with a  
22 conscience as to how to use a professional writer in N.A., but we were  
23 concerned about the future.

24 We feel that all non-elected N.A. positions should, if possible, be  
25 filled with addicts so that we keep this "all in the family." This may  
26 help eliminate some future controversy.

27 \*\*\*\*\*

28 As we learn in the Seventh Tradition, N.A. does not hire expert is  
29 a loving God expressed through our group conscience and the twenty-four

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1 spiritual principles (Steps & Traditions). We have found through hard  
2 learned experience that Twelve Step work is better carried out as an  
3 avocation instead of a vocation. Some of our members happen to work in  
4 the treatment of addiction field, but this has nothing to do with their  
5 membership in our Fellowship. If asked, most would say that their job  
6 could hardly be described as Twelve Step work. By not having  
7 "professional N.A. members" the spiritual principle of anonymity is  
8 maintained. In other works, we all belong here on an equal level.

9 The Eighth Tradition does tell us that we may employ special  
10 workers. Most often this refers to people working for WSO or other  
11 regional offices. There are other occasions when we employ the services  
12 of others: Answering services for our helplines; lawyers to help with  
13 contracts, incorporation, etc. (for conventions and service committees);  
14 DJ's or bands to provide music at functions; and most recently, WSO  
15 hired a professional writer to write the book "It Works: How and Why."

16 When we utilize the services of special workers we have a right to  
17 expect high quality service because we are paying for it. By the same  
18 token, we have to remember our responsibility, as employers, and not be  
19 too unreasonable either. We should not expect large discounts or extra  
20 services simply because we are a "worthy cause." This would not be in  
21 keeping with the spiritual principle of our Seventh Tradition.

22 In our personal recovery, the Eighth Tradition teaches us the  
23 spiritual principle of giving of ourselves without expecting something in  
24 return. The humility we gain from working the steps not only makes  
25 this possible, but allows us an avenue to fulfill our Eleventh and Twelfth  
26 Steps.

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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."*

**Outline**

- I. Define "NA as such".
  - (are NA, NA as such and NA as a whole all different?)
  - A. Define organization (different forms of).
    - 1. Types appropriate and not appropriate to NA.
  - B. Need not be organized.
  - C. Need for a degree of organization (include concept: "The group conscience of the 2nd Tradition is implemented through the 9th Tradition).
    - 1. Growth.
    - 2. Communication.
    - 3. Consistency.
    - 4. Historical Basis.
    - 5. Formats.
    - 6. Starting/stopping meetings on time.
  - D. How is disorganization (anarchy) a threat?
  - E. Dangers of too much organization.
    - 1. for the member.
    - 2. for the group.
    - 3. for the service structure.
    - 4. for NA as a whole.
  - F. Balance of organization.

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- 1    **III. Service Boards and Committees.**  
2        **A. Need (key word is service).**  
3        **B. What are they (differentiation).**  
4            1. General.  
5            2. Specific (service structure).  
6            3. Makeup of each.  
7        **C. Purpose.**  
8        **D. How and why we create them.**  
9        **E. How do we dissolve them?**  
10   **IV. How do our service boards and committees relate to "NA as such"?**  
11        **A. Part of, separate from, or both or neither?**  
12        **B. Direct responsibility.**  
13            1. What is direct(or indirect) responsibility?  
14            2. What is responsibility?  
15            3. Direct responsibility vs. autonomy.  
16            4. Trust (reciprocal).  
17   **V. Application of Tradition 9 to members, groups and N.A. as a**  
18        **whole.**  
19   **VI. Conclusion and lead in to Tradition 10.**  
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1 committees simply make suggestions and act in ways which are directly  
2 responsible to aid in carrying the message to the addict who still suffers.

3       The spiritual strength of Narcotics Anonymous is expressed in our  
4 groups. Ultimate authority over any aspect of our service structure is  
5 always maintained by the group conscience. All service boards and  
6 committees would cease to operate without the support and backing of  
7 our groups. It is our groups which provide the trusted servants who  
8 make up the service structure. One simple example shows us that if  
9 groups stopped electing GSR's to area service committees, the regional  
10 and world service structures would begin collapsing. Therefore the  
11 services provided by N.A. at each level are governed by the group  
12 conscience. N.A. is thus immune to outside control or influence, thanks  
13 to the Twelve Traditions which give us such an untraditional  
14 "organization."

15       The Ninth Tradition makes Narcotics Anonymous as a whole  
16 possible. Without the service structure, our groups would have no  
17 connection with each other-no link, no relationship. There would be no  
18 unified "we," just individual groups. Our service boards and committees  
19 are all a part of N.A. There is no "us" and "them" or "we" and "they"--  
20 it is all "us" and "we." The N.A. member is the foundation of all service  
21 in Narcotics Anonymous. We are responsible for creating our service  
22 boards and committees, and our trusted servants are then in turn  
23 directly responsible to our group conscience. Because each group elects a  
24 group service representative to an area service committee, and likewise  
25 each area service committee elects a representative to a regional service  
26 committee, and each regional service committee elects a representative  
27 to our World Service Conference, we have a unified worldwide  
28 Fellowship. This service structure is not "N.A., as such," but it is a part  
29 of N.A. and is the supporting structure of our Fellowship.

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1           If N.A., as such, were organized in a corporate sense with an  
2 authoritative structure, members in charge might see themselves as a  
3 governing body. If, by some chance, we accepted this oligarchy, N.A.  
4 members would lose the freedom to make decisions for ourselves. We  
5 would experience stifled growth and a feeling of uselessness to ourselves  
6 and the community. Our responsibility for our own recovery would be  
7 eliminated because we wouldn't have to make decisions. They would be  
8 made for us. However, by having no governing bodies in N.A., we gain  
9 the freedom to choose and be responsible in our recovery. Each member  
10 is encouraged to take part in the Fellowship and contribute to the  
11 growth and strength of N.A.

12           Any attempt to organize recovering addicts personally or  
13 collectively would most likely prove futile. Imposing such control would  
14 contradict the principles of the program. Individually, we surrender our  
15 illusions of management and control of our lives to the God of our  
16 understanding when we take the Twelve Steps. Meeting together in  
17 groups, we share spiritually in the guidance of our Fellowship as part of  
18 the group conscience.

19           In order to meet together regularly, we form a structure. The  
20 group steering committee, composed of its members and led by trusted  
21 servants, is the primary example of a service board or committee directly  
22 responsible to those it serves. Each of the service boards and committees  
23 is different from the rest, because it serves different needs. Each one  
24 focuses its activities, such as public information, literature distribution or  
25 telephone helplines, on a specialized area of carrying the message of  
26 recovery.

27           Each N.A. group has a structure. Trusted servants of the group  
28 do business for N.A., as such. Members are elected to serve in some  
29 cases and volunteer in others. Those whom we entrust to lead us are

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1 guided by our Ultimate Authority - God as we understand Him - working  
2 through the collective conscience of the group's members. Our trusted  
3 servants do the business required by the group to help N.A. survive and  
4 grow. They pay rent, answer letters, buy and distribute literature and  
5 perform other duties according to the group's desire to provide a suitable  
6 atmosphere of recovery. Sometimes the simplicity of this concept eludes  
7 us.

8 Our traditions are really quite simple and clear. We have on one  
9 hand "N.A., as such,"--the spiritual principles which make recovery  
10 possible, and members who use those principles to recover from  
11 addiction. On the other hand, are N.A. service boards and committees  
12 directly responsible to those they serve. These include the group officers  
13 or steering committee, area service committees, regional service  
14 committee, World Service Conference, World Service Board, World  
15 Service Office, and other committees. We thus have a clear means by  
16 which our principles may remain intact.

17 As a Fellowship, we conduct business to nurture our program and  
18 foster growth. Doing business for N.A. is a real necessity. All of the  
19 business we do as trusted servants is guided by the same principle of  
20 direct responsibility to the group conscience. No matter what the scope  
21 or size of the services offered, the same principle applies. Our World  
22 Service Conference does not differ substantially from the group renting a  
23 meeting place, buying and distributing literature, or communicating  
24 questions to group members. Our world service arms (the World Service  
25 Office, World Service Conference, and World Service Board) implement  
26 the group conscience of the N.A. Fellowship between World Service  
27 Conference meetings, just as the group's trusted servants implement  
28 group conscience between business meetings. Trusted servants act on

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1 the collective decision of the group conscience in carrying out the  
2 business of N.A.

3 Our service boards and committees exist because we create them  
4 to provide services according to our needs. Experience has shown that  
5 we can best serve N.A. when our service boards and committees are  
6 directly responsible to those they serve. Service not directly responsible  
7 to those they serve ultimately fails. They contribute to confusion and  
8 disunity, and seldom achieve their goal. Directly responsible services,  
9 however, nurture growth and unity for Narcotics Anonymous. They help  
10 us carry our message. These services are generally successful and help  
11 N.A. to flourish.

12 We have considered unity as one important reason for creating  
13 service boards and committees. What are some other reasons? Is even  
14 this minimal organization necessary? Could we get along without a  
15 World Service Board or a World Service Conference? What purpose does  
16 an area service committee serve?

17 Most of us have long histories of rebelling against authority. It  
18 thus is no surprise that some members felt that the entire service  
19 structure should be discarded. It took us some time to become aware of  
20 the spiritual significance of the work of our service boards and  
21 committees. We slowly realized how much we owed to those addicts who  
22 came before us, who worked, through various service committees, to  
23 prepare the way for us.

24 If individual groups could meet all the needs of addicts who still  
25 suffer, we would have no need for service boards and committees. The  
26 same applies to our members and groups: if we could have stopped using  
27 alone, then we would have no need for meetings. But we could never do  
28 it alone. We see that there are many services which are beyond the  
29 resources of a single group. This book you now hold in your hands and

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1 the N.A. Basic Text could never have been written by just one addict or  
2 group; they are the result of thousands of hours of effort by countless  
3 recovering members dedicated to carrying to the addict who still suffers.  
4 We see that the organizational structure of N.A. is absolutely crucial if  
5 we are to be effective in reaching out to suffering addicts.

6 We create service boards and committees to help us further our  
7 one primary purpose. Our service structure has done and continues to do  
8 more to advance our growth than anything else. We surely would not  
9 have come so far if not for the willingness and dedication of our trusted  
10 servants to participate in service committee work beyond the equally  
11 vital individual and group levels of service.

12 We, as a Fellowship, may only create service boards or committees  
13 directly responsible to our members. It is our spiritual duty to see that  
14 all service done in the name of N.A., all business conducted for N.A.,  
15 remains directly responsible to the members of N.A. Our very lives  
16 depend on it.

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1986/1987 Unpublished Draft

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21 "N.A. as such" always was and always will be addicts meeting  
22 together to fulfill their primary purpose--carrying the message, weaving  
23 an atmosphere of recovery. It's addicts helping addicts.

24 Service is at the heart of our program of recovery, and the Ninth  
25 Tradition is at the heart of our service structure. Our groups, our  
26 committees, our service boards and centers protect and support "N.A. as  
27 such." They enable it to survive.

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1           N.A. as such never changes. N.A. as such can never be organized.  
2 It can't be organized because spiritual faith and a spiritual way of life  
3 can never be organized. But our service structure is something else. It  
4 can be organized. And it does change all the time to meet our changing  
5 needs, further our primary purpose, protect our anonymity, and promote  
6 our unity.

7           For instance, our groups are welded into a cohesive Fellowship  
8 with shared goals and outlooks. That's a form of organization. Our  
9 steps and traditions are numbered from one to twelve, and are to be  
10 worked in chronological order for the greatest spiritual impact. That's a  
11 form of organization. We meet at certain designated times in certain  
12 designated places as set down in our directories. That, too, is a form of  
13 organization. We make our group decisions by an organized yet spiritual  
14 process--by group conscience.

15           The alternative to such organization would be chaos. We would do  
16 our steps in helter-skelter fashion, losing their impact and their power.  
17 We would never know when to go to meetings or what would transpire  
18 there. Group decisions would be made on the basis of power and  
19 impulse.

20           No individual runs any N.A. group or collection of groups. We  
21 don't have political aims, social aims, any kind of aims beyond our  
22 primary purpose. We don't show up at meetings because we're required  
23 to check in or punch in. We don't involve ourselves in service or carry  
24 the message because anyone says we must. The "must" comes from  
25 within.

26           As groups and individuals we adhere to the Twelve Steps and the  
27 Twelve Traditions because we've learned that this is the only way we'll  
28 survive. As one member put it, "Instead of being organized in a formal,  
29 bureaucratic sense, the tie that binds us together is in the heart, not the

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1 head, not the law, not some club or fist. Just the heart." The part of  
2 N.A. that's organized, our service structure, enhances the love,  
3 compassion and eagerness to give that which comes from the heart.

4 Yet most of us have long histories of rebelling against authority.  
5 This rebellious attitude is one many of us brought into N.A., as well. We  
6 saw how N.A. is made up of different parts, from the local committees to  
7 the World Service Office. We saw what seemed like an exceedingly large  
8 and complicated service structure. And our first impulse was to  
9 dismantle it. Get rid of it, of anything that even hinted of bureaucracy,  
10 with its implications of some members being "above" and others "below,"  
11 was impossible.

12 Many of us felt that way until we began to do committee and  
13 similar kinds of service work ourselves. Even if we didn't get involved in  
14 that kind of work, many of us eventually realized the importance of  
15 maintaining N.A.'s structure. Our service boards and committees--our  
16 service structure--has no power to rule, censor or dictate. Our boards  
17 and committees simply make suggestions and otherwise act in ways that  
18 help carry the message to the addict who still suffers. They also link us  
19 to groups far and near, enabling us to be a unified Fellowship.

20 Without our service structure our groups would have no links with  
21 each other, no connection, no relationship. And while recovery would  
22 still take place on the basis of two addicts sitting down together to share,  
23 we would be much less effective in conducting our overall program of  
24 recovery than we now are. We would be much less effective in reaching  
25 all addicts "out there" than we now are. Our God-given program would  
26 be very limited, as our history amply shows.

27 One member, for instance, recalled how his area handled hospital  
28 and institution outreach at first, before members created a service  
29 structure to support this outreach. A number of members in this area

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1 were concerned about carrying the message to addicts in jails, others  
2 weren't. Some jails in the area were visited regularly, some sporadically,  
3 some not at all. Whenever a member suggested organizing an H&I  
4 committee, many other members argued against it. For a time the  
5 majority thinking was, "Who needs it?" The idea of organizing a formal  
6 committee was strongly resisted. Gradually, though, this resistance  
7 melted. Finally, at one business meeting, group conscience did vote to  
8 form an H&I committee. It proved to be very effective. From then on  
9 members were able to do their H&I work much more systematically.  
10 They knew what their individual responsibilities were, who was going  
11 where and when to meet with jailed addicts. As a result, the group's  
12 H&I activities increased nearly ten-fold in a short time.

13 That was on a local level. The same thing--better organization,  
14 more effectiveness--holds true at area, regional and world levels, as well.  
15 An oldtimer remembered how it was when N.A. as such didn't have the  
16 service structure it now has: "We floundered. It was a sad thing, a little  
17 meeting would get started in the Middle West or somewhere, and a lack  
18 of service boards and committees just meant that members couldn't get  
19 in touch with anybody. They couldn't find out where the nearest  
20 established meeting was, they couldn't get help, they didn't have  
21 anybody to turn to. It was a tough time, but we grew and we learned.  
22 We have to have more organization in terms of service boards and  
23 committees, trusted servants and other volunteers being directly  
24 responsible to those they serve, getting the job done, keeping the  
25 Fellowship informed, and so on. Our history tells us that without the  
26 service boards and committees we would never have grown."

27 Every N.A. group has a structure. Trusted servants of the group  
28 do the business required by the group to help N.A. survive and grow.  
29 They pay rent, answer letters, buy and distribute literature, and perform

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1 other duties in accordance with the group's desire to provide a suitable  
2 atmosphere of recovery. Those whom we entrust to lead us are guided  
3 by our Ultimate Authority--God as we understand Him--working through  
4 the collective conscience of the group's members.

5 Individual members voting their group conscience create our  
6 service boards and committees. Each board and committee is different  
7 from the rest because it serves different needs. Each focuses its  
8 activities on a specialized area, such as public information or telephone  
9 hotlines, to help carry the message of recovery. Members select and  
10 elect the trusted servants who serve on these boards and committees.  
11 These trusted servants are then directly responsible to the group  
12 conscience that selected or elected them.

13 This is what the Ninth Tradition means when it says that "we  
14 may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those  
15 they serve." It's through our trusted servants who perform their selfless  
16 service work that we're joined together in a worldwide Fellowship. Each  
17 group, using group conscience, elects a group service representative to an  
18 area service committee, which elects a representative to a regional  
19 service committee, which elects a representative to the World Service  
20 Conference.

21 At all levels our service structure serves as a communications  
22 center, solves problems, distributes literature and in other ways  
23 facilitates the business of N.A. Our World Service Conference doesn't  
24 differ substantially from the group that rents a meeting place, buys and  
25 distributes literature or communicates questions to group members. Our  
26 world service arms--the World Service Office, World Service Conference  
27 and World Service Board--implement the group conscience of our  
28 Fellowship between World Service Conference meetings, just as any  
29 group's trusted servants implement group conscience between meetings.

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1           Thus do we clasp hands in unity. If the reverse were to happen--if  
2 the groups stopped electing group service representatives to the area  
3 service committees--the regional and world service structures would  
4 begin collapsing. Soon they would come to a total halt. So would our  
5 Fellowship.

6           All this makes it clear that everything begins with the individual  
7 group. No matter how many committees and service boards we have, no  
8 matter how many new ones are formed, our spiritual growth always  
9 springs from our groups. Our strength is always expressed in our  
10 groups. The service boards and committees spring from our groups and,  
11 just like the groups themselves, are part of N.A. Though some members  
12 at least initially feel alienated from the service structure, it belongs to  
13 them--to everyone in N.A. There is no "us" vs. "them" in N.A., "us"  
14 being members generally and "them" being those who serve in the  
15 service structure. There is no "we" and "they" in N.A. All of it is "us."  
16 All of it is "we." The individual member is the foundation of all service  
17 in N.A.

18           Some of us wondered whether we did have a real say in the  
19 running of N.A. When we spoke up, presented our ideas, we were  
20 pleasantly surprised. Except when an occasional dictatorial committee  
21 head operates on the basis of self-will rather than God's will, we're  
22 definitely listened to. An example: A few years ago N.A.'s Board of  
23 Trustees wasn't as actively involved as it now is. A number of members  
24 thought the Trustees should be more involved in N.A.'s affairs, and they  
25 now are. Another example: One member suggested a book covering the  
26 Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions be created. The suggestion was  
27 considered and accepted, which is how this book came to be. A third  
28 example: A member wrote a letter suggesting that medallions be given  
29 out to mark clean time. The membership got medallions.

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1           The Ninth Tradition says that we "may" create service boards and  
2 committees. It doesn't say we must, it doesn't say we're expected to.  
3 The distinction is important. If we "may" create them it's because their  
4 existence is important to our spiritual program, a way of strengthening  
5 N.A. and its purpose. This imposes several responsibilities on us. Group  
6 conscience must always be the "creator" of our boards and committees,  
7 which assures us that they won't be created frivolously or for  
8 unimportant ends. Boards and committees must always keep in mind  
9 the specific purposes for which they were formed, and avoid taking care  
10 of business they weren't meant to handle. They should disband when  
11 the specific purpose for which they were formed is accomplished.

12           One member was on an ad-hoc committee formed to work out  
13 some problems between the World Service Conference and the World  
14 Service Office. As soon as that mission was accomplished, the committee  
15 dissolved. The member recalled the experience with a little awe: "The  
16 committee was hot for a bit, then it ended. I was impressed how that  
17 thing was crested and how it was dissolved the moment the need for it  
18 disappeared. I can remember the feeling I had--"You mean it's over?"  
19 All the status I had all of a sudden vanished. I was just a regular guy  
20 again. There's something that's so obvious to me about N.A. As long as  
21 there's a need for service, it's there. Once the need goes, so does the  
22 service."

23           The vast majority of the members who volunteer their services for  
24 boards and committee work are dedicated and very hard-working. But  
25 all of those who engage in volunteer work now, and those who might  
26 later on, are addicts. The disease of addiction wreaks havoc in all our  
27 lives. We're all especially vulnerable to the traps of pride and ego. All  
28 of us have to be careful not to focus on "status", on feeling superior to  
29 other members for whatever reason. Whenever any of us lets such

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1 feelings hold sway, spiritual service changes to a quest for personal  
2 power. And that always places our recovery in jeopardy.

3       Members who serve on boards and committees have many such  
4 traps to guard against. For instance, when committee members see  
5 themselves as terribly self-important, they can get bogged down writing  
6 guidelines for the way their committees should work. The guidelines  
7 loom so large they become an end in themselves, and the committees  
8 forget their real purpose for being. In the same vein, committees can  
9 make their procedural aspects during meetings all-important. Then  
10 someone is always yelling "Out of order!" but the actual committee work  
11 doesn't get done.

12       When committee members let pride and ego get in the way of  
13 selfless service work they stop abiding by the spirit and intent of the  
14 Ninth Tradition. For instance, they refuse to make themselves  
15 responsible to the membership--or do so in a very perfunctory way. They  
16 hang on to their committees even when there's no longer any purpose for  
17 them. They carry on functions they weren't directed to carry out. To  
18 stray from our Traditions in these and other ways impairs our spiritual  
19 program.

20       Too, whenever we let pride and ego get in the way of our selfless  
21 service, our judgment and decision-making powers suffer. We make  
22 mistakes that lead to confusion and disunity, and falter in our primary  
23 purpose.

24       Ours is not a punitive organization. We know only too well that  
25 we're our own best disciplinarians. When pride and ego take over, when  
26 we go counter to our spiritual principles, we inevitably pick up the dues.  
27 We put our recovery at risk. This is how we discipline ourselves. Mostly  
28 our committees run very well, but now and then a committee does  
29 behave in a way that harms the membership. Then the membership has

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1 a responsibility to take action. Such action always has to be in accord  
2 with our spiritual principles. A loving God, as He expresses Himself  
3 through our group conscience, is our ultimate authority in these matters.

4 The exact action to be taken differs with the circumstances. In  
5 one group a poorly-functioning secretary was voted out of office by group  
6 conscience. In another instance, a committee that was conflict-ridden  
7 and proposing motions that made little sense was dealt with in a  
8 different way. The membership voted down all of these motions, but  
9 otherwise ignored the committee. Before long, unable to function  
10 without support, the committee fell apart.

11 Actually, everybody involved in this last incident fell short of the  
12 constructive roles they might have played. The committee members had  
13 a responsibility to deal with their internal conflict and shift the focus of  
14 attention back to their primary purpose. They weren't being accountable  
15 to those they served. The membership as a whole had a responsibility to  
16 confront the disruptive behavior, rather than ignoring it, and bring  
17 everyone's energies back to carrying the message of recovery. All  
18 members, whether or not they're serving on a committee, have a  
19 responsibility to do what they can to change disunity to unity.

20 To ensure that boards and committees operate within the  
21 principles of the Ninth Tradition, groups should elect as trusted servants  
22 only those members who have the qualifications for the task at hand,  
23 who have sufficient clean time, and who are leading relatively stable  
24 lives. Members wanting or being considered for committee positions  
25 should ask themselves honestly whether they have the time and skills to  
26 do the job. Service positions should never be given or taken as a reward  
27 for clean time. Clean time is its own reward, making service work  
28 possible.

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1           Members of service boards and committees who do the best job  
2 never forget how easily their disease can take over, causing their  
3 humility to slip away. They make sure to take their inventories. They  
4 make sure to ask God humbly to remove their character defects. They  
5 remain in prayerful contact with their Higher Power. They serve with  
6 gratitude, always remembering that they hold their positions by virtue of  
7 group conscience.

8           Like the Eighth Tradition, the Ninth enables us to have the best  
9 of two worlds. We will never be organized in a stifling, autocratic  
10 bureaucracy in which some members are more equal than others. At the  
11 same time, though, we can form those bodies--committees, boards and  
12 the like--that best meet the needs of our expanding Fellowship.  
13 Narcotics Anonymous, as a whole, including its service structure, is  
14 constantly changing and evolving. The service structure we have today  
15 bears little resemblance to what it was in N.A.'s early days. Tomorrow  
16 it may be different again. As long as it remains flexible and responsive  
17 to members' needs, and preserves our spiritual program, it will serve  
18 well. In line with God's will and with God's help, N.A.'s service  
19 structure will take whatever form required to reach addicts everywhere  
20 who seek our way of recovery.

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Newslite Articles

*This article was written by a member of the Board of Trustees in 1985. It represents views at the time of writing.*

The service structure of Narcotics Anonymous allows for one-third of the members of the Board of Trustees to be non-addicts.

Non-addicts are chosen as Trustees because of special expertise they may provide the Fellowship. Experts in the fields of law, journalism, medicine, business administration, religion, prison administration, counselling, broadcasting, writing, nursing, the judiciary and other professions, who are also knowledgeable and appreciative of the Twelve Step spiritual recovery program of Narcotics Anonymous, are potential non-addict Trustees. Those of you who have participated in the growth of Narcotics Anonymous which occurs annually at the World Service Conference would agree with the need for additional expert assistance in some of the problem areas we have encountered such as tax law, administrative procedures and parliamentary procedures. Subcommittees would benefit from medical opinion, journalistic experience, prison experts and so on. Some of this expertise is available within the Fellowship, but more is needed. Non-addict Trustees are not chosen as spokespersons for Narcotics Anonymous, nor are they trail blazers for N.A. They must work within the Twelve Traditions, even though they are non-addicts. They provide advice and their counsel can be solicited by anyone in the Fellowship. They can recognize needs within the Fellowship and bring their ideas to open forum discussion at the Trustees' meetings and at the World Service Conference. They can strengthen N.A. and support its growth without starting meetings

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1 themselves, but indirectly by mentioning Narcotics Anonymous in press  
2 releases or at medical meetings, or in medical, nursing, legal journals  
3 and symposiums. This work can be done in conjunction with Narcotics  
4 Anonymous by participating in the workings of the World Service  
5 Conference, at various workshops and committees.

6 When they meet with other professionals and share their  
7 conviction that addiction need not be fatal and that Narcotics  
8 Anonymous offers a proven recovery program for addicts, they provide  
9 information which may not be known to these professionals. This is  
10 "spreading the message" and is done within the spirit of the Eleventh  
11 Tradition, which speaks of growth through attraction rather than  
12 promotion.

13 The positions of non-addict Trustees are not honorary positions.  
14 There is a lot of homework, and a lot of travel and real dedication is  
15 required.

16 How can non-addicts become Trustees? Their names must be  
17 placed in nomination at the World Service Conference by a member of  
18 the Conference, such as the RSR's, the Trustees, or other voting  
19 participants. The candidates must be present to speak to the Conference  
20 of their qualifications and to accept the position if elected. If you know a  
21 non-addict who has special gifts or expertise to offer the Fellowship,  
22 present his or her credentials to your local trusted servants, GSR's or  
23 ASR, so that your RSR can nominate that individual at the World  
24 Service Conference. It is essential that they be interested and they must  
25 be willing to attend the World Service Conference at their own expense.  
26 If nominated and selected, air fare home will be reimbursed if funds are  
27 available. Trustees should attend four regular meetings of the World  
28 Service Board of Trustees per year. One is held at the time of the World  
29 Service Conference, which is held annually in late April, one which is

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1 traditionally held at the World Convention over Labor Day weekend at  
2 various locations [the 1986 world convention will be held in London,  
3 England], and two others which are held in November and February at  
4 the World Service Office in Van Nuys, California. Reimbursement for  
5 travel to these meetings will be provided if funds are available.

6 Currently I am one of two non-addict members of the Board of  
7 Trustees. I am a physician, but that doesn't mean we cannot have other  
8 physicians. Generally, however, it would be good to have some balance  
9 of representation from other professions.

10 Please don't think that non-addicts have a natural handle on  
11 honesty or are free of anger, guilt and resentment. Association with  
12 addicts does not come by natural inclination. Predictable unconscious  
13 factors are usually involved. There is a greater chance than not that the  
14 non-addict Trustee or non-addict Trustee-elect is a co-addict (parent,  
15 child, spouse or close friend of an addict), thus affected with some  
16 emotional and spiritual deficits, characteristic of the disease of co-  
17 addiction. Unless co-addiction is recognized and dealt with in a recovery  
18 program such as Nar-Anon, the co-addict trustee can do serious damage  
19 to himself or herself and to members of the Fellowship, or to the  
20 Fellowship as a whole. Narcotics Anonymous does not need "enablers,"  
21 persons serving with all sincerity but actually serving sick needs which  
22 have been unrecognized. These remarks should not be taken to mean  
23 that Nar-Anon is a prerequisite or mandatory for non-addict Trustees,  
24 but objectivity is enhanced by Nar-Anon attendance for the non-addicts  
25 working with Narcotics Anonymous. Speaking for myself, I was late  
26 (considering the number of years I spent treating addicts) in recognizing  
27 the impact of co-addiction in my life. I had long been addicted to addicts,  
28 but I did not know why. The Nar-Anon recovery program helped me to  
29 "see." Some new awareness comes to me regularly by working the Nar-

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1 Anon Program, just as it does for addicts in working the recovery  
2 program of Narcotics Anonymous.

3       When I awoke to realize how deeply I was involved in helping  
4 addicts -- me, a co-addict -- my first inclination was to stop because I  
5 might be more dangerous than helpful. Further reflection suggested to  
6 me that I should stick around because what better way to force a  
7 recovery program for me and a greater in-depth understanding of the  
8 relationship between co-addiction and addiction. If co-addiction places us  
9 in the role of the helper, then let us learn to help in a loving and  
10 spiritual way. Jimmy K., one of N.A.'s first recovering addicts, pencilled  
11 in the cover of my Basic Text, "...Recovery is not only the area of the  
12 addict -- we all need to strip away the illusions from the past."

13

14 Reprinted from: Newsline Vol. 2, No. 1A

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General Input

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19       Around here this tradition has become the butt of many jokes. I  
20 misquote it frequently myself when I am unprepared for the task at  
21 hand, or I've forgotten to bring something such as literature to a  
22 meeting. "Oh well, we shouldn't be organized anyway." You can see  
23 right away that the difference is between "unorganized" and  
24 disorganized." Unfortunately, we often achieve both. In this tradition  
25 the word "organized" refers to personal power or governmental control.

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Tradition Nine, then, ensures that no one can issue orders or  
directives and expect obedience. There are no rules of conduct for  
members so we don't need the traditional methods of enforcing

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1 compliance. We can't expel, censor, or otherwise punish anyone who  
2 chooses to join this fellowship. Neither may we judge another's actions.

3 If anyone leads N.A. at all, it is by example so that our most  
4 humble members are often our greatest leaders.

5 Members and committees can and do make requests and  
6 suggestions but it is the other person's choice as to how to respond and  
7 whether or not to implement the suggestion.

8 Gratefully, we do draw on the experience of older members and  
9 the other twelve step programs, but we remain free to learn from our  
10 own mistakes and forge new pathways within the framework of the  
11 Twelve steps and Traditions.

12 We do have to form committees, etc., to serve the continuing needs  
13 of N.A. but the emphasis is on service and our primary purpose of  
14 bringing a new, clean way of life to all addicts who want it. We have  
15 servants, not senators.

16 This tradition clearly states that our committees are answerable to  
17 the fellowship for their actions and decisions. Therefore, members  
18 individually or collectively may request a committee to account for any  
19 and all of its actions, expenditures, etc.

20 The officers of groups and committees are rotated to share the  
21 responsibilities and give more people the opportunity to grow through  
22 service work. Any heavy-handed authoritarian officers are easily ditched  
23 at the next election.

24 Tradition Nine does not create chaos in N.A., as one might think,  
25 because there is one unspoken principle underlying our Fellowship which  
26 tends to weed out the rebels and the egotists. That principle simply  
27 says, there are no rewards or punishments in nature, only consequences.

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1 And the result of not employing the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions  
2 is using--inevitable death or incarceration for any one of us.

3  
4 \*\*\*\*\*

5  
6 "This Tradition defines the way our Fellowship functions (Basic  
7 Text p. 67). It is the principle that creates our services and makes us an  
8 important part of "the ties that bind us together". The principle of  
9 service is important to our recovery and personal participation in it can  
10 only strengthen our unity.

11 There is work to be done that could only detract from the activities  
12 relating directly to recovery. Boards or committees are created by the  
13 groups, areas, and regions and become extensions of them, remaining  
14 "directly responsible to those they serve".

15 The business of N.A. does not belong in groups. We hold business  
16 meetings not directly relating to recovery, allowing the groups to  
17 concentrate on their primary purpose, and remain fully self supporting of  
18 our services. "Without this principle our Fellowship would be in  
19 opposition to spiritual principles (Basic Text p. 68).

20 We remain responsible to the groups and to this principle by  
21 remaining loyal to our guidelines, our Traditions, and the service  
22 structure. If we step outside the service structure, haphazardly, quoting  
23 this tradition, we are not responsible to the Fellowship, have set  
24 ourselves apart from it, and detract from its unity.

25 "The Ninth Tradition goes on to define the nature of things that  
26 we can do to help N.A. It says that we may create service boards or  
27 committees to serve the needs of the Fellowship. They exist solely to  
28 serve the needs of the Fellowship. This is the nature of our service  
29 structure as it has evolved and has been defined in the N.A. Service  
30 Manual" (Basic Text p.68).

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1           The problem of service boards and committees being directly or not  
2 directly responsible to the membership. Is this being covered elsewhere  
3 or my responsibility?

4           How could this important item not be addressed? The way I  
5 understand this tradition, we keep our service boards and committees  
6 directly responsible in the sense that each has to report to the Fellowship  
7 and gather the input and general support to effectively achieve  
8 Fellowship goals. The alternative would be a system of interlocking  
9 boards and committees, each responsible to each other and only generally  
10 interested in keeping up appearances by showing some interest in what  
11 the Fellowship wants around election time.

12           This approach wouldn't cut it in N.A. because too much depends  
13 on the capacity of our service effort to capture the imagination and give  
14 spiritual and emotional outlets to the members who alone can provide  
15 the services. If the Fellowship gets bored with a phony service effort  
16 they just stop showing up and the whole avenue of effort fades.

17           Should I get into aspects of N.A.'s service structure? Some say it's  
18 not part of N.A., others disagree. Doesn't it belong in the book?

19           Tradition Nine needs some description of how we create service  
20 boards and committees directly responsible to those they serve without  
21 organizing N.A.

22           When I first got into service in 1975, I was told that the service  
23 structure was not a part of N.A. The explanation for this was that N.A.  
24 exists independently of our service structure and that all the structure is  
25 for is to service members of the Fellowship. This made sense to me and  
26 many others. As we grew in service, we came to understand that the  
27 structure was of, by and for N.A. but it was still considered not a part of  
28 N.A. because the positions were "structural" in the sense that they were  
29 arbitrary constructs which had no reality of their own, as would be the

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1 case with a corporation or a government. The Fellowship decisively went  
2 against this viewpoint in 1983 (check date) with a few crucial changes in  
3 chapter six of "Narcotics Anonymous" relating to Traditions Four and  
4 Nine. This material contained the lines, "all else is not N.A." This  
5 resolved the matter as far as the book changes went, but no clear  
6 statement resulted in positive terms which might be helpful to the work  
7 at hand. It is not clear that the Fellowship was making the service  
8 structure part of the Fellowship or acting to resolve a conflict within the  
9 material of our book.

10 Items which need to be included are the way we form our  
11 committees based on a real need. The way our members have trouble  
12 keeping their focus on helping others and getting the good feeling which  
13 comes to us through selfless service. Some service committees have  
14 successfully come together and taken group inventories of themselves  
15 and reunified their efforts.

16 While it may seem obvious to you, our members can get so caught  
17 up in "who" is doing the service that they can forget what is being done  
18 or undone. Some of the reasons why this occurs has been covered in this  
19 input under other questions. Especially, I mean that the quality of  
20 recovery is reflected in the quality of service. Some service committees  
21 are God-centered, faithful and preoccupied with how their actions affect  
22 those they serve. Others get caught up in rules, guidelines and  
23 procedures resulting, in a great deal of oration and choosing of sides  
24 about "how" to do the service, and the service effort itself goes out the  
25 window and members attracted to serve are run off by the conflicts. It

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1 would be my hope that this material could help alleviate some of these  
2 problems.

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5           What do they mean we shouldn't be organized? Is this our excuse  
6 to wander about in chaos and confusion? No, what the Ninth Tradition  
7 is speaking to is that we shouldn't set up a hierarchy. In Narcotics  
8 Anonymous the pyramid of service is inverted so that the broader the  
9 spectrum served, the more answerable the servants are. For example, in  
10 most businesses the top officers of the company "run the show", telling  
11 the middle managers how to perform, who tell supervisors how to do  
12 their jobs, who instruct the workers of their duties. In N.A., the groups  
13 tell the area service committees how they want to be served, the ASC's  
14 tell the regions, and the regions instruct the World Service Conference of  
15 their wishes. Each level of service remains "directly responsible to those  
16 they serve," thus assuring the spiritual fulfillment of our Second  
17 Tradition.

18           In our personal recovery, the spiritual lesson of the Ninth  
19 Tradition can be found in the words, ..."that remain directly responsible  
20 to those they serve." Every mental and physical action we take serves  
21 something. When we go to our jobs, we perform a service to our  
22 employer and the people that use our products or services. When we  
23 spend time with our families or friends we serve their need for our  
24 companionship. When we share at meetings we serve the "atmosphere  
25 of recovery" that is maintained there. As we serve, we also teach. No  
26 matter what we do, where we go, whether we want to or not, we are  
27 teachers.

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1           If we meet a stranger and smile, we teach love. If we are  
2 suspicious and unfriendly we teach fear. If we do nothing at all, we  
3 teach indifference. The Ninth Tradition says we are directly responsible  
4 to those we serve. That means we have a choice as to who or what we  
5 serve as well. This principle allows us to put the knowledge and power  
6 gained from the Eleventh Step into action. We can also serve our  
7 disease. Whichever we choose to serve, the choice is ours to make and  
8 we are responsible for the results.

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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."*

**Outline**

- I. Introduction.**
  - A. Collective Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship conscience.**
  - B. Result of our collective experience (historical examples).**
  - C. How this tradition ties in with unity.**
  - D. How does this tradition protect us?**
- II. No opinions.**
  - A. Our opinion is that we have no opinion on outside issues.**
  - B. Results of expressing personal opinions on outside issues.**
    - 1. Alienation.**
    - 2. Misconception.**
    - 3. Being opinionated is an aspect of our disease --  
personal opinion vs. personal surrender.**
- III. Outside Issues.**
  - A. Definition.**
  - B. Inside issues.**
  - C. Historical examples.**
- IV. Drawn into Public Controversy.**
  - A. How might this happen.**
  - B. Consequences.**
    - 1. Diverted from primary purpose.**
    - 2. Affects N.A.'s reputation.**
    - 3. Dissension.**

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- 1           C.    Avoiding public controversy.
- 2    V.    Summary.
- 3           A.    Application of Tradition 10 to members, groups, areas, etc.
- 4           B.    Relationship to other traditions.
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Blue Review Book Draft

What does it mean that N.A. should have no opinion on outside issues? The Tenth Tradition explains the reason: "hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy." This tradition is designed to save us from ourselves.

Most of us have opinions on just about everything, and many of us are eager to voice those opinions. We were great persuaders in our addiction, and in our recovery are likely to be even better. We think we know just how things ought to be, what is right, and how the world should be run. We are great advice givers and are really good at proclaiming how others ought to live their lives. We may think we could improve on governments, social programs and could really design a wonderful world if given the opportunity.

There are many examples in which the potential exists for our groups or service boards and committees to be drawn into controversy. An example of this would be an N.A. member publicly speaking for N.A. who then expressed opinions on issues outside the principles of N.A. and his or her own recovery. We have seen members use such a platform to state their own views on issues in which they are personally involved, and this can be a source of confusion for those unfamiliar with Tradition Ten. It should be clarified that no member of N.A. speaks for Narcotics Anonymous. The program of Narcotics Anonymous speaks for itself.

To state outright that we, as a Fellowship, have "no opinion on outside issues" leaves no doubt as to where we stand. Quite simply, we stand aside or separate when political, educational, medical, psychological, social or religious issues are being discussed.

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1           Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on any of these outside  
2 issues. As individual members we may have opinions; however, when  
3 publicly carrying the N.A. message, we have none at all. N.A. has no  
4 one person or group representing the Fellowship as a whole. The group  
5 conscience of the Fellowship is our only voice, and is sought only on  
6 issues pertaining to N.A.

7           Tradition Ten promises anonymity for the protection of Narcotics  
8 Anonymous. It teaches us that we need to sacrifice our personal opinions  
9 when speaking publicly as N.A. members. We do not use the program of  
10 Narcotics Anonymous as a platform for our own ideas and personal  
11 convictions, nor do we express any opinions on any outside issues.

12           If individual members acted as spokespersons for N.A., they could  
13 quickly be labeled as "experts." Imagine how some of us would react to  
14 the sudden label of "expert" after years of being society's outcasts. Most  
15 of our egos would explode, and the humility we require for recovery  
16 would be severely jeopardized. Addicts might end up quibbling among  
17 themselves for the position of N.A. spokesperson, and in the fury, lose  
18 sight of the goal of recovery and helping the suffering addict. For this  
19 reason, the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous chooses not to participate  
20 in controversy. We do not call ourselves experts at anything; it is only  
21 through a power greater than ourselves that we have the ability to stay  
22 clean and help other addicts to do the same.

23           A break in this tradition occurred in the following manner. An  
24 individual member received in-house treatment at a rehabilitation  
25 center. As part of his treatment he was introduced to the Narcotics  
26 Anonymous Program. This individual believed that without the  
27 treatment center, he would not have found N.A. or recovery. Six months  
28 after his discharge from the treatment center, he appeared on a radio  
29 talk show as part of a public information effort. When asked about his

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1 recovery and his involvement in N.A., he spoke at great length about the  
2 treatment center. He named it, praised its methods, and expressed the  
3 opinion that everyone seeking recovery should first go through a  
4 treatment center which used the type of therapy his treatment center  
5 employed.

6 As a result of his statements, other treatment centers, which used  
7 different methods, stopped referring addicts to N.A. Medical and  
8 psychological experts began debating the pro's and con's of the treatment  
9 methods. In addition, some N.A. members, who did not go through  
10 treatment centers, became defensive about their recovery, and others  
11 who had gone through different treatment centers argued the success of  
12 their methods. The focus of all these individuals then became treatment  
13 centers, and the N.A. message of recovery was lost.

14 If N.A. were to take a stand on any outside issue, someone would  
15 always disagree with us. Expressing opinions on any issue would  
16 alienate addicts both in and out of N.A. The strength and unity of  
17 Narcotics Anonymous is also affected by its reputation with the general  
18 public. A violation of Tradition Ten would surely alienate professionals  
19 in the medical and social services who refer suffering addicts to N.A.

20 The unity which Tradition Ten ensures is vital for the survival and  
21 growth of Narcotics Anonymous, as are all of the Twelve Traditions.  
22 The N.A. Fellowship needs to concentrate its energy and resources  
23 exclusively on recovery from addiction. This priority does not leave room  
24 for discussion or controversy about anything other than recovery. We  
25 can never forget that getting and staying clean is the most important  
26 thing any of us has ever done. We have to keep our priorities in order.

27 Addicts recovering in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous need  
28 to be free to go through the process of exchanging old ways for new  
29 ways. If we were tied up in press conferences, public harassment or the

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1 like, addicts would not recover. Breaking Tradition Ten would reverse  
2 our progress as well as sever the ties that bind us together.

3       The strict maintenance of Tradition Ten and all Twelve Traditions  
4 ensures unity as well as singleness of purpose. Our credibility and  
5 ability to further our primary purpose are strengthened by eliminating  
6 controversy, internal dissension and outside pressures. The spiritual  
7 principles which attract us to a new way of life remain strong and are  
8 solidified as addicts everywhere seek and find recovery. "As long as the  
9 ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us  
10 apart, all will be well."

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1986/1987 Unpublished Draft

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15       Reading the words of the Tenth Tradition for the first time, some  
16 of us were left confused. What are "outside issues?" We learned that  
17 anything not directly concerned with the N.A. Program of recovery is an  
18 outside issue. Some of us remained confused. We got the impression  
19 that as long as we were N.A. members we had the right to our opinions  
20 on non-N.A. matters. We concluded--wrongly--that we had to keep our  
21 thoughts on such matters strictly to ourselves.

22       We weren't happy about that. As addicts we were very  
23 opinionated, and forceful about voicing our opinions. We were great  
24 persuaders, always ready to tell other people how to run their lives. As  
25 members of N.A. many of us still have opinions on just about everything,  
26 and we are eager to voice them and to give advice to anybody who will  
27 listen.

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1           As those of us who questioned the Tenth Tradition came to see,  
2 however, it doesn't prevent us from speaking up. It doesn't keep us from  
3 having, expressing or acting upon any and all of our strongly-felt  
4 opinions. We're free to say what we please, work for the political  
5 candidates of our choice, join whatever religious or social organization we  
6 like, involve ourselves in any cause that's meaningful to us. What  
7 Tradition Ten does require is that we do so as individuals, not as  
8 identified members of N.A. Thus, no N.A. group, committee or service  
9 board may back a political candidate, or work for or against any social  
10 program.

11           The reason is self-evident: we don't want to be drawn into  
12 harmful conflict or controversy. Imagine what could easily happen if the  
13 Tenth Tradition didn't exist. One of our groups somewhere might, for  
14 example, make a public announcement supporting a particular candidate  
15 for office or urging members to join a particular church. Another group  
16 in the area might, for reasons it considered just as valid, support an  
17 opposing candidate or another church. The result: controversy,  
18 members pitted against each other, disunity instead of unity. It's to  
19 avoid fights internally or with the community that no one in our  
20 Fellowship may get up on a soapbox, either figuratively or literally, and  
21 say, "I'm a member of Narcotics Anonymous and this is what I  
22 believe..." As ordinary citizens we may believe and express what we  
23 wish. As N.A. members, and so identified, we may not.

24           None of us speaks for N.A. or represents the Fellowship. If we did  
25 identify ourselves as members of N.A. and then went on to express our  
26 opinions to the world, confusion would result. People listening would  
27 naturally assume that what we had to say reflected the viewpoint of  
28 N.A. as a whole--and some people would vehemently disagree with our  
29 position. They might easily become outraged. In the case of the

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1 community, outrage might cost us some cooperation necessary to our  
2 functioning. That's why we are very careful what we say in public. For  
3 instance, if one of our members is asked to speak at a school, we make it  
4 a point to restrict our talk to the N.A. Program. Even if specifically  
5 asked to comment on the prevention of drug abuse we refrain from doing  
6 so. N.A. has no official viewpoint on prevention, a subject about which  
7 there are many conflicting ideas, and so we avoid controversy by  
8 avoiding the subject altogether. From the standpoint of our program of  
9 recovery, it's an outside issue.

10 When we refrain from voicing our opinions on outside issues within  
11 our own meetings, we're also furthering our God-given program.  
12 Newcomers attend our meetings because they're interested in our  
13 program of recovery, not because they want to hear debates on  
14 extraneous subjects. Upon hearing opinions with which they might  
15 strongly differ, those newcomers may quickly decide that our way of  
16 recovery isn't really for them. They would leave in the mistaken belief  
17 that N.A. takes stands on controversial outside issues not in accord with  
18 their own viewpoints. Too, our meeting time is precious; it should not be  
19 wasted on issues not directly concerned with recovery. Our only formal  
20 belief, as expressed in the Third Tradition, is the importance of having a  
21 desire to stop using.

22 Therefore, we suspend our personal opinions when, for public  
23 information purposes, we speak on behalf of N.A. In fact, we don't have  
24 "official" spokespersons in Narcotics Anonymous. If we had such  
25 spokespersons they could quickly be labelled--and view themselves as--  
26 "experts." Think of how some of us would react to suddenly being  
27 "experts" after years of having been society's outcasts. Very likely our  
28 egos would explode, and the humility we require for recovery would be  
29 severely jeopardized. We might easily forget the limitations the Tenth

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1 Tradition places upon us, and publicly give our thoughts on topics having  
2 nothing to do with our program of recovery. We might also end up  
3 fighting among ourselves for the position of N.A. spokesperson, and in  
4 the process lose sight of our goals--help for the addict who still suffers.

5 The Tenth Tradition therefore teaches us that we need to sacrifice  
6 our personal opinions when speaking publicly as N.A. members, and that  
7 we may not use N.A. as a platform for our own ideas and convictions.  
8 Should we disregard this teaching, we run the very real risk of bringing  
9 a storm of criticism upon our Fellowship.

10 In one case where this happened an N.A. member had received in-  
11 house treatment at a rehabilitation center. As part of his treatment he  
12 was introduced to the Narcotics Anonymous Program. This member  
13 believed that without the treatment center he would not have found  
14 N.A., nor recovery. Six months after his discharge from the treatment  
15 center he appeared on a radio talk show as part of a public information  
16 effort. He spoke at length, making no secret of the fact that he was an  
17 N.A. member. He went into great detail about the treatment center--  
18 naming it, praising it, saying that everyone who sought recovery should  
19 first go through the type of therapy his treatment center employed.

20 Because of this member's statements, other treatment centers  
21 using different methods stopped referring addicts to N.A. Medical and  
22 psychological experts began debating the pros and cons of the various  
23 treatment methods. Worse yet, some other N.A. members who hadn't  
24 gone through treatment centers became defensive about their recovery.  
25 Others who had gone through treatment centers using different  
26 approaches argued vehemently in favor of those methods. The focus of  
27 attention thus became treatment centers and their methods, while N.A.'s  
28 message of recovery was lost.

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1           The Tenth Tradition's declaration that, as a Fellowship, we have  
2 no opinion on outside issues leaves no doubt as to where we stand. Quite  
3 simply, we stand aside or separate when political, educational, medical,  
4 psychological, social or religious issues are discussed. We stand aside,  
5 too, when a discussion centers on the relative merits of other Twelve  
6 Step programs. In this way we follow the principles of this tradition and  
7 also reaffirm our Fifth Tradition and its focus on our primary purpose,  
8 which is to carry the message of recovery.

9           When we give it careful thought, the Tenth Tradition makes a lot  
10 of sense. It protects us from ourselves, from any impulse to be  
11 confrontive or argumentative, and is entirely consistent with all our  
12 principles. If we embraced or promoted certain outside causes or  
13 projects, regardless of how meritorious they were, we'd be deflected from  
14 our primary purpose. We'd be violating the Sixth Tradition's ban on  
15 endorsing, financing or lending our name to outside enterprises. And,  
16 inevitably, we'd be drawn into the kind of controversy the Tenth  
17 Tradition warns us against, and lose sight of the unity and common  
18 welfare stressed in Tradition One. No matter what the cause, program  
19 or project, there's bound to be disagreement about it--if not about the  
20 goals then about how those goals are to be achieved. No matter which  
21 side we took, we would offend the other side, both within our Fellowship  
22 and without. Thus we would court disunity as well as criticism from the  
23 outside. We would disrupt the good working relationships we now have  
24 with many persons and organizations, including some medical and social  
25 service professionals who refer addicts to N.A. They would stop making  
26 these referrals. We would put ourselves in a no-win situation.

27           The more controversial the issue, the more vulnerable we'd become  
28 if we took a stand for or against. From time to time, for example,  
29 newspapers, treatment centers and even government committees ask

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1 N.A. for its opinion on methadone maintenance programs. These  
2 programs evoke heated debate: some experts in the drug treatment field  
3 believe they help addicts, others believe they hurt addicts. Whichever  
4 side we formally took would be the wrong one because it would bring us  
5 much hostility. Even more to the point, we as a Fellowship aren't  
6 experts. We're not experts on methadone programs. We're not even  
7 experts on the "drug problem" as it exists in the United States or any  
8 other nation. The only thing we can speak about as a Fellowship is our  
9 own program of recovery, and even then we're not so much experts as  
10 we are instruments of a Higher Power. We must always remember that  
11 it's only through a Power greater than ourselves that we have the ability  
12 to stay clean and help other addicts do the same.

13 The larger N.A. grows, the more relevant the Tenth Tradition  
14 becomes. When our Fellowship was small and obscure, few outsiders  
15 knew much about us, much less sought our opinion on drug addiction and  
16 related matters. Today we're a worldwide Twelve Step program, known  
17 and respected. Our opinions on drug-related matters are often sought.  
18 Our advice is often asked for. This is a confirmation of our success, but  
19 we must not allow ourselves to become complacent. Neither success nor  
20 size will protect us from the damaging effects of controversy. That  
21 there's increasing interest in our opinions makes it even more important  
22 for us to say, "No comment" with regard to outside issues.

23 That "the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public  
24 controversy" might be misinterpreted as meaning that it's best to avoid  
25 any kind of controversy in N.A. Actually, there's a big difference  
26 between public controversy and private discussions or debates. Within  
27 our Fellowship, as within all families, there are times when our members  
28 disagree with each other. The fact that so many of us hold strong

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1 opinions about a great many issues, including those having to do with  
2 N.A. and its program, virtually guarantees some disagreement.

3 When our private debates don't become bitter and therefore  
4 divisive, when we don't bring our internal conflicts into public view, a  
5 certain amount of controversy is good for us. Bouncing different opinions  
6 back and forth can clarify issues and clear up confusion. It's usually  
7 better to spend some time arguing an issue back and forth, even if we  
8 seem to get bogged down for a while, than to act hastily and impulsively.  
9 Group conscience doesn't always assert itself right away.

10 While internal debate about matters related to our program of  
11 recovery is in accord with our principles, the Tenth Tradition tells us  
12 that arguments about outside issues are not. Our priority is recovery  
13 from addiction, which requires us to devote our energies and resources  
14 exclusively to carrying out that priority. It doesn't leave room for  
15 discussion or controversy about anything other than recovery. Our  
16 meetings are not appropriate forums for debates on politics, religion,  
17 economics, medicine, social programs, environmental issues or any other  
18 aspect of life that doesn't directly concern recovery as we practice it.

19 Limiting our meeting talk to matters affecting recovery the N.A.  
20 way also helps preserve the unity so vital for our Fellowship's growth  
21 and survival. We can easily imagine what would happen if, for example,  
22 a member at an N.A. meeting "shared" his dislike of the mayor of his  
23 city with the other people in the room. Another member would angrily  
24 come to the mayor's defense. A third member would chime in,  
25 disagreeing in some respects with the first two. A fourth member might  
26 shout that the rest were violating the Tenth Tradition. In the hubbub  
27 the needs of newcomers would be ignored and the furtherance of our  
28 spiritual program neglected.

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1           It's not only in our regular meetings that we can get bogged down  
2 in outside issues, stir up controversy, and breach the Tenth Tradition. It  
3 can happen in our area service and other committees, too. For instance,  
4 members of a service committee may spend a valuable hour discussing  
5 another fellowship, or the validity of various treatment programs, or  
6 politics, or religion--when, in fact, all such topics are outside issues that  
7 don't belong on our agendas. It's an hour that should have been put to  
8 positive use around matters of recovery. And we must, of course, be  
9 especially careful to adhere to the Tenth Tradition in our dealings with  
10 the outside world. For example, a public information committee  
11 manning a booth at an insurance company-sponsored health fair may be  
12 asked what N.A. thinks about methadone maintenance. If those  
13 committee members say something either positive or negative about  
14 methadone maintenance, they're going counter to the Tenth Tradition.  
15 Listeners will assume that what the N.A. members are saying  
16 constitutes official N.A. policy. This will then put N.A. as a whole in  
17 conflict with those people who disagree with the stated position. The  
18 only response in accord with Tradition Ten is, "N.A. has no opinion on  
19 this."

20           A third example that underscores the need for strict adherence to  
21 Tradition Ten concerns a true incident, which took place in a Trustee's  
22 meeting. The issue under discussion was the controversial subject of  
23 AIDS, and whether or not it was an outside issue for N.A. The decision  
24 the Trustees finally came to was that AIDS is not an outside issue when  
25 we discuss it in terms of its effect on our members, our recovery, and our  
26 unity. The decision the Trustees finally came to was that AIDS is not an  
27 outside issue for N.A. On the other hand, the question of whether  
28 addicts should be tested for AIDS is an outside issue in terms of the  
29 Tenth Tradition. We have no policy on that. We have no opinion on any

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1 of the medical or technical aspects of AIDS. We're not experts on the  
2 subject, nor can we pretend to be; these are definitely outside issues.

3 Newcomers who are legally on medication sometimes ask  
4 established members whether they should stop using those drugs.  
5 Members who fall ill or have accidents and are advised by their  
6 physicians to take medications as part of their treatment sometimes ask  
7 whether they actually should use those drugs. In the context of the  
8 Tenth Tradition such questions are very much an outside issue. We're  
9 not doctors. We don't know medicine. Even members who are in  
10 medical fields aren't professionally involved with those persons asking  
11 whether or not to use a given prescription drug. We're not empowered,  
12 formally or informally, to give medical advice. If we did so we might  
13 well be giving advice hazardous to the patient's health, and also creating  
14 serious legal difficulties for our Fellowship. If we did give medical advice  
15 and the outcome was tragic--if, for instance, a member advised to stop  
16 taking anti-depressant drugs became suicidal--we would also be burdened  
17 with guilt. Such guilt opens the door to using. Under the circumstances,  
18 the only answer we can give when asked if an N.A. member should use  
19 any prescription drug is, "I don't know."

20 Saying "I don't know," or, "No comment," or, "I don't have an  
21 opinion on that" is a very hard step for many of us, whether the topic is  
22 prescription drugs or any other outside issue. We're not easily humble.  
23 Some of us think we know the answers to almost everything, and we  
24 want to give those answers to everybody who will listen. Some of us  
25 think we have the solutions to problems, whatever those problems  
26 happen to be, and we want to voice them. The active ego is never  
27 content to be still.

28 To emphasize again, the Tenth Tradition aims to keep us from  
29 being drawn into divisive, destructive arguments, either within our

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1 Fellowship or with organizations in the community. Public controversy  
2 can keep us from getting community cooperation and can drive  
3 newcomers away. Even if others want to draw us into disputes, or press  
4 for an "official" N.A. position on an outside issue, we must all resist the  
5 pressure. As N.A. members we have a responsibility, both individually  
6 and collectively, to adhere to the Tenth Tradition.

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**General Input**

10

11 Tradition Ten, in keeping with the spiritual nature of our  
12 program, ensures the survival of Narcotics Anonymous. To be effective,  
13 the name N.A. must be known and respected and to a certain extent our  
14 growth depends on our good reputation.

15 Our membership consists of people of different nationalities,  
16 religions, races and political opinions. To take one position on any of  
17 these or other issues would surely divide us from within, not to mention  
18 discouraging potential new members and referrals from doctors or  
19 treatment programs.

20 Consequently, N.A. as a whole and individuals speaking as  
21 members of N.A., whether at regular meetings or to the public, do not  
22 take sides or express opinions on controversial subjects, not even on  
23 issues which may at first appear pertinent to the Fellowship such as  
24 drug and alcohol laws.

25 Of course, we may join committees, groups or rallies that interest  
26 us and work toward change as individuals, but we must always  
27 remember to keep these activities separate from our N.A. lives.

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1           For our recovery we need a free, unbiased, non-controversial  
2 atmosphere in which to grow.

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5           There seems to be a difference of opinion about whether someone  
6 on methadone maintenance program is clean?

7           There is little left to discuss on this. Methadone is a drug. The  
8 fact that people addicted to methadone want to call themselves clean has  
9 nothing to do with N.A. recovery. Some of our members came to us  
10 while taking methadone and are clean today. Many others never made  
11 it.

12           Perhaps in the past, methadone users were regarded as trying to  
13 do something about their problem and were shown `consideration'  
14 similar to other addicts who come to us while still using and will  
15 hopefully be open to our message, get clean and stay clean. This was  
16 apparently taken to be endorsement of methadone usage and many of  
17 the methadone maintenance addicts would come to our meetings, share  
18 and accept service positions fostered on them by members lacking  
19 knowledge in this area, and a whole pattern of difficulty ensued.

20           A statement by the Board of Trustees addressed this question (The  
21 statement referred to is included in this document).

22           "NA has no opinion on outside issues, hence the NA name ought  
23 never be drawn into public controversy." As one member put it, "This  
24 means we mind our own business!" The business of Narcotics  
25 Anonymous is carrying the message of hope and freedom that just for  
26 today, you never have to use again against your will.

27           This spiritual principle frees us from any distractions in carrying  
28 our message.

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1           The 6th Tradition tells us that we don't endorse any outside  
2 enterprises, but Tradition 10 goes a step further. It tells us we don't  
3 endorse or oppose anything outside NA. We have no opinion on politics,  
4 other forms of treatment or recovery, religions, or even the use of drugs.  
5 As addicts, it would be easy to stand on our soap box and tell the world  
6 what we think about any number of topics but that would not help us  
7 carry our message any more effectively. In fact, it would inevitably turn  
8 someone against us, not to mention the controversy that would be  
9 created within our own Fellowship. Our experience has shown that  
10 when we lay judgment aside from the disease of addiction, we are  
11 fulfilling our primary purpose.

12           This spiritual principle is a valuable tool to our personal growth as  
13 well, and the steps give us the ability to implement it into our lives.  
14 Step One teaches us there is nothing external about our powerlessness; if  
15 we are not the problem, then there is no solution. In Steps 4-7 we  
16 realize the futility of gossip, criticism, and passing judgment on other  
17 people, places, and things. In Steps 8-10 we get an opportunity to repair  
18 some of the damage caused by our opinionated behavior and try not to  
19 repeat the same mistakes in the future. Tradition 10 provides us with  
20 an excellent guideline to keep from repeating those mistakes.

21           By having "no opinion on outside issues," we don't have to be the  
22 world's foremost authority on everything anymore. This frees our mind  
23 to become more aware of ourselves and to become more God-conscious in  
24 our daily living. Most people would think of giving up opinions as losing  
25 a part of yourself or becoming an unthinking clone. What we've come to  
26 realize over and over throughout our recovery is that when we give up  
27 something, we don't lose, we gain. We gave up drugs and gained a new  
28 life. When we gave up judging and denial, we gained acceptance. When  
29 we gave up worry and fear, we gained serenity. When we gave up

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1   resentments, we gained love. Rather than losing our personality, by  
2   surrendering to the spiritual principle of Tradition 10, we begin to find  
3   our true selves.  
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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."*

**Outline**

- 1  
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- 10 I. What is our public relations policy?
  - 11 A. Principles.
  - 12 1. Interrelationship with other Traditions (3, 6, 7, 8, 10,
  - 13 and 12).
  - 14 B. Application in the role of P.I., H & I and Literature;
  - 15 service centers; the group; conventions.
  - 16 a. Our conduct.
  - 17 b. Not using conventions for P.I.
  - 18 II. Attraction Rather than Promotion.
  - 19 A. Attraction.
  - 20 1. Definition.
  - 21 2. Recovery is attractive to suffering addicts.
  - 22 a. members.
  - 23 b. groups.
  - 24 B. Promotion.
  - 25 1. Definition.
  - 26 2. Consequences.
  - 27 a. for the Fellowship.
  - 28 b. for individual members.
  - 29 3. N.A. needs no promotion.

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- 1    **III.    Personal Anonymity at the level of press, radio, films.**
- 2        **A.    Spiritual principle of anonymity.**
- 3            1.    the heart of the program.
- 4        **B.    Protecting ourselves from ourselves.**
- 5            1.    member.
- 6            2.    Fellowship.
- 7        **C.    Public communications vs. Fellowship communications.**
- 8    **IV.    Application to members, groups and N.A. as a whole.**
- 9    **V.    Summary and lead in to Tradition Twelve.**
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- 11



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1           Promotion is pushing--selling something regardless of the price in  
2 terms of human dignity or spiritual values. Promoting often is an end in  
3 itself, and its use in N.A. would reflect self-glorification. We should  
4 never misrepresent what we offer, even if by doing so we might be able  
5 to get a few more addicts to attend our meetings. It is easy to make  
6 promises. If we bribed addicts with any rewards other than recovery,  
7 they would probably flock to our doors. But how many would have a  
8 desire to stop using? How many would leave as soon as they found out  
9 that we could neither grant nor keep any promises? How many would  
10 never come back? How many would die without ever having a chance to  
11 find recovery? In order to effectively carry the message of recovery, we  
12 do not use promotion to encourage addicts to come to us, nor do we use  
13 promotion to make ourselves more acceptable. Our recovery speaks for  
14 itself.

15           Tradition Eleven illustrates that we, as a Fellowship, have an  
16 ongoing relationship with society. If we are to carry the very precious  
17 message given to us, then this relationship must be maintained in a  
18 responsible and loving manner. Perhaps in no other area does the need  
19 for anonymity become so crucial.

20           The message of recovery can be carried in many ways. If we are  
21 to reach the addict who still suffers, we must make our presence known  
22 to the general public. To broaden the scope of those we reach, many  
23 groups and service committees have turned to the use of radio, press and  
24 television. These types of media link us with the general public and can  
25 reach segments of society. Our message is best delivered with a quiet  
26 dignity, offering the hope of a drug-free life.

27           There is no need to recruit new members. However, the media  
28 may be utilized to let the community know that N.A. exists, that the  
29 Fellowship is available. Contact with press, radio, films, and T.V. can be

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1 a sensitive area. The N.A. Public Information Handbook helps clarify  
2 this issue. These guidelines, which describe how to protect the  
3 Fellowship and individuals selected to be in the public eye, can prevent  
4 any misconceptions. Public information committees can be established at  
5 area and regional levels, where knowledge and experience with the  
6 traditions are available. Even where N.A. is completely new and an  
7 area service structure has not been established, those wishing to use the  
8 media should consult the nearest public information committee or the  
9 World Service Conference Public Information Committee.

10 The maintenance of anonymity serves a two-fold function: it  
11 protects individual members from the pressure or temptation to speak  
12 for N.A. as a whole. It also protects the Fellowship, as a whole, from  
13 being judged by the words or actions of one recovering individual. It is  
14 possible that addicts would seek fame just to see their names in the  
15 paper. It would be very damaging to N.A. if a member publicly broke  
16 anonymity and then relapsed. The public view of the person who had  
17 gone to N.A., but had not stayed clean, might result in assumptions that  
18 the N.A. program does not work. In a situation such as this, countless  
19 future members might then painfully complete the dying process of  
20 active addiction.

21 Another danger of broken anonymity relates to the possibility that  
22 an addict could be frightened away by seeing an N.A. member give  
23 public testimony. They might think they would be required to do the  
24 same if they became involved in the N.A. Program. For this reason,  
25 breaking anonymity is against the traditions. The last thing addicts  
26 need in our recovery from addiction is a spotlight on our lives.

27 When we came to this Fellowship, we learned that we were not  
28 the center of the universe. We came to N.A. to recover from drug  
29 addiction. We remain first to stay abstinent, and then to carry the

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1 message that recovery is possible. Any other activity can only take away  
2 from what we have to offer. If we can help an addict stop using and find  
3 a new way of life, we will all benefit.

4 Anonymity is a point of personal freedom and recovery. No  
5 members of N.A. should ever place themselves in a position in which  
6 they have to make a statement for N.A. as a whole. No one member is  
7 N.A., and no one member can speak for N.A. There is no elite class, nor  
8 are there any special members. Each of us has our own story and our  
9 own recovery. Individually, we are powerless; but as a Fellowship, we  
10 bring the hope of recovery to countless suffering addicts throughout the  
11 world.

12  
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1986/1987 Unpublished Draft

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16 How do we let the addict who still suffers know that we exist?  
17 How do we let the addict who still suffers know how we, as addicts  
18 ourselves, were helped by the N.A. Program of recovery? Word of mouth  
19 is one way; we spread the word where and when appropriate. But word  
20 of mouth isn't sufficient to reach addicts everywhere whose lives might  
21 be saved if only they knew about our program. Because of our love for  
22 N.A., and our belief in its effectiveness, we would like every addict in the  
23 world to become aware of our existence. But that raises an important  
24 problem--the problem of reaching addicts who haven't heard of us, and  
25 reaching, too, those who have dealings with them--courts, for instance,  
26 and parole officers and treatment centers. Just as important, we must  
27 make ourselves known while remaining true to our spiritual principles.

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1 That's what the Eleventh Tradition, and its focus on public relations, is  
2 all about.

3 For some of us the very idea of "public relations" is controversial.  
4 We tend to think of public relations in the Madison Avenue sense--as  
5 akin to advertising. Advertising is a technique for selling the public  
6 goods and services--car manufacturers, banks, airlines and hundreds of  
7 thousands of other companies advertise. Public relations, a close cousin,  
8 sells the public on the company itself--the main purpose of p.r., as it's  
9 generally known, is to enhance the company's image. In N.A. "public  
10 relations" has a very different purpose. We're not out to sell anything to  
11 anybody--not a product, not a service, not our image. We simply want to  
12 make sure that as many addicts as possible know that we exist, know  
13 that we offer a spiritual program of recovery that's available to every  
14 addict who wants it.

15 The Eleventh Tradition states that our public relations policy is  
16 based on attraction rather than promotion. That makes us all, each of  
17 us who's an N.A. member, in a sense personally responsible for our  
18 Fellowship's public relations. Even if we never specifically involve  
19 ourselves in public information committee work, every one of us is a  
20 walking advertisement calling attention to N.A. We may be a positive  
21 advertisement. We may be a negative advertisement. But to the extent  
22 that people around us know we belong to N.A., or discover this fact, how  
23 we conduct ourselves strongly reflects on Narcotics Anonymous's image  
24 in our communities.

25 If meetings are noisy and rowdy, or marred by violence, we've  
26 created a negative advertisement for N.A. If an N.A. member gets in  
27 trouble with the law, the public doesn't simply see it as just another  
28 person having performed an unlawful act. The public's immediate  
29 reaction generally is, "All those N.A. members are probably like that!"

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1 And when newspapers point out that a lawbreaker is an N.A. member,  
2 readers aren't likely to consider the fact that the vast majority of us lead  
3 lawful, productive, principled lives. They're much more likely to lump us  
4 all together. This is detrimental to our reputation generally and scares  
5 off addicts whose lives might be saved.

6 We create a positive image for N.A. when we hold orderly  
7 meetings and lead abstinent, normal, law-abiding lives. We don't make  
8 headlines that way--we wouldn't want to--but we favorably impress those  
9 who know our history. It's the most powerful way we have of telling the  
10 world that N.A.'s spiritual program of recovery truly works.

11 There was a time when we weren't loved, weren't respected by the  
12 communities in which we held our meetings. In fact, up until a decade  
13 or so ago (written in 1987), some major cities in the U.S. and abroad  
14 didn't allow us to hold meetings. They gave various reasons for making  
15 our meetings illegal--mainly, officials were fearful about the very idea of  
16 addicts banding together in groups. Some long-time members can recall  
17 the antagonism of parole officers in a number of localities: to attend  
18 N.A. meetings, these officers said, would be a violation of parole. Today  
19 things are very different. Today parole officers and others in the  
20 criminal justice system generally encourage addicts to join our  
21 Fellowship--they recognize the value of Narcotics Anonymous.

22 When the communities in which we live view us positively, they're  
23 much more likely to rent space to our groups, refer addicts to us, or  
24 otherwise cooperate with us in important ways. When active addicts  
25 who want to change their lives see us leading happy, fulfilling lives we're  
26 carrying the message of recovery in the best way possible--by our  
27 example. This is what the Eleventh Tradition means in stating that the  
28 Fellowship's public relations policy is based on "attraction." When we

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1 lead lives that others want for themselves we attract them to our  
2 program.

3 The Eleventh Tradition makes a distinction between attraction  
4 and promotion, a distinction that goes to the heart of N.A.'s public  
5 relations policy. We can see the difference between the two by imagining  
6 a building with many wonderful activities going on inside. If the door is  
7 open, and we peek inside, and we want to go in--that's attraction. If  
8 somebody in a fancy suit stands outside urging us in--that's promotion.

9 There's a tremendous psychological, philosophical and spiritual  
10 difference between attraction and promotion. If we simply wanted to  
11 pack our groups with "bodies" we could do so easily enough by promoting  
12 our program the way laundry detergents and toothpastes are promoted--  
13 the hard-sell way.

14 We could, for instance, stand on streetcorners and hand out  
15 leaflets, knock on doors and ask people if they want recovery today. We  
16 could push N.A. as the great drug addiction cure-all. We could work up  
17 statistics "proving," say, that five out of every six addicts who stay in  
18 N.A. for at least three months stop using forever. We could offer \$100  
19 to every active addict who attends N.A. meetings four weeks in a row.  
20 We could make tantalizing promises: "Come to N.A. and you'll get a job  
21 in the helping professions," or, "Come to N.A. and you'll find a girlfriend  
22 or boyfriend."

23 We could do such things and more to promote N.A. as though we  
24 were glorifying a product, but the results would be counterproductive.  
25 As addicts we were constantly being pressured by those around us to  
26 stop using, and we paid no attention. If N.A. used pressure to bring in  
27 active addicts they wouldn't respond to us, either. Well-meaning  
28 relatives, spouses, lovers and friends offered us bribes of one kind or

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1 another to get us to stop using, with no good effect. If N.A. used such  
2 tactics, it would also fail. Addicts know hype and hustle only too well.

3 Promoting is a futile and useless effort, one that falls on deaf ears  
4 unless--as the Third Tradition emphasizes--the addict himself or herself  
5 has a desire to stop using. The atmosphere of recovery we generate in  
6 our meetings is the very opposite of promotion. It is, instead, attraction  
7 of the most potent kind. Newcomers, not really knowing what to expect,  
8 hear us sharing our experiences, our strengths, our hopes. They hear us  
9 talk about what our lives were like before we surrendered to the Twelve  
10 Steps and what our lives are like now.

11 What makes our meetings and our program attractive to  
12 newcomers, however, is not only the message of hope and recovery we  
13 carry but the manner in which we carry it. We must take care not to  
14 get carried away in talking about the terribly self-destructive lives we  
15 led as addicts; if we make our "war stories" too lurid, too dramatic and  
16 detailed, we're not really offering anything attractive. If, by contrast, we  
17 talk more about how strikingly our lives have bettered, that's attractive.  
18 When newcomers hear us speak with heartfelt gratitude about the  
19 Higher Power that led each of us to N.A., that's attractive. We should  
20 never spend so much time talking about the dark past that we run out of  
21 time for the much brighter present.

22 Our sense of unity, our concern for the common welfare, the caring  
23 we show each other--these, too, make a strong impression. They, too,  
24 create a desire for total abstinence on the part of new members. They're  
25 powerful selling points to newcomers who wonder whether our program  
26 might really be for them.

27 We don't need to promote ourselves, but we do need to let active  
28 addicts know that our meetings exist and are open to them. We do  
29 accomplish this practically by creating public information committees.

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1 They in turn create informational materials in accord with our Public  
2 Information Handbook which are left in appropriate places. At times our  
3 public information committees also use public service announcements for  
4 use in newspapers, on radio or television. And we also arrange for  
5 formal or informal contact with treatment centers and other related  
6 facilities. Contact of this kind proved useful, for example, when an N.A.  
7 group held a dance and neighbors called the police to complain of the  
8 noise. The police came and inquired whether a lot of drinking was going  
9 on. None was, but the police officers seemed skeptical. A few days later  
10 several members from that group called on the police administrators of  
11 that precinct to explain our Fellowship and its program of total  
12 abstinence from all drugs. The neighbors were also contacted and  
13 explanations offered. These visits cleared up any misunderstandings and  
14 helped N.A. gain a positive image in that community.

15 At times, too, we're asked for information or interviews at the  
16 level of press, radio, films and television. In line with the Eleventh  
17 Tradition we must never agree to grant interviews, appear on talk  
18 shows, accept speaking engagements or the like on our own. We must  
19 always obtain clearance and advice from our public information  
20 committees at the area and regional levels. Our Public Information  
21 Handbook, which offers guidelines related to all aspects of public  
22 relations, should also be consulted. Even where N.A. is completely new  
23 and no area service structure has been established, members and groups  
24 wishing to use the media should consult the nearest public information  
25 committee or the World Service Conference Public Information  
26 Committee before making any arrangements. By taking such  
27 precautionary steps we strengthen our unity and promote our common  
28 welfare. On a personal level, when we seek counsel from appropriate

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1 N.A. sources before engaging in public relations work of any kind we  
2 surrender our egos, an act that benefits our recovery.

3 In the past some groups avoided any contact with the media.  
4 When N.A. members did agree to interviews or appearances on panels  
5 related to addiction they didn't reveal the fact that they belonged to N.A.  
6 They didn't give their names. They made a point of appearing totally  
7 anonymous in keeping with the way the Eleventh Tradition was  
8 interpreted.

9 Over time, however, our Fellowship's thinking about this tradition  
10 has undergone an evolution. Trusted servants involved in public  
11 information work now recognize that in specific circumstances and under  
12 safeguards--as outlined in the WSC P.I. Committee guidelines--the mass  
13 media can effectively carry the message to large numbers of addicts who  
14 still suffer. While the Eleventh Tradition stresses "personal anonymity"  
15 this doesn't necessarily prohibit members from revealing that they  
16 belong to our Fellowship. It definitely does prohibit us from giving  
17 names and other details that would result in identifying us personally.  
18 When appearing on television we take additional precautions to make  
19 sure we cannot be recognized.

20 An incident in a western city illustrates how mass media exposure  
21 can help further our growth and be an effective instrument for reaching  
22 addicts who are unaware of our existence. It so happened that a hotel in  
23 the city played host to an N.A. convention and, simultaneously, to a  
24 meeting of the city's teacher's union, which was then on strike. The local  
25 news media was well represented in the hotel because of the teacher's  
26 strike. One reporter spotted the N.A. convention and thought it would  
27 make a good story. An interview with an N.A. member and a non-addict  
28 special worker was arranged by the local P.I. committee. The story that  
29 subsequently appeared about N.A. was a factual, straightforward

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1 account. As a result, calls to the N.A. hotline in that city jumped.  
2 Schools in the area asked for N.A. speakers. Many newcomers joined  
3 N.A.--addicts who hadn't known about our Fellowship until the  
4 newspaper story appeared.

5 This was an unusual circumstance in the sense that we usually  
6 don't do public relations work at our conventions. In general we tend to  
7 view our conventions as celebrations of recovery rather than as vehicles  
8 for publicity. We don't want to turn these gatherings into media events.  
9 But the incident does point up the positive results media attention can  
10 have.

11 Nevertheless, we must always be careful to follow our public  
12 relations guidelines because media contact is a double-edged sword. It  
13 presents a number of potential pitfalls that can bring us bad will instead  
14 of good will, and can harm rather than further our primary purpose. We  
15 can't control the attitude of the mass media. We can't control what  
16 reporters will write or how interviewers will present us to the public.  
17 Some may have a biased view of addicts or drug treatment programs.  
18 They may, deliberately or not, distort information given to them. They  
19 may be seeking personal information about certain members, especially  
20 those who are celebrities in their fields.

21 In general, the wisest policy in dealing with interviewers is to give  
22 as little information about ourselves as possible and none about other  
23 members. To present factual information about N.A. is our only purpose  
24 in granting interviews. Experience shows that when the questioning  
25 becomes too personal, or the member being interviewed is in doubt about  
26 what to say, the safest answer is, "I don't know," or "I can't comment on  
27 that."

28 On a personal level, those of us who appear on interview shows  
29 and the like are very vulnerable. We may truly want to retain personal

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1   anonymity and technically that's not difficult. But sometimes anonymity  
2   is at war with our desire for recognition. We want to be stars; a craving  
3   for attention is a symptom of our disease. As users we got plenty of  
4   attention--of a negative kind. Being interviewed or appearing on a panel  
5   or talk show is a positive way of gaining attention, but if no one knows  
6   who we are we don't get that attention. The temptation to break  
7   personal anonymity and tell the world who we are is great, therefore,  
8   and occasionally members who do public relations work succumb to it.  
9   They may even rationalize this breach of the Eleventh Tradition as an  
10   act of courage, a way of making an even stronger impact on behalf of  
11   N.A.

12         Far from actually helping N.A., though, members who fall into  
13   this trap are much more likely to harm the Fellowship and jeopardize  
14   their own recoveries. The pattern has occurred too often to be mere  
15   coincidence. We have seen many members' recovery suffer from this  
16   kind of self-will; we have seen too many members relapse. Breaking our  
17   personal anonymity at a public level is disastrous because when we do so  
18   we're no longer carrying the message. Instead, we're pushing humility  
19   aside and giving free rein to our egos, which have been so destructive to  
20   us.

21         The keys to recovery are selflessness and humility. When we seek  
22   counsel from appropriate N.A. sources before engaging in public relations  
23   work, and remain within N.A.'s public information guidelines, we  
24   surrender our egos for the common welfare. This surrender, this  
25   expression of humility, greatly benefits our recovery.

26         There are other reasons why we must resist the desire to be stars.  
27   When we think we're stars we're very likely to get carried away and  
28   allow ourselves to become self-appointed spokespersons for N.A. That  
29   easily leads us to make pronouncements that go far beyond a factual

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1 presentation of N.A. And those pronouncements usually relate to  
2 outside issues--precisely the issues Tradition Ten warns us against  
3 talking about.

4 Also, when one N.A. member does become a star--that is, gets lots  
5 of media attention and exposure--other members may react with  
6 resentment and envy. They want the same exposure. For the sake of  
7 unity, therefore, those of us who do appear in the mass media should be  
8 very discreet about it. We should avoid bragging to other members that  
9 we are or will be in the public spotlight. Public relations work at the  
10 level of the mass media is done to best effect when as few people as  
11 possible, both in N.A. and on the outside, know the actual identities of  
12 the members being interviewed.

13 Finally, when some members break their anonymity during a  
14 public relations presentation it makes other members feel much less  
15 secure about their own anonymity. We all need to consider N.A. a safe  
16 place where we can talk freely and securely about our disease of  
17 addiction, about the things it has done to us and made us do. If any of  
18 us goes public, many other members feel threatened. We become fearful.  
19 Among the fears members have expressed is that they might be required  
20 to reveal their own names publicly, or that their names will be leaked, or  
21 that a television crew will appear at a meeting someday. All of us are  
22 concerned with the preservation of our anonymity. If word got out that  
23 they were addicts, many members could lose their jobs or have their  
24 careers destroyed. We need to make sure, when we participate in P.I.  
25 work, that this doesn't happen.

26 Experience shows that members who handle media exposure best  
27 are those with considerable clean time, a deep understanding of the  
28 Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions, and a marked reluctance to be  
29 interviewed. The less they want to be stars, the likelier it is that they

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1 will adhere to the principles of the Eleventh Tradition when in the public  
2 spotlight.

3 The Eleventh Tradition doesn't say we should refrain from  
4 engaging in public relations; it does say we should have a clearly-defined  
5 public relations policy, one in accord with our spiritual program. As long  
6 as we stay clean, keep a low profile, present ourselves anonymously,  
7 stick to the facts, work with a public information committee and credit  
8 our program and our God with bringing about the miracle of recovery,  
9 we have in P.R. a powerful instrument to help us carry the message.

10 It's important to always remind ourselves, as well, that even when  
11 we're not directly involved in public relations work, we're still doing  
12 public relations. Whatever our service responsibilities, whatever  
13 committees we belong to, whatever and wherever we attend meetings,  
14 conventions and the like, we're "attractions in action." That is,  
15 wherever we are, our behavior reflects on the Fellowship as a whole.  
16 The more constructive the image we individually present, the more  
17 effective we all are as public relations representatives for N.A.

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**Newsline Article**

21

**Anonymity, Yours and Mine**

22

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*This article was written by a member of the Board of Trustees in  
1984. It represents views at the time of writing.*

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We, like many of you in the Fellowship, have become increasingly  
concerned with the Eleventh and Twelfth Tradition violations which  
have been cropping up with increasing and alarming regularity.



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1           This is the opposite of most promotional practices which are  
2 anxious to advertise how many prominent public figures support them.

3           Our public information committee was formed to co-ordinate and  
4 initiate ways of reaching addicts who may never have heard of N.A. We  
5 have had several members interviewed recently on radio and T.V.  
6 programs, but in keeping with Tradition Eleven, full names were not  
7 used, nor were their faces shown on camera, which can be easily  
8 accomplished through various photographic techniques.

9           No one speaks for nor represents N.A. at any level. We may  
10 appear as members of the program, but not as spokesmen.

11           This is in keeping with the spirituality of our programme. Since  
12 many of us have been very egotistical, remaining anonymous helps us  
13 stay humble, even when called upon to serve in a public capacity.

14           Tradition Eleven deals with anonymity at a public level only.  
15 N.A. would not be able to grow if none of us ever broke our anonymity to  
16 friends, neighbors or co-workers. Each member chooses when to tell  
17 someone else that she/he belongs to N.A. We should be especially careful  
18 not to break the anonymity of another member.

19           In this way, each member is an active guardian of our Fellowship.  
20

21           \*\*\*\*\*

22           "If an addict has never heard of us, he cannot seek us out. If  
23 those who work with addicts are unaware of our existence, they cannot  
24 refer them to us. One of the important things we can do to further our  
25 primary purpose is to let people know who, what, and where we are. If  
26 we do this and keep our reputation good, we will surely grow" (Basic  
27 Text p. 68).

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1            "This Tradition deals with our relationship to those outside the  
2 Fellowship. It tells us how to conduct our efforts at a public level" (Basic  
3 Text p. 69). Our responsibility is set before us. In order for our  
4 Fellowship to become whole, there is an area of need to be fulfilled.  
5 Public Information is the means chosen to fulfill it, and our  
6 responsibilities are defined by this principle.

7            "Our recovery speaks for itself" (Basic Text p. 69). We should  
8 make an effort to let it do just that; through verbalizing and humanizing  
9 it in our P.S.A.'s or our mailings, and personally presenting it through  
10 public contact. Humility seems to be the key to our work. Our program  
11 is a power greater than addiction, and when our work is representative  
12 of that, it will be a statement for it.

13           Strong P.I. work will present N.A. to the public and unify the  
14 Fellowship, while carrying the message to the addict who still suffers.  
15 This is dependent upon our ability to be honest about the Fellowship on  
16 a public level, our willingness to surrender to the program for our needs,  
17 and our open mindedness within the guidelines presented to us. When  
18 our public announcements reflect our recovery, their honesty will unite  
19 our Fellowship.

20           Promotion, by definition, means "to advance by degree". Our  
21 public relations policy is based on the attraction of the program itself.  
22 Our attraction is that we are successes in our own right. As groups  
23 gather together we offer recovery. We have found the success of our  
24 program speaks for itself. To advance this or go beyond it to any degree  
25 would be promotion. Many addicts who have yet to find us may do so  
26 through our work. Group conscience gives us a standard for selecting  
27 what is suitable for presenting N.A. and what is not. It is a means of  
28 determining if our service is attraction, not promotion. Our Basic Text

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1 and literature can be used as authorities. They are examples of group  
2 conscience.

3 Just as our works are representative of N.A., press, radio, and  
4 film are representatives of the public level our work is meant to touch.  
5 They are the media through which we hope to carry our message to the  
6 masses. When the existence of a spiritual program of recovery from  
7 addiction known as Narcotics Anonymous is common knowledge, we will  
8 be fulfilling our responsibility.

9 It is a saying in our Fellowship, "Anonymity is the sacrifice of  
10 personal ambition." Personal anonymity is our surrender and  
11 participation in the spiritual foundation of our Fellowship, the ties that  
12 bind us together, recovery.

13 "Our message is hope and the promise of freedom" (Basic Text p.  
14 68).

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17 I wonder if in "It Works" there isn't a contradiction between "N.A.  
18 has no need for promotion," followed by "The media may be utilized to  
19 let the community know that N.A. exists."

20 I am concerned about the rudimentary nature of these questions.  
21 We do not promote because addicts seeking recovery as we know it in  
22 N.A. would be put off by sensationalism. They might well respond but  
23 the elements of surrender, faith and trust would be missing. These  
24 things are essential for recovery. Promotion requires funding and brings  
25 financial motivation, and the means for promotion are missing.

26 Our public information committees specialize in letting people  
27 know N.A. recovery is available. How else could addicts seeking  
28 recovery find us? Much time and care is taken to ensure that our PI

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1 efforts are attractive to addicts seeking recovery, and the elements of  
2 sensationalism and promotion are avoided. Where is the contradiction?

3 I assumed I wouldn't get into things covered by the N.A. Public  
4 Information Handbook. There's lots of ambiguity expressed about  
5 promotion. Some thought may be required on how to handle--for  
6 instance, whether it's okay for N.A. members to identify themselves as  
7 such on television. Also, lots of overlap between Traditions Eleven and  
8 Twelve.

9 First, it is my hope that the Traditions material in "It Works,  
10 How and Why" will contain enough pertinent material to satisfy the  
11 need of our Fellowship to understand our Traditions. So many items  
12 have been shelved and the decisions deferred in the past that we have  
13 needlessly suffered.

14 The genesis for this material lies in the recovery of members who  
15 focus their lives and full-time involvement on the well-being of Narcotics  
16 Anonymous. So many of these issues have been up in the air so long.  
17 All that is required is to think, feel and pray through a certain topic  
18 until a clear pattern forms which is agreeable to members and find a  
19 firm but not harsh way of clearly stating the truth. Most of these  
20 questions are basically simple. What makes them seem hard is the  
21 reluctance of our members to come out and really say what they feel.  
22 Maybe, in some cases, they haven't really thought about it. Remember,  
23 Narcotics Anonymous is going through its historical period right now  
24 (written in 1986), not five years ago. Fundamental and basic  
25 considerations are being made and that is what makes a writer's  
26 position, assigned to the material, difficult. We also know how that  
27 feels. We wrote our Book.

28 Today's 'hot question' will seem 'milk toast' tomorrow! Of course,  
29 it's not OK for a member to identify themselves as such on television. It

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1 is implicit in the wording of the Tradition. The Eleventh Tradition  
2 material should get into the general principles. Within a year or two of  
3 approval, the material will start to show its loopholes. Let's do all we  
4 can today to avoid as many as possible.

5 Does the overlap between Traditions Eleven and Twelve involve  
6 anonymity? If it does, my recommendation is to bear in mind that it is  
7 the same principle but with different perspective or backdrop. Maybe a  
8 literary emphasis can help resolve the clarity of each point in question.

9 In the Eleventh Tradition, anonymity is addressed in very real  
10 terms which relate directly to situations which are occurring more  
11 frequently as we grow. It is easier to have many addicts identified in the  
12 media as such if we have two hundred thousand members than when we  
13 have twenty. The threat here is more to the member breaking spiritual  
14 contact with the Fellowship than any injury which might reflect badly on  
15 N.A. There have been quite a few violations of this sort in the last few  
16 years and we're doing fine! Are the members who wittingly or  
17 unwittingly broke their anonymity doing fine? Are they still clean? Can  
18 they go into meetings as addicts seeking recovery or are they, at least in  
19 their conscience, violators?

20 When members do service work in hospitals and institutions, is  
21 this "promotion" rather than "attraction"? There also seems to be a  
22 difference of opinion about the use of last names at meetings, or on  
23 television, etc.

24 First, what is meant by "service work"? It sounds like members  
25 working for nothing to benefit a hospital. If this is the case, then I don't  
26 see how it can be related to N.A. It would be well within an individual  
27 member's freedom of action and if it benefited people so much the better.  
28 Where would the promotion be?

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1           At any rate, the way the question is phrased, a question is raised  
2 in my mind if the term service work is being applied in the N.A. sense or  
3 not. We serve the needs of our members including our groups. One of  
4 the beauties of N.A. is that since we charge nothing for our message, we  
5 cannot be accused of bartering love for money...

6           We are only interested in being available to those who want to do  
7 something about their problem. It is their pain that creates the  
8 attraction, not anything promotional.

9           Last names at meetings is each member's option. For all we  
10 know, our members use pseudonyms. TV is media and we maintain  
11 anonymity at the level of the press, radio and films. This leaves no room  
12 for doubt.

13           If something can help our Fellowship's understanding and  
14 application of the Twelve Traditions, it should be addressed. Differences  
15 of opinion, relative to this material, can be remedied in several ways.  
16 Phrases like "most members feel..... while some are concerned about ..."  
17 allow our material to be complete and yet flexible. Crucial questions  
18 often will need definite statements and the Board of Trustees will be  
19 looking hard at these in our review of the material prior to the  
20 Fellowship review and approval process. We have a need for clear  
21 definite statements because they can be used by members to resolve  
22 difficult issues in their local communities.

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**TRADITION 12**

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

**Outline**

- I. What is anonymity?
- II. How anonymity applies in the case of each of the 12 Traditions.
- III. Principles of the Traditions.
  - A. Humility.
    - 1. Removes fear.
    - 2. Setting aside differences allows us to be part of the whole.
    - 3. Can't take credit for recovery.
    - 4. Dependence on a power greater than ourselves.
  - B. Equality.
    - 1. Message, not the messenger.
  - C. Common welfare.
    - 1. Personal judgment and criticism have no place in violation of anonymity.
    - 2. Principles before personalities.
  - D. Importance of Steps to being able to apply principles.
  - E. Need opportunity to give without recognition.
- IV. Why personalities come second in N.A.
  - A. Proper role of personalities.
    - 1. Anonymity makes possible autonomy.

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- 1           B.    How to deal with problem of personal understanding or
- 2                    perspective.
- 3           C.    Communications.
- 4    V.    Application to members, groups and N.A. as a whole.
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1

**Blue Review Book Draft**

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3           The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous complement each  
4 other and are bound together by the principle of anonymity. Anonymity  
5 is a basic guiding principle of Narcotics Anonymous. It is truly the  
6 foundation of all our traditions. In order to survive, we have to set aside  
7 our differences and become a part of a greater whole. What is  
8 anonymity? It is an opportunity to give without recognition. We find  
9 that giving in this way allows us to feel good about ourselves as we learn  
10 to practice the N.A. principles. We see an attitude of anonymity in  
11 throughout each of the Twelve Traditions.

12           The principle of anonymity is based on honesty and humility. We  
13 honestly acknowledge that we can't take credit for our recovery or the  
14 things which become possible through recovery. The awakening of  
15 humility in each of us occurs when we give up trying to manage our lives  
16 and begin to depend on a Power greater than ourselves. Anonymity tells  
17 us to listen to the message, not the messenger.

18           Anonymity is the principle whereby we become willing to place our  
19 egos and personalities second to both recovery and group unity. All of us  
20 have egos, and it is normal to seek our "strokes" for a job well done.  
21 However, most of us got to N.A. because we had problems with our egos;  
22 constant praise and recognition severely pollute the humility which we  
23 require for recovery. In recovery, we have found that humility is a  
24 spiritual tool to be nourished and cherished.

25           Developing humility through living the Twelve Steps is the  
26 channel which makes anonymity possible. We have experienced great  
27 personal regard in giving of ourselves without seeking or expecting  
28 recognition. This principle helps us to establish our priorities, with

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1 recovery in its proper perspective at the head of the spectrum. As we  
2 experience ongoing recovery, we begin to realize that all of our needs are  
3 somehow met. Humbly aware and grateful for this prosperity, we  
4 become able to give to others.

5 Anonymity within the Fellowship is important. Gossip and  
6 criticism of our fellow addicts destroys the unity of our Fellowship. Have  
7 you ever been told that a fellow addict had relapsed, only to find them  
8 still clean? Or have you ever sat down for coffee after a meeting, only to  
9 hear another member's inventory being taken for them? N.A. is a  
10 Fellowship of recovering addicts. We are all growing and we all have  
11 character defects. Acceptance of other addicts, including their character  
12 defects, is love. As recovering addicts, we need an atmosphere of love  
13 and support in which to grow. Members, especially newcomers, need to  
14 feel safe within our Fellowship. An atmosphere of trust allows members  
15 to share openly. We can help each other by keeping what is shared in a  
16 group, or on a one-to-one basis, to ourselves. In N.A., a desire for  
17 recovery helps us keep principles before personalities.

18 In our recovery, we need to open our minds and practice  
19 anonymity in sharing the message. We try not to cloud the message by  
20 placing expectations or limitations on what we hear, based on any  
21 messenger's length of clean time, sex, color or our feelings about that  
22 particular person. A God of our understanding can work through any of  
23 us in sharing recovery. If we are able to look past the false pride and  
24 ego which have cut us off from others so often in our past, we can listen  
25 openly to other people's points of view. Rarely do we fail to benefit in  
26 some way from our ability to listen anonymously.

27 The principle of anonymity is the key to understanding the  
28 Twelfth Tradition and how it is the foundation of all our traditions. The  
29 First Tradition talks about common welfare and N.A. unity. The placing

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1 of common welfare before personal welfare in the group setting is a  
2 direct application of anonymity. We surrender our own self-will and  
3 place the welfare of Narcotics Anonymous first, because our lives depend  
4 on it.

5       The Second Tradition focuses on one Ultimate Authority. No  
6 single person, no personality, has N.A. authority. This is vested in a  
7 loving God to whom we have turned over our wills and lives. We trust  
8 this God, expressed through the group conscience, to guide our affairs.  
9 Group conscience is different from group opinion, which can be influenced  
10 by contending personal views. This type of conflict is contrary to the  
11 spirit of anonymity, and often leads to controversy. As members of a  
12 group, we can sense the presence or absence of spiritual direction. When  
13 we feel it is lacking, we turn to the God of our understanding to act as  
14 our Ultimate Authority.

15       The anonymity of a trusted servant typifies our method of  
16 leadership. Each recovering addict is important, but none is so  
17 important as the group or N.A. as a whole. Without our servants,  
18 willing and worthy, there could be no N.A. Fellowship. We need to bear  
19 carefully in mind the principle of anonymity which guides us to serve  
20 selflessly. Our names are not important; it is what we are able to do to  
21 help others that counts.

22       The Third Tradition is a statement of anonymity. We do not  
23 define who our members may or may not be. We only require that they  
24 have a desire to stop using. Nothing else matters. This desire is the one  
25 requirement for membership in the N.A. program. We either come with  
26 it or develop it before the program will work for us. If we do not  
27 surrender to the principle of anonymity but cling instead to our delusions  
28 of uniqueness, we are unable to begin the steps, and thus we prevent our

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1 own recovery. However, as our understanding of anonymity increases,  
2 we find that membership in N.A. and recovery become possible.

3 Anonymity makes possible the autonomy of our Fourth Tradition.  
4 How does anonymity relate to the right of an N.A. group to have the  
5 format and style of its choosing? The Fourth Tradition gives each group  
6 the freedom to develop its own personality as a spiritual entity.  
7 However, the principle of anonymity, which reminds us to place  
8 principles before personalities, puts the personality of our groups in  
9 check - the personality of a group must not affect Narcotics Anonymous  
10 as a whole. Each group, like each individual, is but a small part of a  
11 greater whole. Much of our freedom results from this balance. We  
12 experience freedom when we respect the freedom of others. Group  
13 autonomy gives interest to our meetings, while maintaining the spiritual  
14 qualities of N.A.

15 Without the principle of anonymity, each group could set itself up  
16 as something unique from the others. However, no N.A. group may  
17 dictate or set standards for other groups. Without anonymity, our  
18 groups might begin competing with each other for members or for  
19 recognition. The resulting loss of unity would divert us from our primary  
20 purpose and eventually destroy N.A. Because anonymity applies to  
21 groups as well as individuals, carrying the message rises above the  
22 personality of our groups.

23 Our Fifth Tradition says that each group has but one primary  
24 purpose, to carry its message to the addict who still suffers. This unity  
25 of purpose is the tie that binds our groups together. Our groups are not  
26 truly different; each has the same spiritual aim. Our individual and  
27 group anonymity is the key to maintaining the atmosphere of recovery  
28 found in our groups. This atmosphere of anonymous recovery makes it  
29 possible for any addict to find help in Narcotics Anonymous.

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1 Tradition Six tells us that we ought never endorse, finance, or lend  
2 the N.A. name to any facility or outside enterprise. To violate this  
3 Tradition would be to lose our anonymity by placing other consideration  
4 ahead of our spiritual aims. Just as individuals and groups practice  
5 anonymity, so does this principle apply to Narcotics Anonymous as a  
6 whole. Our name is safeguarded and is not linked to any other facility or  
7 organization. We refuse to lend our name to anyone or endorse  
8 anything. The principle of anonymity reminds us to maintain our  
9 integrity rather than to endorse or associate with anything or anyone  
10 other than N.A. The suggestion that money, property, or prestige have  
11 anything to do with personal recovery in N.A. is contrary to all our  
12 beliefs and principles. As addicts, we have probably been involved in the  
13 past with persons and/or institutions who, despite their money, property,  
14 and prestige, were unable to keep us clean. If we do not practice  
15 anonymity, problems of money, property, and prestige would surely  
16 divert us from our primary purpose.

17 Our Seventh Tradition guarantees N.A. members the right and  
18 privilege to share in the support of Narcotics Anonymous. Each of us is  
19 given the equal opportunity to help anonymously. We also do not allow  
20 members to contribute more than their share; to do so would be to  
21 encourage the loss of their anonymity. Another way we practice  
22 anonymity is in regard to funding from sources outside the N.A.  
23 community. Regardless of the identity or intent of an outside source, we  
24 do not accept financial contributions, so that the freedom and integrity of  
25 our groups are maintained.

26 In regard to our Eighth Tradition, we do not single out our  
27 members as "professionals." Professionals are defined by their  
28 education, background and experience. N.A. members are defined by a  
29 desire to stop using. The principle of anonymity ensures that every N.A.

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1 member has an equal opportunity to experience personal growth in  
2 recovery.

3 Anonymity further applies to the hiring of our special workers.  
4 We do not discriminate against addicts or non-addicts in employing  
5 people to serve the needs of the Fellowship. As with any organization,  
6 we try to get the best person for the job to ensure the best services.  
7 These special workers are skilled and qualified to do things for our  
8 Fellowship on a business-like basis. This frees our members in service to  
9 focus on carrying the message of N.A., which requires experience and  
10 wisdom that can be gained only through recovery. Non-addict special  
11 workers provide a special service by performing certain duties addicts  
12 could not undertake due to the necessity of safeguarding their  
13 anonymity.

14 Our Ninth Tradition makes possible the creation and operation of  
15 service boards and committees. These boards and committees provide  
16 services beyond what individuals and single groups can do. We see the  
17 principle of anonymity in that these committees are not responsible to  
18 any particular individual, but rather are accountable to the groups and  
19 members of N.A. By practicing anonymity, our service boards and  
20 committees are protected from individual power struggles.

21 Another way anonymity applies to our service boards and  
22 committees is that although our actions are surely influenced by our  
23 personalities, we are directly responsible to those we serve. The work we  
24 do for N.A. is important, and it is here that we see the necessity of  
25 applying the Twelfth Tradition. We are able to be of assistance because  
26 we are guided by the principle of helping others. When personalities get  
27 in the way of carrying the message, our Twelfth Tradition has been  
28 violated. A service committee does not reflect the opinion(s) of an

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1 individual member, but rather the collective conscience of many  
2 anonymous members.

3 Anonymity applies to members of service boards and committees  
4 because none of them has a greater or lesser voice in a Narcotics  
5 Anonymous meeting. For example, an elected trusted servant, when  
6 attending an N.A. meeting, is not acknowledged in the meeting for  
7 his/her position in service, but rather for a desire to stay clean.

8 The Tenth Tradition limits the growth of powerful personalities  
9 and safeguards anonymity by having no opinion on outside issues.  
10 Individual members practice anonymity by not representing themselves  
11 as spokespersons for N.A. If we maintain our anonymity at the public  
12 level, it is impossible to thrust our Fellowship into public controversy.  
13 When controversy exists, people take sides and personalities come  
14 forward; as this happens, anonymity disintegrates. The Tenth Tradition  
15 prevents this, thus ensuring unity.

16 In our Eleventh Tradition, we find that the way we relate to  
17 society in general is by practicing personal anonymity. By maintaining  
18 our personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films, none of us  
19 is singled out. No one of us represents N.A., for to do so would be to  
20 place ourselves above our common welfare. Our relationship with the  
21 public is based on attraction rather than promotion. In this way, we  
22 avoid both setting the individual up in the public eye as a spokesperson  
23 for N.A., and the self-glorification which could result. In N.A., the  
24 recovery and well-being of the members are placed ahead of everything  
25 else.

26 We have discussed how the principle of anonymity is the  
27 foundation of all our traditions. We see now that this principle is a  
28 guiding force in our spiritual and emotional growth, and in our  
29 interactions with others. The Twelfth Tradition reminds us to place

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1 principles before personalities. When we see other members  
2 experiencing difficulties or upset, we may be tempted to judge.  
3 However, we realize that the recovery process is different for everyone,  
4 and the members' upset may be perfectly reasonable and appropriate.  
5 Judgment and criticism have no place in our program or our services.

6 We are all imperfect instruments of a loving God of our  
7 understanding. While studying and learning spiritual principles may be  
8 a lot of work, we develop a willingness to go to any lengths to find  
9 lasting remedies for the various difficulties we encounter as we grow.  
10 When we become involved in conflicts or disagreements, we apply the  
11 principles of the traditions, using a group conscience which looks to the  
12 heart of matters, without the influence of personalities.

13 Anonymity embraces our Fellowship and is woven throughout our  
14 traditions. It is one of the basics of recovery. The principle of anonymity  
15 protects us from our defects of personality and character. Where  
16 anonymity exists, personalities and differences have no power. This  
17 immunity from personality clashes is the first shelter most addicts have  
18 ever known.

19 Our lives are reconstructed through the Twelve Steps, with the  
20 protection of the Twelve Traditions. Lives once racked with confusion  
21 and pain are slowly transformed. A peace of mind and sense of direction  
22 come to us as a result of applying N.A.'s Twelve Steps and Twelve  
23 Traditions. We are grateful to those who have gone before us and to the  
24 members clean in N.A. today. We do our part to make recovery  
25 available to any addict who wants it. We acknowledge the power of a  
26 loving God in our lives who provides the strength and guidance we so  
27 desperately need. These gifts are ours to keep and enhance, as long as  
28 we keep giving them away the N.A. way.

29



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1 terms of "we". As one member put it, "There are many ways of looking  
2 at anonymity. Practical ways like not giving our names to the media.  
3 But to me anonymity at its deepest level is letting go of all those things  
4 we use to separate and isolate ourselves from other people--all the things  
5 we do to make ourselves different and special. In N.A. we have to stop  
6 being different so as to become part of a greater whole--and survive."

7       Spiritual anonymity is a recurrent theme in each and every one of  
8 our traditions. The First Tradition talks about common welfare and  
9 N.A. unity. When we place common welfare before personal welfare in  
10 the group setting it's a direct application of spiritual anonymity. We  
11 surrender our self-will to God's will and to the welfare of Narcotics  
12 Anonymous. It's not "my" welfare, it's "our" welfare; by stressing our  
13 similarities rather than our differences we emphasize our unity. But we  
14 also realize that unity doesn't mean uniformity. Surrendering our egos  
15 in no way requires us to give up our individuality. On the contrary,  
16 when we embrace the spiritual principle of anonymity that so powerfully  
17 guides us towards recovery, we become more fully individual than was  
18 ever possible when addiction held us in its grip and straightjacketed our  
19 lives.

20       The Second Tradition states that for our group purpose there's but  
21 one Ultimate Authority. No N.A. member--no man or woman or trusted  
22 servant--has N.A.'s authority. This is vested in a loving God to whom  
23 we have turned over our wills and our lives. We trust this God as He  
24 may express Himself through our group conscience, to guide our affairs.  
25 Here is another example of letting go, becoming anonymous. We let go  
26 of our personal opinions, our special ideas, which can only bring us in  
27 conflict with each other. We work together to bring about group  
28 conscience.

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1           The Third Tradition, which says the only requirement for  
2 membership is a desire to stop using, underscores our anonymity. We  
3 don't define who our members may or may not be. Their sex doesn't  
4 matter. Their age doesn't matter. Their skin color and religion don't  
5 matter. Their politics and economic status don't matter. In accordance  
6 with the Third Tradition we let go of everything that makes us different  
7 and could easily divide us. We surrender to anonymity and focus on the  
8 one overriding thing we have in common--the desire to stop using.

9           The Fourth Tradition gives each N.A. group the right to develop  
10 the style and format of its choosing. How does this relate to anonymity?  
11 The Fourth Tradition encourages our groups to exercise creative freedom  
12 in order to best meet the needs of its members, but also stresses the  
13 limits to that freedom of expression. No group should set itself up as  
14 unique from the others. No group should dictate to, set standards for, or  
15 compete with other groups. All of our groups are part of the same God-  
16 given program, all have the same primary purpose. This is also a letting  
17 go, a becoming anonymous: as different as our groups may individually  
18 be, in a larger sense they submerge their distinct personalities for the  
19 good of N.A. as a whole.

20           Our Fifth Tradition says that each group has but one primary  
21 purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. This, too,  
22 talks to our unity of purpose. Our groups do not go off in ten or fifteen  
23 different directions, each having its special goals. We let go of all goals  
24 but the one that fulfills our spiritual aim. In this sense we blend in--  
25 become anonymous--as we pursue our primary purpose.

26           The Sixth Tradition tells us we ought never endorse, finance, or  
27 lend the N.A. name to any facility or outside enterprise. To violate this  
28 tradition would be to lose our anonymity by placing other considerations  
29 ahead of our spiritual aims. Just as individuals and groups practice

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1   anonymity, so does this principle apply to Narcotics Anonymous as a  
2   whole. Our name is safeguarded and kept anonymous, and is not linked  
3   to any facility or organization. The principle of anonymity reminds us to  
4   maintain our integrity rather than endorse or associate with anything or  
5   anyone other than N.A. Endorsements come from people and  
6   organizations deemed special. We all know from painful personal  
7   experience the sorrows that befall us when we succumb to feeling special  
8   and superior. Unfortunate events would befall our groups, and the  
9   whole Fellowship as well, if we thrust them into the public spotlight.  
10   Similarly, the principle of anonymity reminds us that money, property or  
11   prestige have nothing to do with personal recovery in N.A. Our past  
12   experiences as addicts amply illustrate the problems associated with  
13   money, property and prestige; we know how easily these can divert us  
14   from our primary purpose.

15       The Seventh Tradition guarantees members the right and  
16   privilege to contribute to the support of Narcotics Anonymous. No  
17   member is expected to do more than the other members; we share in the  
18   responsibility of supporting our Fellowship with money, time, and skills.  
19   Service contributions of whatever kind don't make one member better  
20   than another; we're all equal. We all have an equal opportunity to help  
21   support N.A. and to do so anonymously insofar as possible.

22       We also practice anonymity in our refusal to accept funding from  
23   outside sources. If we accepted outside funding we'd be allying ourselves  
24   with those funding sources, endorsing them, just as we would if we  
25   funded them. This would make us special. We would no longer be  
26   operating anonymously, and therefore we would lose both the freedom  
27   and the integrity so necessary to us.

28       The Eighth Tradition states that we don't employ professionals in  
29   our groups. Professionals are defined by their education, background and

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1 experience. N.A. members are defined by a desire to stop using. If some  
2 of us were professionals and others "just" members, we'd no longer all be  
3 the same. There would be a hierarchy among members, with some more  
4 important--"more equal"--than others. Everyone would know who was  
5 who. This would destroy our anonymity and, hence, our unity. The  
6 principle of anonymity ensures that every N.A. member has an equal  
7 chance to experience personal growth in recovery.

8 Anonymity further applies to the hiring of our special workers.  
9 We don't discriminate against addicts or non-addicts in employing people  
10 to serve the needs of our Fellowship. We don't say, "Addicts come first  
11 in our hiring procedures regardless of qualifications." We don't say,  
12 "Addicts shouldn't work for N.A." Either way would make addicts  
13 special, different, and take away from their anonymity. We simply try  
14 to get the best person for the job.

15 Our Ninth Tradition states that N.A. as such may not organize,  
16 but makes possible the creation of service boards and committees.  
17 Anonymity is at work here in several ways. We don't structure our  
18 Fellowship in such a way that certain members--"presidents,"  
19 "directors," or whatever--have more power than others. If we did, it  
20 would make some members superior to others, destroy their anonymity  
21 and damage our unity, which is based on equality.

22 Furthermore, our boards and committees aren't "above the law"--  
23 they must operate within the framework of our Twelve Traditions and  
24 are responsible to the membership they serve. In carrying out their  
25 tasks, they don't reflect the opinions of individual members but are  
26 guided by the collective conscience of many members. Trusted servants  
27 who serve on boards and committees aren't special in relation to the  
28 membership as a whole; when they attend regular N.A. meetings they're  
29 simply recovering addicts working the program along with everyone else.

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1           The Tenth Tradition keeps us, as N.A. members and N.A. groups,  
2 from voicing opinions on outside issues. Members practice anonymity by  
3 not representing themselves as spokespersons for N.A. As a Fellowship,  
4 we maintain our anonymity by not making public pronouncements. If  
5 we did express opinions on outside issues as N.A. members or groups we  
6 would surely be drawn into public controversy. Public controversy would  
7 shatter our anonymity, tear us apart from within, and alienate addicts  
8 who might otherwise seek recovery with us. The Tenth Tradition also  
9 limits controversy within N.A. by defining all issues other than recovery  
10 as "outside issues."

11           The Eleventh Tradition speaks very directly to anonymity,  
12 cautioning us to maintain it on the level of the mass media. In this way  
13 none of us is singled out for special attention. The Eleventh Tradition  
14 also stresses that our relationship with the world is based on attraction  
15 rather than promotion. We simply say, "Here we are, this is how our  
16 program has helped us, you're welcome to take it for yourself." Thus do  
17 we avoid dangerous self-glorification, which is the very opposite of  
18 spiritual anonymity..

19           The Twelfth Tradition affirms the vital role that anonymity plays  
20 in our spiritual program. Anonymity is at the core of all the Twelve  
21 Traditions largely because it's the most powerful principle we have in  
22 countering the egotistical impulses so symptomatic of our disease.

23           The Twelfth Tradition also addresses the all-important role of  
24 anonymity in our day-to-day relationships within N.A. We may, if we  
25 wish, give only our first names at open meetings. Some members do the  
26 opposite, they make a point of giving their last names at all meetings--  
27 maybe as a way of saying, "I trust you all," maybe as a way of showing  
28 some bravado, maybe as a way of saying they don't care about possibly  
29 adverse consequences, or for other reasons. Motives vary. Sometimes

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1 it's appropriate to reveal our identities, sometimes not. We should  
2 endeavor to understand our motives in this respect--why we might want  
3 to be open about who we are, why not. Depending on the circumstances,  
4 sometimes discretion is best. We must, in all situations, strive to set our  
5 egos aside.

6 Ego and recovery are incompatible. Ego and selfless service are  
7 incompatible. By contrast, anonymity and recovery, and anonymity and  
8 selfless service, go hand-in-hand. For many of us this wasn't an easy  
9 lesson to learn. When we came into N.A. we were of two minds. We  
10 had outsized egos but we also felt a strong sense of worthlessness. We'd  
11 let our addiction make a mess of our lives and we wanted desperately to  
12 feel good about ourselves, to get praise, pats on the back. So right away  
13 some of us wanted credit for not using and for being diligent in working  
14 the program. We wanted to be told how great we were for no longer  
15 trying to destroy ourselves. As a member said, "Here I was for the first  
16 time in years and years doing things I could be proud of, and I wanted to  
17 get the applause. My sponsor said, 'It's not you doing it, it's God--you're  
18 just another addict trying to get clean and the woods are full of them.' It  
19 took me a long time to learn that it's dangerous for me to think too much  
20 of myself."

21 Another member started taking on more service work--manning a  
22 hotline, serving on an H&I committee. This member, who in the past  
23 had never done anything that wasn't for money, was very proud of the  
24 way he gave in N.A. He went around feeling extremely good about  
25 himself and wanting other members to feel good about him, too. Finally,  
26 his sponsor asked him to spend a couple of months performing an  
27 exercise, which consisted of doing small favors for other people. The  
28 catch was, he was to do them anonymously, not in his name but in  
29 God's. At first it was hard; he yearned so for thank you's and was

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1 frustrated. But in time the most unexpected thing happened: he got to  
2 enjoy doing things for others quietly, without fanfare. "It was," he said,  
3 "a humbling experience." It also felt good because he knew he was doing  
4 the right things for the right reasons.

5 Anonymity is the principle whereby we become willing to place our  
6 egos and personalities second both to recovery and to group unity.  
7 Because we all have egos, it's normal and understandable to seek  
8 "strokes" for a job well done. However, constant praise and recognition  
9 severely pollute the humility which we require for recovery. In recovery  
10 we found that humility is a spiritual tool to be nourished and cherished.  
11 Credit for what we have achieved goes to the God of our understanding,  
12 not to us personally. We're the channels for God's love.

13 When we practice anonymity we can't take credit for carrying the  
14 message, reaching out lovingly to a newcomer with one day clean, or  
15 doing any of the service work that furthers our primary purpose.  
16 Though it's our energy that stuffs the envelopes, makes sure the meeting  
17 schedule gets printed, plugs in the coffee pot and accomplishes committee  
18 work, that energy comes from a Power greater than us.

19 When we practice spiritual anonymity our groups serve as  
20 channels of God's love in the same way individual members do. We  
21 perform our group functions without needing credit for it. We don't see  
22 our own groups as special or superior to other groups. We don't fight,  
23 group against group, for members; we work cooperatively within the  
24 Fellowship for our common welfare.

25 When we practice spiritual anonymity, we honor other members'  
26 anonymity and fully respect their right to privacy. Therefore, we refrain  
27 from gossiping about our fellow members, and refuse to listen to gossip  
28 about others. We refrain from taking other members' inventories for  
29 them, realizing that that's exclusively their task as taking our own

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1 inventories is exclusively ours. We refrain from reporting to a member's  
2 sponsor something a member has said in a meeting, rigorously adhering  
3 to the principle that "what is said in meetings stays in meetings."

4 In sum, we refrain from playing games with the personalities of  
5 others--we stick to our principles.

6 In N.A. we hear the phrase, "principles before personalities" so  
7 often it has almost become a cliché. But the repetition underscores how  
8 important those words are. They're a powerful reminder that we must  
9 not let personality squabbles spoil our unity or detract from our common  
10 welfare.

11 Many of us have very strong personalities. We're quick to judge,  
12 to exercise control over others, to take offense. We have to struggle to  
13 shed these character defects. Sometimes it takes a long time before we  
14 do so and sometimes they resurface just when we think we're done with  
15 them. Obviously, we can't like everyone equally well, especially at first  
16 meetings, before we get to know someone better. And the better we get  
17 to know some people, the less we may like them. But we do have a  
18 choice. We can react with impatience, anger, disgust, contempt or other  
19 negative feelings, letting those feelings take over and dictate our  
20 response--or we can step back, allowing the feelings to drain away, at  
21 which time we may respond with compassion and love.

22 We come to realize that none of us is in a position to judge others,  
23 lest our own failings be taken into account. For instance, we must--  
24 individually and collectively, as groups--try not to judge members who  
25 may be going through great upset or difficulty; we realize the recovery  
26 process is different for everyone, and a member's upset may be  
27 reasonable and appropriate under the circumstances. We realize that we  
28 all need time to work the Twelve Steps so that they become integral to  
29 our day-to-day functioning. Therefore, we try not to dismiss a new or old

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1 member as too bullying or too wimpish or too arrogant or too whatever.  
2 We recognize that all of us were led to N.A. for our own specific reasons,  
3 and that we come at whatever state of spiritual development we may be.  
4 We recognize that when we judge someone we're focusing on differences  
5 rather than on similarities--which has the effect of separating, not  
6 unifying, us.

7 We also come to realize that personality squabbles are in direct  
8 opposition to anonymity and can scare newcomers and others away from  
9 our meetings. If we chase newcomers out their recovery may be thrown  
10 into jeopardy and their lives lost. Hostility ruins the atmosphere of  
11 recovery and its emphasis on the common welfare which we all  
12 desperately need.

13 There's yet another important aspect to principles before  
14 personalities. It means that when issues affecting our Fellowship arise  
15 at meetings or in any other circumstance we judge those issues on their  
16 own merits. We don't react positively because a comment or suggestion  
17 has been made by a member we like; we don't react negatively simply  
18 because an idea comes from somebody we dislike. We listen to the  
19 message rather than the messenger. We know that a Higher Power may  
20 work through any of us as we share recovery.

21 The effort to place principles before personalities can bring about a  
22 real leap in our spiritual growth. One member, a trusted servant, was  
23 locked in a power struggle with some other trusted servants over the  
24 direction of a certain project. This member knew she was right. She  
25 knew that the other approach was harmful to N.A., but couldn't budge  
26 the other members. There were personality clashes galore. In the long  
27 run she was proved right and eventually her point of view prevailed.

28 Later, however, she could look back at this incident and say, "I  
29 don't know what's right, only God does. In retrospect I can look back

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1 and see that the whole thing came out the way it was supposed to come  
2 out at that particular time. Not the way I thought it was supposed to,  
3 but the way it was supposed to".

4 When we engage in power struggles or personality clashes we're  
5 basically engaged in attempts to assert our egos. Winning the fight  
6 becomes more important than resolving the issue. Ironically, though, in  
7 such situations no one is truly the winner because resentments linger  
8 and fester--and erupt in more conflict later on. Too, none of us has the  
9 right to tell another person, "You're right," or, "You're wrong". Any  
10 attempt to do so means casting aside humility and arrogantly assuming  
11 the ability to see into the future. We can't see into the future. We can't  
12 take the place of God and don't really know how things will or should  
13 work out. What we can and must do in line with our spiritual principles  
14 is to surrender to God's will. When we surrender, and the members with  
15 whom we have been in conflict also surrender, and we all remain  
16 faithful to our Twelve Traditions, we will come through the experience  
17 having done "right." As recovering addicts we need an atmosphere of  
18 love, compassion and support in which to grow. When we insist upon  
19 principles before personalities we help create that atmosphere.

20 As our weeks in N.A. stretch into months, and months into years,  
21 we come to be seen as long-term members. Many of us have taken on  
22 increasing visibility. We come to be known for having this many or that  
23 many years' clean time. We come to be known, too, for the growing  
24 amounts of work we do in support of N.A.'s service structure. It's far  
25 more difficult then to practice spiritual anonymity, but no less important  
26 that we do so, lest we fall into the traps our egos set for us.

27 A member with three years' clean time recalled being in meetings  
28 in which he was the only person there in that position; at best the other  
29 members present had three months' clean time and some were

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1 intermittently still using. At first he had a hard time relating to those  
2 other members. He felt impatient with them. He felt lonely in their  
3 midst. He wanted to get everybody there to stop using and he wasn't  
4 succeeding.

5 Later he understood the problem. The problem wasn't theirs, it  
6 was his. He'd made himself conspicuous by his relatively long clean time  
7 and unconsciously played on that to be the guru, the wise one. He'd let  
8 ego and personality get in the way of service and recovery. After a few  
9 similar experiences he went to meetings as just another member, not the  
10 one who knows all the answers and whose ideas have to be accepted. At  
11 that point he was able to get much more out of the meetings than before--  
12 and the quiet advice he gave, when asked for, had much more impact.

13 Another member, many years clean, and with a gift for sensitive  
14 communication was often in demand as a speaker. Over time, however,  
15 he noticed a distance growing between himself and other members--most  
16 of whom had much less clean time than he. He realized he'd become a  
17 star, a myth, and meditation helped him to know how to find his way  
18 back to the humility he needed and wanted. The next time he spoke, he  
19 shared an experience in which he talked at length about himself, as  
20 nothing special. He worked the program no differently than other  
21 members, he said. He went further; in a heartfelt way he admitted to  
22 having been wrong in a lot of the things he'd conveyed to members over  
23 the years. Right after the talk he felt a little embarrassed and  
24 humiliated. It made him feel uncomfortable. But then one of the male  
25 members in the audience came up, hugged him, and said, "I've heard you  
26 talk before but I've always been afraid to come up to you afterwards  
27 because you had all this status and knew so much more than I did. I'd  
28 felt inferior to you. But I feel so much better about you, and about  
29 myself, now that I know you're vulnerable."

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1           The former "star" never forgot that incident. As he concluded,  
2 "Being a big shot and helping other people just don't go together."

3           The longer our clean time, and the better known we are in the  
4 Fellowship, the more we need to work with a sponsor, and work the  
5 steps. We need to attend meetings with humility--sharing as if we were  
6 newcomers, admitting it when we hurt. We need to resist feeling special  
7 or being made to feel special. Being special means being different, and  
8 being different almost killed us. None of us is really special. All of us  
9 suffered terribly in our addiction. All of us had to have a loving God  
10 bring us to recovery--and all of us still do.

11           Regardless of how visible we are in the Fellowship, when we're  
12 finally able to practice true spiritual anonymity we're in for a surprise.  
13 We feel as if a burden has been lifted. The burden was real; we  
14 recognize it as our ever hungry egos, always demanding admiration,  
15 recognition, appreciation, and the right to be the center of the universe.  
16 When we drop that burden the relief can be enormous. As one member  
17 said, "When it happened I no longer had to live up to anything. I could  
18 just be me." The more we practice anonymity, we discover, the easier it  
19 becomes to respond that way. The response becomes intuitive and,  
20 eventually, effortless--a statement of our gratitude at being in recovery.

21           For all these reasons spiritual anonymity embraces our Fellowship  
22 and is woven throughout our Twelve Traditions. It helps guard us from  
23 our defects of character and personality. When we practice anonymity in  
24 our one-to-one relationships with other members and in our groups,  
25 personalities and differences have no power. Protected by anonymity, we  
26 can be free and open with each other, giving to and living with each  
27 other. As one long-time member said, "No matter what problem I have,  
28 or what secret I have, I always feel comfortable talking about it to  
29 anyone in this room, whether I know you or don't know you, because I

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1 know you anyway as vehicles of recovery, and I know that you embrace  
2 the concept of anonymity in selfless and loving service to other people."

3 Our lives are reconstructed by the Twelve Steps, which we work  
4 under the protection of the Twelve Traditions. Confusion, pain, and  
5 anger give way to a sense of direction and peace of mind. We're grateful  
6 to those members of N.A. who found recovery before us and those in our  
7 Fellowship who are clean today. We do our part to make recovery  
8 available to any addict who wants it. We acknowledge the power of a  
9 loving God in our lives who provides the strength and guidance we so  
10 desperately need. These are gifts--ours to keep and enhance, as long as  
11 we keep giving them to others the N.A. way.

12 We know, though we might occasionally deny knowing, all the  
13 things that would tear us apart--self-will, self-centeredness, run away  
14 ego, the hunger for power and prestige. We know, with equal certainty,  
15 the ties that bind us together--love and compassion, a striving for unity  
16 and for the common welfare, a commitment to our spiritual path. As  
17 long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would  
18 tear us apart, all will be well.

19  
20  
21 **General Input**

22  
23 The basic text approval of our N.A. "White Book" gives a  
24 dictionary definition of anonymity as "the state of bearing no name." I  
25 found a similar definition in my dictionary and another definition that  
26 said, "without individuality." So anonymity is when "I" becomes "we"  
27 and spiritual principles are more important than any one person  
28 (including myself), or any one group.

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1           Anonymity is visible humility. We relinquish our natural desire  
2 for personal distinction and subordinate our wills to the spiritual  
3 strength of the group conscience.

4           This tradition leaves no room for pride or prejudice. When I came  
5 into N.A., I made a lot of judgments of other members, mainly on the  
6 grounds of clothes and grammar. I couldn't see for example, how  
7 someone who wore a purple sweater with a green shirt could possibly  
8 have anything to say to me, who thought those two colors clashed.  
9 Gratefully, I am learning not to discount the message because I don't like  
10 the messenger. I think another reminder in "principles before  
11 personalities" is that we are all equal and, of ourselves, powerless. No  
12 one belongs on a pedestal.

13           Finally, in keeping with our anonymity, what we hear in meetings  
14 and who we see here is privileged information. We can do great harm to  
15 others and/or N.A. as a whole, by carelessly repeating what was said in  
16 the trust and confidence of a meeting. There is an old Sanskrit test  
17 which can be used before saying anything about another person: "Is it  
18 true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?"

19           Recovery is of equal importance to each and every one of us. In  
20 keeping with this the "I" becomes "We." The spiritual foundation  
21 becomes more important than any one particular group or individual"  
22 (Basic Text, p. 70). "By working together for our common welfare we  
23 achieve the spirit of anonymity" (Basic Text, p. 70). "True spiritual  
24 principles are always in harmony". What brings the harmony about is  
25 the foundation which all of us seeking recovery have acquired in some  
26 degree. It is what we bring to and share in group conscience, what we  
27 use to tell the World about our Fellowship. It is recovery being the  
28 message, hope and the promise of freedom being fulfilled, coming to  
29 believe and making decisions, accepting responsibility and fulfilling

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1 obligations. It is the common knowledge we share for our common  
2 welfare.

3 With the acceptance of anonymity, character defects are  
4 minimized and do not influence our work. The principles of recovery are  
5 in control and we are exactly where we are supposed to be. We do the  
6 best we can with our projects, practice the principles of Narcotics  
7 Anonymous on them. The addict who still suffers, the people who work  
8 with them, and all who are exposed to our message are attracted,  
9 introduced to us by N.A. recovery.

10 Honesty, open mindedness and willingness are the foundation of  
11 cooperation and good organization. They are fulfilled with this principle.  
12 Love, tolerance, patience and humility, exist together in anonymity.  
13 They become obvious in effort, and with vigilance the power of example  
14 is ever present. With the acceptance of the principles of Narcotics  
15 Anonymous into our lives, anonymity becomes intuitive and effortless, a  
16 statement of gratitude. Our work becomes a statement of recovery, and  
17 recovery in itself serves.

18 "Anonymity in itself makes it impossible for personalities to come  
19 before principles" (Basic Text, p. 70).

20 \*\*\*\*\*

21 One of N.A.'s esteemed members claims, in effect, that in  
22 meetings everyone's supposed to be equal, but that it doesn't work out  
23 that way--that oldtimers are "special" in ways that separate them. He  
24 says this violates the Traditions. Something to explore?

25 He is a dear friend of mine and my mentor in world services, so I  
26 think I know where he's coming from on this. Oldtimers are addicts still  
27 and sometimes they need the same help accorded more usually to our  
28 newcomers. Through sponsorship, regular attendance at a home group

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1 and the close friendships we form over the years, this is a somewhat rare  
2 occurrence. Our Twelve Steps help us deal with or eliminate most of the  
3 attributes and habit patterns which result in our getting in tight places.

4 He would more likely be talking about the "oldtimer mystique". I  
5 believe that this is more the fault of the oldtimer than the membership,  
6 if it can be considered a fault. The phenomenon is where you ask a  
7 question and the oldtimer will draw up their face and knit their brows,  
8 treating the question and questioner with undue heaviness. Members  
9 come to accept these mannerisms which may have grown up gradually  
10 over a period of time. The result is separation from their Fellows.

11 Come to think of it, there is a fairly common occurrence where a  
12 member with only three to six years resides in a small community where  
13 they are put on a pedestal and not allowed to have problems. Through  
14 travel and regular communication with the N.A. friends, the feeling of  
15 "separateness" is reduced to a more balanced level. This most likely is  
16 what my friend is bringing up and if it isn't, I'll bring it up now! I  
17 believe that problems like this are rooted in human nature as opposed to  
18 the disease of addiction. Our leaders have to accept certain impositions  
19 which go with the territory.

20

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22 Our literature writing process is a good example of how anonymity  
23 works. No one person, or group of people, can claim to have written our  
24 pamphlets or books. On our writing, reviewing, input and discussion  
25 process, any addict in our Fellowship can participate in writing our  
26 literature. All the wisdom, experience and principles we write about  
27 comes from our Higher Power through many voices. All that we know is

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1 shared by all of us, available to all of us. When we carry the message  
2 anonymously the information is not drowned out by an individual voice.

3 Carrying the message anonymously clearly is "an addict" rather  
4 than a personality. We refer projects to "the Literature Committee",  
5 whose membership changes yearly, rather than to individuals by name.

6  
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8 We have all heard the phrase, "principles before personalities,"  
9 over and over again, in and out of meetings, but how often do we stop  
10 and reflect on what that means?

11 This tradition is asking us to lay aside old (or new) prejudices, to  
12 treat each other with dignity. We are all equals here--we have to be  
13 because addiction is no respecter of age, race, sex, personality or status.

14 We learn to hear the message and disregard the messenger, to  
15 listen without judgment. Even if the speaker has only one day clean, or  
16 has relapsed countless times, he or she can teach us something, and has  
17 the right to be heard. Time in the Program is no guarantee of healthy  
18 recovery, and this is not a personality contest, so when electing trusted  
19 servants, let us consider the way members apply the twenty-four  
20 spiritual principles of N.A. in their lives.

21 The first part of Tradition Twelve, "Anonymity is the spiritual  
22 foundation of all our Traditions" often gets lost or forgotten in the  
23 cliché of the second half.

24 "Anonymity" is defined as a state of bearing no name, or as  
25 applied to us, "giving without personal recognition." This, we are told, is  
26 the very basis of our Program. This is the principle that underlies all  
27 our traditions, and remaining anonymous will help us grow spiritually.  
28 We are all imperfect instruments of our Higher Power. By ignoring the

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1 character defects of members around us, we render personality  
2 differences powerless.

3 To do this takes an act of will. At least it does not come naturally  
4 to me, nor I expect to many other addicts. To forgive and forget an  
5 injustice is difficult. No, I want to tell the whole Fellowship that so and  
6 so was rude to me or whatever. In other words, I want revenge.

7 Next to slinging blame at others, it is most natural for us to want  
8 to take credit for what we have done. Neither of these acts of egotism is  
9 conducive to humility--the humility required to practise anonymity on a  
10 personal level. I am not responsible for my coming to the Program; nor  
11 am I responsible for anybody else's recovery. My clean time is a gift  
12 from my Higher Power, a gift He has entrusted to my care. Recognition  
13 of that fact is the beginning of humility.

14 Tradition Twelve also reminds us that each member has the right  
15 to privacy. Who and what I see and hear in meetings must remain  
16 confidential. I may tell everybody that I am a member of N.A., but I do  
17 not have the right to say that you are.

18 When I first came around the Program, I was very hurt and angry  
19 that people had told my sister that they had seen me in meetings. I  
20 wasn't sure I could stay clean, nor if I even wanted to, so I very carefully  
21 went to the meetings I know she didn't attend. I was afraid of  
22 disappointing her, but even more I was building a surprise for her first  
23 year cake: I was going to give her the realization of her cherished hope:  
24 that I would be clean before her first birthday. To those who told her  
25 they'd seen me in meetings it was probably just a casual remark, but to  
26 me it was a big betrayal.

27 In conclusion, I would like to say we are, after all, human beings  
28 striving for growth. Some of our greatest tests will come from other

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1 members. In the spirit of all the traditions, let's learn to practice  
2 unconditional love.

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## THE TWELVE STEPS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS.

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

