

Narcotics Anonymous,

# **It Works:** How and Why

Part Two

## **The Traditions**

Review-Form Material  
Traditions Seven — Twelve

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NOT FOR USE IN NA MEETINGS

FOR REVIEW AND INPUT  
INPUT DUE JULY 15, 1992



## **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 The Traditions

*Review Form, 1992*

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# WORLD SERVICE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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TO: The Fellowship  
FROM: World Service Board of Trustees  
DATE: December 10, 1991  
RE: Review form of *It Works: How and Why--The Traditions*  
Traditions Seven through Twelve

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As with the first six chapters we released in April 1991, we decided that including the following information might enhance members' understanding of the process, development, and current state of the project. We have included not only background information regarding decisions but also information about the review period, the type of input being requested, and our plans for the completion of the traditions portion of *It Works: How and Why*.

The attached drafts were generated by the WSB Traditions Ad Hoc Committee. The 1988 brown and beige input form of *It Works* and input from the fellowship served as the foundation for their work. Committee drafts were reviewed by members of the World Service Conference Literature Committee and the World Service Board of Trustees. After factoring in the literature committee and trustee input, final drafts were developed by the ad hoc committee and approved by World Service Board of Trustees for release to the fellowship.

As reported in our various communiques, the following was adopted as the statement of purpose for this book: *"The Traditions portion of It Works: How and Why, shall serve as a resource for NA groups and the individual member. The book seeks to explore the spiritual principles within the traditions, engage members with the spirit--not the law--of the traditions, and provide a basis for thought and discussion about the traditions."* This book is not meant to fulfill every need for every group or every member; rather, it is to be a book that will generate discussion and allow for practical application of the principles contained in the traditions.

In order to engage the reader, this book is written in more of an experiential rather than a didactic or "how to" manner. This decision to write it in this way was made as a result of lengthy discussions about whether the work should be idealistic in its presentation or more reflective of current

practices within the fellowship. We strived to write this material in a nonjudgmental tone, keeping the discussion on a level that is spiritual in nature. The style prefers the simple rather than the complex in presenting the concepts contained in the material, and is written to engage rather than impress the reader. The audience this book is aimed toward is the membership of Narcotics Anonymous and the NA groups rather than nonmembers.

The attached drafts are out for fellowship review and input until July 15, 1992. As we have stated within our various reports, we are looking for conceptual rather than line-by-line input on these drafts and, as a result, have not included line numbers. You will find six questionnaires in this package, covering each of the chapters. Please complete them as fully as possible and return them to us in care of the WSO. We are hoping that you will tell us what we may have missed or what may be incorrectly or insufficiently articulated. If you feel that these drafts are on target, please let us know that, too.

Our plan for completing our work on this book, depending upon the availability of resources, is as follows:

1. Begin working on the approval form of *It Works: How and Why--The Traditions* in January 1992.
2. Complete the approval form in time for action at the 1993 World Service Conference. (We have not, as yet, made a final decision about releasing the approval form in sections or in its entirety. This decision will be made either before or at WSC 1992.)

It is important to realize that, depending upon the nature of the input we receive, the approval version of this work may be somewhat different than the attached drafts.

We thank you for your ongoing interest in and support of our work. If you have any questions about this material, please contact us through the WSO. It continues to be a privilege to work on this project for the fellowship. Thank you for allowing us to be of service to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.



# **WORLD SERVICE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

## **TRADITIONS SIX - TWELVE REVIEW FORM**

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<sup>1</sup> This table of contents reflects the page-numbering system started with the review and input draft of Traditions One through Six released last year. The input form of Tradition Six ended on page 56, therefore Tradition Seven starts on page 57. This is done so that you may combine the first and second halves of the review form if you so wish.

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**TRADITION SEVEN**

*Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting,  
declining outside contributions.*

The Seventh Tradition adds further clarity to our group's relationship with the surrounding community. Tradition Six cautioned us against funding other organizations, "lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose." By the same token, Tradition Seven encourages us to decline funding *from* other organizations, and for the same reason: to maintain our group's focus on its primary purpose. By paying our own expenses, we remain free to carry our own message.

While we encourage every NA group to become fully self-supporting, we recognize that most meetings don't start that way. Some meetings are started by nonmember professionals who've become acquainted with the Narcotics Anonymous program. Wanting to provide their clients with access to what NA has to offer, these professionals set a time, find a room, buy some literature, give a *Group Booklet* to the addicts who've gathered, and help them start a meeting. After some exposure to the principles underlying the NA program, these recovering addicts often begin taking responsibility for their meetings themselves.

Other meetings are started by one or two NA members who want to help carry the message to other addicts. Frequently, such members pay rent and buy literature for these meetings out of their own pockets. Sometimes they're given help by established NA groups in the community or by the nearest area committee. Either way, it often takes quite a while before a new meeting is able to stand on its own feet.

How a meeting is begun is not nearly so important as how it grows. Our experience is that, once a meeting is established, it gathers momentum. The meeting begins attracting a group of addicts who attend on a fairly consistent basis. These addicts share their experiences with one another and help each other better understand NA's principles of recovery. As they get to know and

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love one another, they begin making a commitment to one another. At this point, the meeting becomes more than just an event--an NA group has evolved from the meeting, complete with members. With the evolution of an NA group, its members committed to supporting one another, the group as a whole is ready to take full responsibility for its obligations.

Many of us think of the Seventh Tradition as "the money tradition." While we have come to associate this tradition of self-support with the funds we contribute, the spirit of the Seventh Tradition goes much deeper than the basket we pass. Whatever a group needs to fulfill its primary purpose should be provided by the group itself.

The question then is, what *does* a group need? First and foremost, it needs a message to carry--and that, it already has. In the course of its evolution, the group has attracted members who've proven to one another that "an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live." Without that message, the group has no reason to exist; with it, an NA group needs little more.

Basket → Beyond that, the needs of the group are small. The group needs the volunteer time and energy of its members for service work. Groups usually need to rent meeting places where their members can gather and where newcomers can find them. Most groups find it important to buy NA literature which they make available at their meetings. Some purchase refreshments. The expenses associated with these things are minimal. Most groups can meet such expenses by passing the hat, and even have a little left over.

From the "little left over," most groups make contributions to the NA boards and committees established to serve them. Like the groups, these boards and committees decline contributions from sources outside the fellowship. Unlike the groups, however, our service boards and committees are not themselves fully self-supporting. They have been created to help the groups fulfill their primary

on to Committees not Boards.

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purpose more effectively, and depend on group contributions for the money needed to do their work.

As simple as a group's needs are, a group's decision to become fully self-supporting does not usually require the commitment of extensive amounts of its members' money, time, or other resources. If a group is having problems paying its own way, it may want to ask itself some questions: What is our primary purpose, and how do we fulfill it? What does our group need to fulfill its primary purpose? Have we confused our wants with our needs? When a group's sense of its needs have become grandiose, the simplicity of the Fifth Tradition can help deflate those needs to their proper size.

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not #7.

But what if a group is still unable to pay its own way, even after examining its understanding of the Fifth Tradition? Should it ask for assistance from other groups? Should it ask NA's community friends for contributions? After all, the Seventh Tradition doesn't have the power of law; it merely says that "every NA group *ought to* be fully self-supporting." What might a group want to consider before seeking outside contributions?

First, the group will want to consider its identity as a part of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. Recovery in NA is very different from our using, in a number of ways. When we were using, many of us took whatever we could from whomever we could as often as we could. Our group's decision to become fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions, reflects the new way our members are living in recovery. Rather than taking what we want or need from others, we are paying our own way.

The group will also want to examine its identity as a *group*. When we were using, most of us looked out for ourselves and ourselves alone, not giving any thought for one another's welfare. An NA recovery group, on the other hand, is founded on its members' commitment to one another. Many of us have tried to find a way of making it on our own, but without success. We've found we need one another to survive and to grow. The NA group is both the expression and the

fulfillment of that need we have for one another's support. An NA group reinforces the solidarity of its members, and the foundation of their continued recovery, by declining outside contributions.

"Alright," we say, "our group has made a commitment to become fully self-supporting. But what if the money we collect from passing the hat still isn't sufficient to meet our needs? What if we sold some T-shirts or jewelry to raise some cash, or held a potluck dinner and asked for a donation at the door? Perhaps the energy our members put into such activities could be turned into the money we need to pay our bills."

On the face of it, there doesn't seem to be any contradiction between the Seventh Tradition and these kinds of money-raising activities. Before engaging in such activities, however, the group might want to ask itself some questions. First, of course, is the question of need. For what purpose does the group seek these funds? Fundraising may be a way to help us fulfill our primary purpose, but if we already have enough money to complete that objective, we don't need to engage in money-raising activities.

If our group is considering a fundraiser, we might also ask ourselves whether such activities, intended to raise money to help our group carry the message, might not end up *diverting* us from carrying the message. Money-raising activities usually take a good bit of time to manage, time that might be better spent in fulfilling our primary purpose more directly. If fundraising activities are successful, bringing in more money than the group needs to meet its obligations, controversy over control of that money may well arise, distracting the group from its primary purpose. A group may also want to consider whether the atmosphere created by selling goods and services at its meetings might not detract from the free, open atmosphere so conducive to recovery.

By and large, our groups have found that the simplest, straightest path to full self-support is through the voluntary contributions of their own members. If a group is unable to provide for its own needs from the contributions of its

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members, perhaps group members will want to consider increasing their contributions. In the same breath as we speak of this, however, we need also recall our fellowship's Third Tradition: "The only *requirement* for membership is a desire to stop using." Our membership, whether we are speaking of membership in NA as a whole or group membership, does not depend on the amount of money we give; indeed, we aren't required to give any money at all in order to consider ourselves NA members. If our group has carefully examined its expenses, trimmed them to match only what it needs to fulfill its primary purpose, and still doesn't bring in enough money to pay its own way, the group's members will be left with some questions only they can answer for themselves, individually: What do I get from the group? Does my personal recovery depend on its survival? Am I able to give more than I've already given and still meet my own financial responsibilities?

In the end, our individual decisions and group commitments are entirely up to us, because we are the ones who have to live with them. However, certain lines from our White Booklet, written in reference to the Twelve Steps, seem to apply equally to the observance of the Seventh Tradition--indeed, to all the traditions: *"If you want what we have to offer, and are willing to make the effort to get it... these are the principles that made our recovery possible."* The traditions are not laws, and there is only one membership requirement. But if we want what the group has to offer us individually, and if our group wants to reap the benefits associated with self-support, we will practice the principles that make those things possible.

### Applying spiritual principles

Each of our Twelve Traditions describes one specific, concrete thing that has been found to help our groups remain strong, lively, and free. Underlying the specifics of our traditions, however, are dozens of spiritual principles, any one of which could be applied to almost any of the Twelve Traditions. This broad field of principle is the ground upon which the traditions have grown. The more we



Let #2  
Speak of #2

cultivate this ground, the stronger our understanding and application of each of the traditions themselves will be. Some of the principles we will wish to tap in strengthening our appreciation of the Seventh Tradition are *gratitude, responsibility, simplicity, faith, integrity, and freedom.*

The *gratitude* we speak of in regard to Tradition Seven is like the collective sense of direction the Second Tradition talks about--it is the gratitude of the NA group, *as a group*. When NA members gather to share their recovery, they generate a sense of gratitude among themselves. They are grateful the group exists, and want it to continue to be there for them and for the members yet to come. The gratitude of the group speaks, in part, through the group's collective commitment to support itself.

The group's decision to become fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions, reflects the group's sense of *responsibility* for itself. In recovery, we discard the illusion that the rest of the world is responsible to take care of us; rather, we take due pride in caring for ourselves. Individually, we demonstrate our newfound maturity by accepting the weight of our own burdens. And collectively, as NA groups, we demonstrate our fellowship's maturity by accepting responsibility for our group's expenses, neither seeking nor accepting outside contributions.

The burden of responsibility, however, may seem unbearable without an appreciation for the *simplicity* of the group's needs. The commitment to become self-supporting is not a commitment to raise vast sums of money to fulfill sweeping programs. Rather, the group determines it will muster the few basic resources it needs to fulfill its simple primary purpose: to carry the message to the still-suffering addict. The principle of simplicity, when applied to Tradition Seven, helps our groups avoid the heated conflicts that often arise over the control of great resources. Problems of money, property, and prestige need not divert our groups from their primary purpose when the simplicity of that purpose and of our needs is kept squarely in focus.

Tradition #6 Stuff

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Loving God

In understanding the principles underlying the Seventh Tradition, practical simplicity walks hand in hand with our *faith* in a Higher Power. In our personal recovery, we've come to believe that, so long as we take our direction from what we believe the God of our understanding would have us do, our needs will be met. Likewise, the decision to decline outside contributions, paying group expenses from the group's own resources, is based firmly in faith. So long as our group remains devoted to fulfilling its primary purpose, its needs will be met.

As an NA group, we have made a commitment to support one another in our recovery; this is what defines us as a *group*. Our group's commitment to become fully self-supporting reflects the group's *integrity*, its faithfulness to its fundamental identity. We support each other in recovery and, together, we pay our way as a self-supporting group.

Our integrity, our faith, our sense of simplicity, our acceptance of responsibility, our gratitude--together, all these things spell *freedom*. By encouraging our group to pay its own way, the Seventh Tradition gives our group the freedom to share its recovery as it sees fit, not beholden to outside contributors. Further, it gives our group the freedom that comes from inner strength, the strength that develops through applying spiritual principles. By making the decision to become fully self-supporting, our NA group assures that it will always have the resources it needs to survive and continue fulfilling its primary purpose.

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**IT WORKS: HOW AND WHY - THE TRADITIONS  
INPUT FORM****TRADITION SEVEN**

1. Does the draft reflect the concepts contained in this tradition accurately?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

2. Are there any concepts missing? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, what?

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3. General Comments: P.58-Parg.3 Last Sentence - Change Hat.  
P.62-Parg.1 What's the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tradition doing here.

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**TRADITION EIGHT**

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

Narcotics Anonymous offers a distinctly nonprofessional approach to the disease of addiction. We have no hospitals, no treatment centers, no outpatient clinics, none of the facilities associated with a professional enterprise. We do not diagnose anyone's condition or track the progress of our "patients"--in fact, we *have* no patients, only members. Our groups do not provide professional therapeutic, medical, legal, or psychiatric services. We are simply a fellowship of recovering addicts, meeting regularly to help each other stay clean.

"The heart of the NA way of recovery from addiction," we are told, is "one addict helping another." We have no certified NA "counsellors"; our varied experiences in recovery from drug addiction are all the credentials we need. Our members are not paid a salary for their Twelfth Step work, nor do our groups charge any dues or fees for carrying the NA message. This is what we mean when we say that "Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional."

This is not to say that no member of Narcotics Anonymous should ever take a job as a professional therapist of one sort or another. It is only to say that, at an NA meeting, a member's vocation is irrelevant. The therapeutic value in the message we share with one another lies in our personal experience in recovery, not in our credentials, our training, or our professional status.

We don't sell recovery; we share it freely with others in a spirit of love and gratitude. However, Narcotics Anonymous groups, service boards, and committees often require professional help in fulfilling their responsibilities. Tradition Eight makes a distinction between "selling our recovery" and employing people to help us do our service work. We refer to these employees as special workers, and we give them a paycheck in return for the services they provide us. Special workers who are also NA members are not "selling their recovery." They

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are simply providing professional service support we would otherwise have to hire nonaddicts to provide.

We employ the services of special workers through what the Eighth Tradition calls "our service centers." Some of us think only of our service offices when we hear the phrase, "service centers." This tradition, however, refers to all the special workers we employ for any purpose at all levels of Narcotics Anonymous, not just our office workers. In the same way, the phrase "service center" refers to any center where NA services are provided. The group may hire a translator for its bilingual meetings, or a janitor to help clean the hall. The area may hire typesetters and printers to help produce its meeting list, or an order clerk to assist in literature distribution. A service office may contract with attorneys or accountants to assist in managing its legal or financial affairs. None of these people are being paid for sharing their recovery; some of them may not even be addicts. We hire these special workers through our service centers to provide professional support for our services, not to professionalize our recovery program.

### **Applying spiritual principles**

Tradition Eight is one of the simplest, most straightforward of the Twelve Traditions. Likewise, the principles underlying the Eighth Tradition are eminently practical ones: *humility, prudence, sufficiency, anonymity, and integrity.*

An NA group exercises *humility* when it does not pretend to be anything more or less than it is. We do not purport to be professionals or experts in anything. We are not physicians, psychiatrists, or therapists; we are recovering addicts. All we offer is our collective practical experience in getting clean and learning to live clean. The value of our program comes from the identification and trust that exists between one addict and another.

We further exercise humility when we recognize that, sometimes, we need professionals to help us fulfill our services. We place great emphasis on "the

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therapeutic value of one addict helping another," sometimes to the extent that we are reluctant to hire professional assistance when we need it. But some NA services require too much time or expertise for our members to fulfill on a strictly volunteer basis. We mustn't allow our pride to prevent our fellowship from hiring the help it needs to support its services.

Neither should we hire special workers for jobs we can do ourselves. We must exercise *prudence* in employing professional assistance for our services. Most NA service responsibilities do not require special expertise or large, consistent commitments of time. Our members are perfectly capable of fulfilling such responsibilities on a volunteer basis. By exercising prudence, we can distinguish between those tasks requiring the support of special workers and those we can fulfill voluntarily.

In discussing the Sixth Tradition, we considered the *sufficiency* of our message: Narcotics Anonymous groups need not rely on outside enterprises in order to effectively offer recovery from addiction themselves. In the same way, Tradition Eight reminds us that our members need no professional credentials to be effective in carrying the NA message. The first-hand experience each of us has in recovery from addiction is more than sufficient to qualify us to carry the message to other addicts.

Let #6  
speak of  
#6

In the same vein, the Eighth Tradition reminds our groups of the value of *anonymity*. "Professionals" are people with certain specialized skills, often recognized by the credentials given them by a certifying panel. An NA group has no such recognized "experts." All group members are "experts" in their own recovery, fully qualified to share that recovery with another addict.

Finally, Tradition Eight supports the *integrity* of the NA group, helping it preserve what is most important about its fundamental identity. What is Narcotics Anonymous, after all, but a fellowship of addicts freely sharing with one another the simple message of their own experience? The Eighth Tradition is a firm, permanent commitment on the part of each NA group to steadfastly



maintain the feature of our program that is, indeed, of foremost value. By agreeing that "Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional," we reaffirm our belief that "the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is *without parallel!*" This is the heart of our program; so long as that heart beats strongly, our fellowship and our recovery shall remain vital.

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**IT WORKS: HOW AND WHY - THE TRADITIONS  
INPUT FORM****TRADITION EIGHT**

1. Does the draft reflect the concepts contained in this tradition accurately?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

2. Are there any concepts missing? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, what?

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3. General Comments: P. 69 - Parg. 2

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**TRADITION NINE**

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

In our White Booklet, we read that "NA is a nonprofit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean." This is "NA, as such"--a simple fellowship using a nonprofessional, addict-to-addict approach to the disease of addiction. Our groups require little organization; in fact, the less organization, the better.

The basic message of the Ninth Tradition can be expressed in three words: "Keep it simple." We are a fellowship, not a lobbying organization or a medical service or a chain of treatment facilities. We are nonprofessional. We have no rules, no fees, no governing bodies, and only one membership requirement. We have some traditional standards by which our groups may guide themselves, but nothing any more authoritative than that--certainly no "laws." Our guiding authority is a Higher Power as it finds expression in the conscience of our members; our primary purpose, to carry the message. That's "NA, as such," as we understand it. Our groups work as well as they do because they "keep it simple," lest anything get in the way of carrying our message as simply and directly as possible, one addict to another. We are not, and ought never become, organized.

Yet, for all its emphasis on keeping things simple, Tradition Nine recognizes that our fellowship does require a certain degree of organization to fulfill its primary purpose. Rather than recommend that NA groups themselves become organized, the Ninth Tradition suggests that groups organize separate boards and committees to serve their needs. Just as we are nonprofessional but may hire professionals to help us, so we are not organized but we may organize boards and committees to serve us. This arrangement insures that "NA, as such" maintains

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its uncluttered, direct approach to recovery, while assuring our ability to fulfill service tasks requiring a certain amount of organization.

Okay, so we *may* create service boards and committees. Now we must ask ourselves, why would we *want* to create such things? What are the needs these boards and committees would fulfill? To answer this question, let's look at how an NA group evolves, as we did when considering the Seventh Tradition. 7 to 7

In the beginning, the first NA group in a community only needs to gather its members together so they can help one another stay clean and carry their message to other addicts. As the group grows, it begins taking care of a variety of business related to its meetings, trying to insure that the message is carried as effectively as possible. To maintain the focus of its recovery meetings, the group usually conducts its business meeting separately, keeping "NA, as such" as simple as possible.

As the group grows even larger, it often sprouts new groups. To maintain some of the unity and camaraderie that existed when there was only one group in the community, these groups elect representatives who meet periodically. These representatives share information with one another about how their individual groups are doing, and help one another find solutions to problems one group or another may be having. From time to time, they may even organize a joint recovery meeting or social activity, gathering the entire NA community together.

Sooner or later, the groups realize the potential they have in this committee of representatives. Through this committee, the groups can combine their guidance and resources so that each of them can function more effectively and all, together, can carry the message further. To make it easier for each group to procure NA books and pamphlets, the groups may ask their committee to buy bulk supplies of literature. To make it easier for addicts to find out where NA meetings are being held in the community, the groups might ask their committee to compile a directory for distribution at meetings throughout the area. To let still-suffering addicts in the community who might not hear of NA by word-of-

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mouth know of the fellowship's existence, and to increase general community awareness of Narcotics Anonymous, the groups may ask that public information, hospitals and institutions, and phonelines programs be set up. The point is, the development of these services is based squarely on the groups' needs. We create these boards and committees to serve us in fulfilling those needs.

First, the groups define their needs; then, they create the boards and committees which will serve them. Once created, how do we assure that our service boards and committees will remain "directly responsible to those they serve?" We do this, first and foremost, through consistent communication. Through their representatives, groups communicate with the boards and committees serving them. The groups provide regular information about their condition and their activities. They communicate their concerns, their needs, their ideas, and their wishes. This information helps our boards and committees better understand and serve the needs of the groups.

Communication is a two-way street. Groups share information and guidance with the boards and committees serving them. Then, these boards and committees report back to the groups to which they are responsible, describing their operations, discussions, and plans. Responsible service boards and committees consult the groups in matters directly affecting them, and seek direction from the groups in matters not already covered by existing policy. By maintaining regular two-way communication between NA groups and the boards and committees serving them, we create an atmosphere of responsibility that serves our fellowship and its primary purpose well.

### **Applying spiritual principles**

Because the Ninth Tradition empowers the groups to establish a service structure--not a simple thing--many of us think of Tradition Nine as being very complex. In reality, the spiritual principles underlying this tradition are very simple ones, beginning with the principle of *simplicity* itself. The Ninth Tradition

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focuses first not on the relationship between groups and service committees, but on "NA, as such." The Narcotics Anonymous program is almost spartan in its simplicity. We are a fellowship of recovering addicts who help one another stay clean, nothing more.

Organized service work should be kept distinct from the groups, so that the groups can remain free to simply and directly fulfill our primary purpose, addict to addict. The boards and committees we *do* organize, we organize on the basis of need only, using the simplest guidelines possible. We organize them solely to serve us, not to establish a complex governing bureaucracy. The Ninth Tradition is far from complicated; in fact, it speaks throughout of simplicity.

In the same vein, Tradition Nine speaks of *anonymity*. When the Ninth Tradition exhorts NA, as such, never to become organized, it is telling us that we ought not create a governing hierarchy, a top-down bureaucracy dictating to our groups and members. As we noted in the Second Tradition, our leaders are not governors but servants taking their orders from the collective conscience of those they serve. Our primary purpose, not the personalities of our trusted servants, is what defines "NA, as such." To reinforce the anonymity of Tradition Nine, our groups, service boards, and committees practice various systems of rotating leadership so that no one personality ever dominates.

Another principle implicit in the Ninth Tradition is the principle of *humility*. Each group, on its own, is somewhat limited in its ability to fulfill its primary purpose; it has only so many members, so much time, and so many dollars to use in carrying the message by itself. However, when a number of groups combine their resources by joining together to form a service board or committee, they enhance their ability to fulfill their primary purpose. Together, they become able to do what they could not do alone.

The principle of humility also applies to the boards and committees spoken of by our Ninth Tradition. These boards and committees are established to serve only, not to govern. They are directly responsible to the groups, and are always

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subject to the explicit direction of the groups. Although our service boards and committees may do much to help our groups fulfill their primary purpose, it is in the groups where "NA, as such" comes to focus, not in the boards and committees that serve them.

*Prudence* is one of the guiding principles behind the Ninth Tradition relationship between the groups and the boards or committees that serve them. Groups are responsible to carefully consider their needs, planning prudently before they create boards and committees. There is nothing that will complicate the simplicity of "NA, as such" more than a needlessly elaborate array of committees, boards, and subcommittees.

The groups' *responsibility* does not end with the establishment of a board or committee to fulfill their service needs; in fact, that is only the beginning. As long as the committee remains active, the groups should maintain familiarity with its affairs. The groups should also provide continuing guidance to the committee. Our boards and committees cannot be held accountable to the groups they serve unless the groups play a responsible role in their service relationships.

Finally, the Ninth Tradition speaks of *fidelity*. Narcotics Anonymous groups join together, combining their resources to create service boards and committees that will help them better fulfill their primary purpose. Those boards and committees are not called to govern Narcotics Anonymous; they are called, rather, to faithfully execute the trust given them by the groups they serve. With a minimum of organization, our service boards and committees perform tasks on behalf of the groups, helping our groups remain free to do what they do best, simply and directly. Our fidelity to the Ninth Tradition assures that the simple, spontaneous atmosphere of recovery shared one addict to another in the NA group is never organized, legislated, or regulated out of existence.

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**IT WORKS: HOW AND WHY - THE TRADITIONS  
INPUT FORM****TRADITION NINE**

1. Does the draft reflect the concepts contained in this tradition accurately?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

2. Are there any concepts missing? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, what?

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3. General Comments: P. 74 - Parg. 1 - Why talk 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition  
P. 76 - Parg. 2 Why talk 2<sup>nd</sup> Tradition

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**TRADITION TEN**

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

Narcotics Anonymous is a society of recovering addicts who help one another stay clean by applying certain simple spiritual principles. Our primary purpose, as groups and as a fellowship, is to offer that same help to any addict seeking recovery. Aside from that, NA has no opinions whatsoever. By refusing to take sides on other issues, we avoid becoming embroiled in public controversies that could distract us from our primary purpose. This is the message of our Tenth Tradition.

To most of us, it probably seems obvious that Narcotics Anonymous, as a fellowship, has no opinion on the pressing world issues of our day. Most of these issues have little to do with either addiction or recovery. But there are a great number of addiction-related issues that others might *expect* a worldwide society of recovering drug addicts to take positions on. "What is NA's opinion," we are sometimes asked, "on the addiction treatment industry, other twelve-step fellowships, the legalization of drugs, addiction-related illnesses, and all the rest?" Our answer, according to Tradition Ten, is that our groups and our fellowship take no position on any issues, pro or con, except the NA program itself. We maintain neutrality on such issues so that we can maintain our focus on what we do best: sharing recovery from one addict to another.

However, even in explaining our own program in public, we may find ourselves treading on controversial ground. NA's views on total abstinence, recovering in open society, the "disease concept" of addiction, even our broad views on spirituality are not met with universal acceptance. Others who deal with addiction and recovery may view these matters very differently than we do. We cannot deny those aspects of our program that others take exception to. We can, however, take care to explain our program in such a way as not to deliberately

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invite controversy. "We do not suggest that everyone adopt our views, nor do we oppose those with different views," we can explain. "We simply want you to know what the Narcotics Anonymous program is like." So long as we focus, as groups and as a fellowship, on our recovery *experience* rather than our *opinions* of why or how NA works, we will stay as far as possible from public controversy.

Tradition Ten restricts NA, as a fellowship, from stating opinions on outside issues. However, it places no such restriction on the individual member. In Narcotics Anonymous, we believe strongly in personal freedom. Addicts who have a desire to stop using can become members of NA simply by saying so. We have no dues or fees, no pledges to sign, no promises to make to anyone, ever. Though a spiritual program, we encourage our members to develop their own understanding of a Higher Power. Even our leaders are only trusted servants, with no power to tell individual members what to do, think, or say. NA members are encouraged to think for themselves, to develop their own opinions, and to express those opinions as they see fit.

Everything in a recovering addict's life is sharing material. If it's affecting our ability to stay clean and grow spiritually, it's not an "outside issue." Many things can put us off balance and challenge our recovery. We often discuss such challenges with one another at our meetings, seeking to ease our personal burdens by sharing them with our fellow NA members. We ask others to share how they have applied the principles of the program in similar circumstances, recovering their balance and strengthening their recovery. We need no one's permission to talk about such things in our meetings.

But, for all that, we all know that controversial personal opinions can distract our meetings from their primary purpose. If "everything is recovery material," yet we want to help our meetings retain their focus on recovery, how do we decide what to share? We can ask ourselves some questions: Am I sharing from my experience, or am I expounding an opinion? As an individual, am I dwelling in the problem or seeking the solution? Do I share to draw the group together, or

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to force the group into separate camps? So long as we keep our common welfare and our primary purpose in focus, we will avoid the kind of controversy that distracts us from recovery.

### **Applying spiritual principles**

Foremost among the principles our groups and our fellowship apply in practicing Tradition Ten is the principle of *unity*. For all the diversity of individual opinion among our members, Narcotics Anonymous itself is united in having *no* opinion on any issues apart from its own program. As a fellowship, we agree to take positions only on those ideas that have drawn us together, our principles of recovery, not on the many personal opinions that might divide us.

The Tenth Tradition is an exercise in *responsibility*. As groups and as a fellowship, we are responsible to carry our message to the still-suffering addict. We are responsible to provide an atmosphere in which recovering addicts can share freely with one another. To do these things effectively, we must stay as free of the distractions of public controversy as possible. We may not be able to avoid *all* public controversy, because various features of the Narcotics Anonymous program itself--such as our views on total abstinence--may arouse a certain amount of contention in some public quarters. However, we absolutely *can* avoid any controversies which might arise from groups or the fellowship taking positions on issues entirely outside the scope of our program.

To fulfill Tradition Ten, our groups, service boards, and committees must exercise *prudence* in their public contacts. Elements of our fellowship are constantly in touch with others in our communities. Groups maintain contacts with their meeting facilities and those in their neighborhoods; H&I subcommittees, with facility administrators; public information workers, with health professionals, community organizations, government agencies, and the media. In all our contacts with our communities, we must take care not to express any opinions on issues outside the scope of our program. Such prudence

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will protect our credibility in the public eye on the only issue that truly concerns Narcotics Anonymous: our program of recovery from addiction.

By practicing the Tenth Tradition, we demonstrate our belief in the value of *anonymity*. All of us have our opinions. But when we speak as groups and as a fellowship, we do not take positions on the opinions of individuals. What we have to share with our communities is our fellowship's message, not our personal opinions.

Tradition Ten is supremely practical: The only issue upon which our fellowship is willing to publicly stake its reputation is the NA program itself. Underlying the practicality of the Tenth Tradition, however, can be found a fundamental spiritual principle, that of *humility*. Narcotics Anonymous does not claim to have the answer to every trouble in the world. We do not even claim that we necessarily have the only answer to addiction. When we share in public, as groups or as a fellowship, we share only our message. We talk about what we do, neither supporting nor opposing what anyone *else* does. We are what we are, and that's all that we are: a society of recovering drug addicts sharing their recovery with one another and offering the same to the addict who still suffers. We speak simply about our program, knowing that our effectiveness will attract more goodwill than any amount of promotion. Our program has worked for us, and is available for others interested in recovery. If we can be of service, we stand ready to help.

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## TRADITION TEN

1. Does the draft reflect the concepts contained in this tradition accurately?

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2. Are there any concepts missing? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, what?

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3. General Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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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.*

The Eleventh Tradition is the cornerstone of NA's public relations policy. But Tradition Eleven is only one of six traditions that address various aspects of our relations with the public. The Third and Fifth Traditions talk about the primary purpose and ultimate target of our public relations efforts. Traditions Six and Seven describe the nature of our relations with other organizations in the community. And the Tenth Tradition details our policy concerning public pronouncements on issues outside the scope of our recovery program. Clearly, our traditions are just as concerned with our public relations as they are with our internal relations.

Most NA groups have some sort of contact with the public in their everyday affairs. But the public relations spoken of in the Eleventh Tradition are more than just our group's casual encounters with those outside the fellowship. The existence of a public relations *policy* implies the importance of a public relations *program* in carrying out our fellowship's primary purpose. As NA groups, service boards, and committees, we deliberately and energetically cultivate good public relations, not just as a by-product of our normal activity but as a way to better carry our message to addicts. Narcotics Anonymous is not a secret society; Tradition Eleven speaks to personal anonymity, not fellowship anonymity. The better known we are in the community, the more likely it is that addicts seeking recovery--or their friends, relatives, or co-workers--will think of us and know where to find us when they decide to seek help. One way to take part in NA's public relations program is to become involved in the local public information subcommittee.

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The Eleventh Tradition tells us that, when we engage in public relations activity, we are to speak simply and directly of what Narcotics Anonymous is and what we do. We are not to make exaggerated claims about NA. Our public relations efforts should be as inviting and nonpromotional as our program itself, saying to addicts and the community at large, "If you want what we have to offer, this is what we are and how we work. If we can be of service, please let us know."

Some organizations use celebrity members as public spokespersons, hoping to enhance the organization's credibility by tying it to the celebrity's status. This may be fine for other organizations. But Tradition Eleven tells us in no uncertain terms that, in NA's public relations efforts, we must never do this--not with celebrity members, not with *any* member. If our fellowship used a celebrity member in a public announcement about NA, and the celebrity later relapsed or otherwise suffered a loss of prestige, what good would that do our fellowship's credibility? The same could apply to any individual member put in the public spotlight on NA's behalf. NA's credibility is in its message, not its messengers. In the public eye--that is, "at the level of press, radio, and films"--we need *always* maintain personal anonymity.

In most circumstances, though, personal anonymity is a purely personal decision. However closely we may have guarded the secret of our addiction, most of those close to us probably knew we were in trouble when we were using. Today, in making our amends to these people, it may be helpful to tell them about our recovery and our membership in Narcotics Anonymous.

Other circumstances may also warrant the disclosure of our NA membership. When a friend tells us about the struggles another person is having with addiction, we may want to let that friend know about Narcotics Anonymous and what it's done for us. When a co-worker has a drug problem, we may want to share our experience with that person. None of us will want to indiscriminately trumpet all the gory details of our addiction to everyone in our communities, nor will we disclose our NA membership to everyone we meet. When we think we

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may be helpful to someone, however, it may be appropriate to share a bit of our story and the recovery we've found in Narcotics Anonymous.

All our members play a part in our public relations, whether or not they're involved in public information work. When individual addicts in the community demonstrate recovery at work in their lives, they become our strongest attraction, a living testament of NA's effectiveness. Those who know what we once were like, seeing us now, will spread the word to those they meet that NA works. The further that message is carried, throughout our communities, the more likely it is that addicts seeking recovery will be attracted to the warm, loving support of our fellowship.

#### **Applying spiritual principles**

Tradition Eleven is an expression of our *faith* in the effectiveness of our program. As a fellowship, our primary purpose is to carry the recovery message to the still-suffering addict in our community. To fulfill that primary purpose, we do not need a promotional public relations policy. To gain the goodwill of our communities and attract addicts to our meetings, all we need do is clearly and simply describe the Narcotics Anonymous program. We need neither fanfare, overblown claims, nor celebrity endorsements to build our public relations. We have faith that the effectiveness of our fellowship, once made known, will speak for itself.

The principle of *service*, critical to the application of our Eleventh Tradition, is not a passive principle. To be of maximum service to the still-suffering addict, we must energetically seek to carry our message throughout our communities. Our public relations policy is based on attraction, to be sure, not promotion. But to attract the still-suffering addict to our program, we must take vigorous steps to make our program widely known. The better and broader our public relations, the better we will be able to serve.

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Earlier in this chapter, we spoke of the more practical aspects of public *anonymity*. But, as we will see in the next chapter, anonymity is far more than just a practical consideration to be taken into account in carrying out our public relations program. Each of us has our own life, our own words, and our own story, all adding dimension and color to the message of our fellowship. But the message we carry to our communities is not the message of how great we are as individuals. The primary purpose of our public relations efforts is to tell the story of Narcotics Anonymous and what our program offers to the still-suffering addict. Our practice of public anonymity is built on the "spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."

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**TRADITION ELEVEN**

1. Does the draft reflect the concepts contained in this tradition accurately?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

2. Are there any concepts missing? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, what?

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**TRADITION TWELVE**

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

In personal recovery, we seek to replace self-will with the guidance of a Higher Power in our personal affairs. In the same way, the traditions describe a fellowship that takes its collective guidance from spiritual principles rather than individual personalities. That kind of selflessness is what the Twelfth Tradition means by the word *anonymity*, and it is the spiritual foundation upon which Narcotics Anonymous is built. Tradition Twelve is all the traditions rolled up in one, summarizing and reinforcing the message of the previous eleven.

Anonymity is essential in preserving the stability of our fellowship, making personal recovery possible. Recovery is a delicate thing. It grows best in a stable, supportive environment. Each of us and each of our groups plays a part in maintaining that stability. Our unity is so precious that, given a choice between fulfilling our own wishes and preserving our fellowship's common welfare, we put the best interests of NA first. We do this not only out of enlightened self-interest but out of our sense of responsibility to our fellow addicts. The principle of NA unity comes before the fulfillment of our personal wishes.

Anonymity is the primary principle underlying our tradition of membership. While we all have our personal differences, NA's only membership requirement is what we have in common: addiction, and a desire to stop using. This simple principle draws the diverse personalities of those who suffer from our disease together in a common fellowship of recovery.

The principle of anonymity lies at the core of our fellowship's understanding of group conscience. The ideas of each individual group member have their importance, but the group takes its guidance from the collective conscience of all its members. Before the group makes a decision, its members consult their Higher Power, seeking spiritual guidance on the matter at hand. Their individual

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voices humbly join in developing a collective sense of God's will for the group, and a strong, common voice arises out of that mix to guide us all. We call this group conscience. The same principle applies to NA's concept of leadership. Though individual members serve as NA leaders, these leaders act only as our servants, carrying out their duties in accordance with the group conscience. The principles of selfless service and collective guidance come before the personalities of our trusted servants.

Just as the principle of anonymity guides the evolution of a group's collective conscience, so it also applies to group autonomy. Each NA group is, of course, entirely free to fulfill its primary purpose as it sees fit, developing its own way of doing things and its own group personality. Our fellowship places only one restriction on this near-total liberty: The group may not exercise its personality at the expense of neighboring groups or NA as a whole. The welfare of each NA group depends, to an extent, on the welfare of all NA groups. Our groups do not seek ascendancy over one another; rather, they join and cooperate to work for the greater good of the fellowship as a whole. The principle of anonymity draws our autonomous groups together for the common welfare of them all.

The principle of anonymity shapes our primary purpose. Individual ambition and personal purpose provide much of the motivation for our development as human beings. Our fellowship, however, is driven by its collective purpose: to carry our message to the still-suffering addict. When we enter Narcotics Anonymous, we leave our personal agenda at the door. We seek to help others rather than only ourselves. This selfless principle, not personal ambition, defines the primary purpose of our groups.

Anonymity guides our fellowship's participation in our community. We are not a secret society; we are happy to see our name becoming better known throughout the world with each passing year. However, we do not trade that name for the endorsement of organizations that might possibly help us further our primary purpose. Nor do we attempt to gain influence in the community by

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asserting the prestige of our fellowship's name. If we are fulfilling our primary purpose, our community will see our usefulness. We will have no need to trade our endorsement for the support of others. The good spoken of us by our fellowship's friends will be sufficient recommendation.

Anonymity is a one of the guiding principles behind the way our groups practice the Seventh Tradition. We believe in the value of selfless generosity for its own sake. For this reason, we choose to receive contributions from our members anonymously. We also encourage each group as a whole to become fully self-supporting, not dependent on the contributions of only one or two individual members. The principle of selfless giving, without expectation of personal distinction or reward, goes hand in hand with the principle of collective responsibility. Together, they assure both the spiritual solidarity and the financial stability of our groups.

This same principle of selfless anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our Eighth Tradition. In Narcotics Anonymous, we have no professional Twelfth Steppers. Rather, we use the simple language of empathy to freely share with one another the spiritual experience we call recovery. A spiritual experience cannot be bought or sold; it can only be given away. The more we freely share that experience, the more we strengthen the empathy that joins us together. This tradition reminds us to place the principle of anonymous, selfless giving before whatever personal desires we may have for recognition or remuneration.

In Narcotics Anonymous, we apply the principle of anonymity in the way we structure our service organization. Our fellowship has no authoritarian hierarchy. We create boards and committees solely to serve us, not to govern. The various elements of our service structure are guided by the primary purpose and collective conscience of our fellowship, and are held directly accountable for the service they do on our behalf. Those who serve on our various boards and committees are expected to do so not to accrue power, property, or prestige to

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themselves, but to selflessly serve the fellowship that has made their recovery possible.

Almost all our groups, service boards, and committees rotate different members through their service positions, never asking one individual to serve in a particular position of responsibility more than one or two terms in a row. The practice of rotation emphasizes our fellowship's belief in the value of anonymity in service. NA service is not primarily a personal endeavor, but is rather the collective responsibility of our fellowship as a whole. This doesn't mean that we do not appreciate the care, experience, and insight that individuals may offer in carrying out their service duties. However, we place the principle of anonymity in service before the personalities of our individual trusted servants. Collective responsibility, not personal authority, is the guiding force behind NA services.

The principle of anonymity gives form to our fellowship's public voice. Each of our many members has personal opinions on a wide range of subjects. The message our fellowship carries throughout the community, however, is the message of our collective experience in recovery from addiction. As groups and as a fellowship, we have *no* opinions on anything but the NA program itself. In our interactions with the public, we present only the principles of our program, not our members' personal opinions about other issues.

Anonymity applies not only to our public pronouncements, but is the principle underlying the whole of our fellowship's public relations policy. In our public contacts, we base the credibility of our program on NA's effectiveness, not on the personal reputation of any individual member. We seek to attract addicts and gain public goodwill solely by virtue of what we have to offer, not by grandiose promotionalism. Exaggerated claims about NA cannot take the place of the simple, proven validity of our message as the basis of our public relations policy.

Truly, anonymity is the spiritual foundation of *all* our traditions. Without it, the unity upon which personal recovery depends would dissolve in a chaos of conflicting personalities. With it, our groups are given a body of guiding

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principle, our Twelve Traditions, helping them join the personal strengths of their members in a fellowship that supports and nurtures the recovery of us all.

We pray that Narcotics Anonymous *never* becomes a gray, faceless collection of addicts without personalities. We enjoy the color, the compassion, the initiative, the rough-and-tumble liveliness that arises from the diverse personalities of our members. In fact, we find that the stronger our individual members are, the more strongly united our fellowship becomes. This is a great paradox of NA recovery: In joining together in a commitment to the greater good of Narcotics Anonymous, our own welfare is enhanced beyond measure. In surrendering self-will, humbly placing whatever individual power we may have at the service of the whole, we find an amazing power not only greater than our own but greater than the sum of all its parts. In serving the needs of others selflessly, *anonymously*, we find our own needs served in turn far better than we ever could have imagined. In joining anonymously in a fellowship with other recovering addicts, placing the welfare of the group ahead of our own, our own spiritual growth is enhanced beyond measure, not diminished. This is what Tradition Twelve means when it says that "anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions." So long as we place spiritual principles first, our individual personalities can grow and flourish like never before, insuring that our fellowship also continues to flourish, strong and free.

Our common welfare depends upon our unity. The only hope we have of maintaining that unity amidst the tremendous diversity we find in Narcotics Anonymous is by the application of certain common principles: those found in the Twelve Traditions. So long as we place the practice of those common principles before the exercise of our individual personalities, all will be well.

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**IT WORKS: HOW AND WHY - THE TRADITIONS  
INPUT FORM****TRADITION TWELVE**

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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.



