

GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS

From the beginning newcomers to the program of Narcotics Anonymous hear of the principles of honesty, open-mindedness and the willingness to try. As we live and grow together in the fellowship we go through many changes and these principles can help us if we ~~use them~~ apply them in our lives. In time we become intimately knowledgeable of members beyond our immediate circle of friends. Just as ~~we must~~^{WE} learn to apply spiritual principles in our personal living we will want ~~at~~ at some point to consider their ~~application~~^{USE} in our social relations. We can surely find areas in our social relations that need improvement. The guiding principle of love can remind us to first and always examine ourselves. ^UOur fears and our motives can get the best of us if we are not thoroughly honest.

Group consciousness, mindful of our traditions, can rise to a level of spiritual awareness. The sobriety of the group can function in ~~the group~~ much the same way as sobriety in an individual. Just as the spiritually awakened individual grows more humble, patient and tolerant so can the group. In this atmosphere of supportive awareness the newcomers or old-timers in trouble can be guided out of difficulty by fellow addicts who can truly say there but for the grace of God go I.

As we walk the razors edge of service, it is all too easy to step out of God's will into self-will. As compulsive as we are even our spirit of dedication to a group can turn us into bleeding deacons who see the efforts of others to serve the group as a threat to ~~their~~^{our} vision for the group or role ^{our} in service. Of course it is an old game for us to see ourselves as

mysterious pullers of the strings behind the scenes. In reality fellow members have little difficulty seeing whats up. Like an ostrich hiding it's head in the sand, we usually only fool ourselves into believing ourselves invisible to others. In service we hold ourselves directly responsible to those we serve. If we lead at all, it is only by setting a desirable example.

Gossips will of course appear as our members grow and extend themselves into the consciousness of the group. In honesty we want to remember that information shared by a suffering addict seeking help is priviledged and should only be shared to help that person. A few attentive members can usually offset the harm done. At some point the gossip will realize that character assasination is an old game with addicts. Most members with a little time clean and sober look to the source instead of the object of gossip as the one needing help. We may be able to give them this help by honestly sharing our feelings about what we see happening. Other times we have to wait until they are ready to receive help and ask for it. It may be important to remember that many intolerable situations resolve themselves and don't last long. Generally those who fall into the trap of gossip become aware of what they are doing and find other ways of getting attention or outgrow their need to avoid self-examination. In telling our stories we gossip about ourselves as active addicts. This reminds us of what it will be like if we go back. This can give us the benefit of ego-deflation at depth and help render us teachable.

Our sincere desire to help others and the power of our ultimate authority will guide us in our social relations if we remember to ask for help and try not to do too much by

ourselves. An addict alone is in bad company but most of us have some learning experiences to go through to become effective members of a group. Bringing our insights and concerns to the attention of the group is vital to the growth and validity of the group. It is only when we attempt to force our views onto others that self-will appears. Fortunately the program gives us the ability to let go of self-will when it appears. We shouldn't feel unique if find ourselves beyond the bounds of good service. There is probably no one in N.A. service who hasn't comitted this error at one time or another. The important thing to remember is that we don't have to be saints to help people. We share our experience, strength and hope and do the footwork and leave the rest to our higher power. This simple formula has worked many miracles as I am sure we are all aware.

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