

WORLD SERVICE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS



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To: The Fellowship
From: Jack Bernstein, Chairperson
World Service Board of Trustees
Date: April 27, 1987

In recent Fellowship Reports (January and March 1987), we reported that our work on several articles was progressing toward completion and that these articles would be published soon. From the original five subjects which were presented in the Board of Trustee Report to WSC-86, two of them were published in the January 1987 Fellowship Report. The remaining articles are presented here.

Two articles were not presented to WSC-86, nevertheless have been topics of discussion in many of our meetings over the past year, and are also included.

The Board of Trustees as well as each individual trustee has received many written requests and phone calls concerning all of these subjects. We have approached these requests with individual letters in the past. These articles were meant to go beyond the process of letter answering. Our efforts have been aimed at providing guidance and information to the Fellowship in the form of our experience and opinions. It is important to recognize that these articles are based upon the collective experience of members of the Board of Trustees combined with all input which has been received about each subject.

Publication of these articles is a result of long and intense discussion. The articles themselves are not appropriate for use as conference-approved literature. Therefore, they should not be read and discussed at NA meetings. In the same respect, these articles do not represent "policy" nor are they offered in an attempt to dictate or make policy in any way. These articles **do not** necessarily represent the views of the entire Board of Trustees. The information presented in the articles can be used by members, groups, and service committees in studying and arriving at resolutions to issues which relate to any or all of the Twelve Traditions.

As is always the case, we welcome and solicit continued input from the Fellowship on these subjects.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS TO NAR-ANON AND FAMILIES ANONYMOUS:

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The Board of Trustees has received many inquiries during the past few years which have asked specific questions about how to go about cooperating without affiliating when it comes to Nar-Anon and Families Anonymous. The need to address this issue arose from a confusion between the letter of our Twelve Traditions, and the spirit of love, understanding, and caring which we all feel as individuals.

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 number of people together in an enterprise, the benefits of which are shared." This definition can present a problem in addressing our relationship with any other organization, including Nar-Anon and Families Anonymous. Strictly speaking, the object or goal of our Fellowship is not the same as any other fellowship. In this respect, it is impossible to cooperate without also endorsing or affiliating.

The Board of Trustees believes that a policy, or attitude, or phrase which serves our purpose best and guides our Fellowship well is "a policy of non-affiliation." This clearly conveys the fact that we do not associate with, connect with, or adopt any other organization or purpose. Traditions 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"*) and Ten (*"N.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy"*) refer to these issues, and there can never be any formal relationship between Narcotics Anonymous and any other Fellowship or organization.

As individuals, we have tremendous respect for these other Fellowships and support the need for them. As grateful recovering addicts, we carry intense and genuine love and understanding in our hearts.

Adherence to our Twelve Traditions does not preclude or negate these feelings. We must remember, however, that Narcotics Anonymous, Nar-Anon, and Families Anonymous are separate Fellowships, each with its own purpose. These organizations are not enmeshed with each other nor are they interdependent.

We believe that by reflecting back upon our own paths, we can find the way to convey this respect, love, and support, without endorsing or affiliating with other Fellowships. Our family members and loved ones were often instrumental in allowing us to face the consequences of our addiction by not helping us! We now have the opportunity to support them by not interfering and also by simply pursuing our own purpose as guided by the spiritual principles of Narcotics Anonymous. While we all may have our own way of supporting our loved ones, N.A. can only remain true to our primary purpose (Tradition Five: *"Each group has but one primary purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers"*) and the guidance provided in Traditions 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"*) and Ten (*"N.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy"*). Consistent Fellowship action which is guided by these principles is the kindest and most loving path for us to follow, both for ourselves and our family members and loved ones. This helps these other Fellowships to address their own needs in a sensible, appropriate, and non-dependent manner.

Our relationship as a Fellowship with Nar-Anon and Families Anonymous, as with treatment centers, clubhouses or any other organization or enterprise can then be simply and clearly defined as one of providing information. We do, and are willing to, provide information about what we do, where we do it, where our meetings are held, where our conventions are held, etc. We are pleased to provide this information to anyone or everyone who requests it, while at the same time avoiding any type of affiliation or special treatment for any people or organization outside of Narcotics Anonymous.

The Board of Trustees believes that many of the practices which we have engaged in as a Fellowship do not constitute adherence to our Traditions. The intent of these actions was usually sound and it has taken many years of experience and study to evaluate them with respect to our Twelve Traditions. These include listing Families Anonymous and Nar-Anon meetings in N.A. directories, on flyers for N.A. conventions, or in N.A. registration forms, and the practice of obtaining meeting places for these other Fellowship at conventions or other N.A. activities. Additionally, utilizing speakers from the Nar-Anon and Families Anonymous Fellowships is a practice which does not adhere to our Traditions. However, we encourage phonenumber workers to use common sense and good judgement in making known to family members that N.A. is for the drug addict and that family members may find family oriented recovery fellowships to be beneficial.

METHADONE USE AND MEDICATION IN N.A.

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After reviewing the input from the Fellowship, we came to the conclusion that we were dealing with three issues:

1. using addicts and their participation in N.A. meetings
2. application of the concepts involved
3. and the issue of the use of medication in recovery.

A thorough discussion led to the conclusion that we needed to broaden our article and reiterate that we are a program of complete abstinence. Because Methadone is but one drug among many, we decided to refocus our original article to more clearly reflect concern regarding the issue of people in N.A. meetings who are still using. Additionally, we have included a companion article which addresses the use of medication in recovery.

COMPLETE ABSTINENCE AND N.A. MEETINGS

There have been many inquiries and concerns from many members, groups, areas and regions of our Fellowship which have pointed up a need to address the question of persons using drugs and their right to share, conduct meetings or function as trusted servants in Narcotics Anonymous. Most of the time, these situations are resolved quickly and easily by N.A. members, groups and service committees.

This article is meant to assist our Fellowship in those situations where some meetings may encounter these types of problems on a frequent and continuing basis.

Our Fellowship is founded on the principle of total abstinence from all drugs. This is our starting point in our path away from death due to drug addiction. Tradition Three says that the only requirement for N.A. membership is a desire to stop using.

Our Fellowship is devoted to the goal of carrying the message to the addict who still suffers. A welcoming attitude is essential in demonstrating this devotion, as we strive to further our primary purpose in an atmosphere of love and compassion. Our behavior before the meeting begins, during the meeting, and outside of the meeting can be instrumental in letting addicts who are still using know that their presence is important.

We share at meetings to carry a message of recovery according to our Fifth Tradition (*"Each group has but one primary purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers"*). We only have a message of recovery to carry after we get clean from all drugs.

The Board of Trustees believes that Tradition Three (*"The only requirement for N.A. membership is a desire to stop using"*), Four (*"Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups, or N.A. as a whole"*) and Five (*"Each group has but one primary purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers"*) are not in conflict regarding this issue. It is our opinion that group autonomy cannot be utilized to allow using addicts to share, chair or be a trusted servant for an N.A. meeting because active users cannot fulfill the primary purpose of an N.A. meeting - carrying the message. Therefore it is advisable for anyone who is still using to participate by listening, and then talk with members after the meeting.

This article reflects the philosophy of the Board of Trustees. How this is implemented is a matter for group autonomy. Some groups, as we stated, have included general statements in their format asking those who have used in the past 24 hours to refrain from sharing. Other groups apply this on an as-needed or when-the-problem-arises basis.

We advocate insuring that the addict who still suffers receives a clear message of recovery. We do not advocate rudeness, insensitivity, or a lack of compassion.

If addicts who are still using share in a meeting, it is not productive to stand up, point, and yell at them to stop. Many times, an addict will state that they have used that day and don't want to use anymore, so they have come to a meeting. Common sense and sensitivity would dictate that this person does not need to be told not to share.

On the other hand, if an addict identifies as being clean and talks for some five minutes or more about how Methadone is helping him/her stay off Heroin and how well he or she is doing, we would hope that the meeting leader or secretary would gently interrupt and remind this person that this is a program of complete abstinence. Asking such an individual to listen and offering to talk about it after the meeting can be most helpful to everyone involved. The meeting leader can then move on to another member who does have a message of recovery.

Our Fellowship must be cognizant of what kind of message we are carrying if still-using addicts share on a regular basis in a meeting, lead meetings or become trusted servants for a group. We believe that under these circumstances, we would not be carrying our message of recovery from the disease of addiction. Permissiveness in this area of concern is not consistent with our traditions. It can carry a negative message to recovering addicts, the N.A. Fellowship as a whole, and still-using addicts.

Our experience has shown that an N.A. meeting cannot become a forum for using addicts who want to justify their using, and still fulfill its primary purpose. We believe that this position reinforces our recovery, protects our meetings, and supports addicts in striving for total abstinence.

The Board of Trustees endorses the efforts of groups who have utilized our traditions, especially Tradition Four (*"Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups, or N.A. as a whole"*) to guide them in reaching the following guidelines:

- A. Politely asking that those who have used not share during the meeting.
- B. Conveying, in attitude and action, a genuine welcome to addicts-using or recovering.
- C. Asking that the meeting leader, chairperson or speaker be an individual who is not using.
- D. Upholding the suggestions in the Temporary Working Guide to the Service Structure of N.A. with respect to suggested clean time requirements for service positions.

We looked at the remainder of the input which concerned the use of medication for various medical and psychiatric conditions. We have received many letters from individuals and groups presenting a situation wherein a person was using medication for a medical or psychiatric condition. Most of this correspondence asked how to determine if, in fact, the individual was clean, and many of these letters asked the Board of Trustees for guidance.

We would like to offer the following article, which at the present time, is our thinking on this matter.

N.A. MEMBERS, MEDICATION, AND RECOVERY

There have been continuing inquiries and concerns from many regions, areas, groups and members of our Fellowship regarding the use of prescribed medication by members of N.A. for diagnosed illnesses. These inquiries and concerns focus upon membership in Narcotics Anonymous, how meetings are conducted, holding service positions, and how N.A. does or doesn't make recovery available to addicts who are receiving medication.

It is our belief that the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous provide the basis for addressing these issues.

We, as members and as a Fellowship, can never be drawn into situations in which we give advice or opinions on medications or illnesses. Spiritual recovery demands that the responsibility for decisions in these areas must ultimately rest on the shoulders of the individual addict who is involved. The determination of 1) What is a mind-altering drug? 2) Is there medical need? and 3) What are the underlying motivations for taking medication? can and should be resolved by individuals utilizing the Twelve Steps, their N.A. sponsor, and their Higher Power, as well as informed competent medical consultation. No addict can shoulder the

entire responsibility for these decisions. However, each addict is obligated to participate in their own decisions.

It becomes essential for each addict to employ these four resources in all situations regarding illness and/or medication. The desire to stop using must be evidenced by the willingness to consult an N.A. sponsor, to utilize the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, and to involve our Higher Power as referred to in Step Two. Additionally, informed competent medical consultation implies that the health professionals consulted be experienced in treating addicts, familiar with addiction as a disease, and well versed regarding recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. Recovering addicts in N.A. have the responsibility to inform their health professional about their own drug addiction, their recovery program, and any other relevant circumstances. We must always be aware that we cannot guide ourselves in these matters because the nature of our disease of addiction renders us incapable of doing so.

Working Steps One through Twelve with honesty, willingness, and courage, coupled with our belief and faith in a Higher Power, allows us to find the truth about ourselves. These spiritual principles, along with the experience of an N.A. sponsor and other members of our N.A. groups, then make it possible to live life on life's terms. Experience has shown that when N.A. members utilize these resources and spiritual principles, they can eventually clarify their own circumstances of intent and need.

There are many scientific disciplines which are devoted to studying and exploring illness, pharmacology, drug chemistry, and the physiological aspects of addiction. These disciplines require constant education and research in order to keep abreast of the constantly changing and developing information. No member, group, or service board in Narcotics Anonymous can possibly do this job. We are not professionals in the field of medicine, and we cannot generalize one experience with medication to all cases. Our strength lies in the fact that we are addicts carrying the N.A. message of recovery.

The Twelfth Step, ("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"), and the Fifth Tradition, (Each group has but one primary purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers"), provide the focal point for our personal and group efforts in addressing this issue. Care, love and concern are essential as we proceed in doing so.

We must always remember that we are striving to ensure that recovery is available to any addict seeking it. Physical presence at meetings, listening at meetings and talking to other members are important components of the Narcotics Anonymous Program. These three components of our Program must be available to all addicts seeking recovery in order for us to achieve our primary purpose and to maintain our own recovery on a daily basis. It is the responsibility of each recovering addict in N.A. to contribute to this goal, employing the care, love, and concern referred to above.

Sometimes, addicts have abused medicines under the guise of medical need, and created havoc. However, it has been our experience that even greater damage can be done when we set ourselves up as enforcers of each others clean time.

Clean time is an issue for each N.A. member, their sponsor, and their Higher Power to decide. We must keep in mind that in Narcotics Anonymous we are not judges or police officers but companions, friends, and passengers in recovery. We believe that when we set ourselves up as judges and policemen we lose something in our own recovery and we divert ourselves from our primary purpose. By taking ourselves out of the judging role, we allow a loving God to work both in our own lives and the lives of others.

THE QUESTION OF AIDS AND RECOVERY IN NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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Over the past several months the World Service Board of Trustees has held discussions regarding AIDS, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. As a result of these discussions an ad-hoc committee was formed to prepare an article or special report for the Fellowship on this issue.

AIDS is a problem which is reaching epidemic proportions in various places throughout the world. AIDS is a disease which has found a way of spreading some of its roots through the disease we commonly share - the disease of addiction. National and international statistics indicate the problem will get much worse. Some N.A. communities are already beginning to feel the impact of this disease.

Some newcomers are coming to our program afflicted with AIDS. Some of us are aware of members who either have AIDS or test positive for the AIDS virus. Still others of us know fellow members who have died. Some of us are fearful we will contract AIDS, or someone we know and love will succumb to this disease.

There is a good deal of fear surrounding AIDS, and addicts are people who sometimes do not operate well in the face of fear. Many of us would like to deny the reality of this disease, not talk about it and hope for the best. Our literature tells us that it's not the things we talk about that get us into trouble but the things we don't.

The purpose in addressing this issue is because of some incidents which indicate that our reaction to this disease can compromise our spiritual principles. One case in point was at an N.A. meeting where a member stood up and said he was an addict who was dying from AIDS. A wave of terror swept across the room. Nobody was quite prepared.

We are concerned that through fear and ignorance about this disease we might reject someone seeking recovery from addiction because they are either infected with the AIDS virus or have AIDS. Such a reaction would undermine the very nature of our Steps and Traditions. We strive to be a loving, compassionate Fellowship, and that which sabotages this striving hurts us.

It is remarkable and very moving to see someone who faces death and still wants that spiritual gift of recovery from addiction. Someone who faces death and yet has the courage to want to be clean and get right with a God of their understanding, deserves every bit of love and support we can provide.

One member in a country where the Fellowship was just beginning to feel the impact of AIDS, told us about his experience. Our member went to his regular meeting and found himself sitting next to a man he had seen before but never heard speak. The man shared that night that after months of feeling ill he had that day received an AIDS diagnosis. He talked about his reaction to that diagnosis and how he was dealing with it.

Our member found himself moving his chair as far away from that man as possible. He found a way to stand next to someone else during the prayer at the end of the meeting. Our member left that meeting and on his way home he thought about his conduct and felt "this is a spiritual program and I behaved in an unspiritual way. I thought about what had happened and had to confront my own fear. The next day I went to health services and got as much information about the disease as I could. I learned about it and I learned about myself. I confronted my own fear that I might also have AIDS. I had the test for it. The next week I was back in my meeting waiting for that man. Waiting to hug him and tell him how much I cared, waiting to offer him my love and support".

When an addict with AIDS turns to Narcotics Anonymous we want to be able to respond out of love and not out of fear, but we must be prepared. Part of being prepared has to do with our spiritual response which we can offer within the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. The other part has to do with education and this is the responsibility of the individual member to seek out. Narcotics Anonymous cannot get involved with medical education.

Workshops which cover illness in recovery could involve a sharing of experience, strength, and hope dealing with a variety of illnesses which affect our membership, including AIDS. A few areas have held workshops on AIDS and a couple of regions have these workshops in the planning stage. Whether or not an area or region holds such a workshop is up to them. We would, however, advise some caution and thorough planning.

We must remember, we are not doctors. We should avoid providing information about the mechanics of AIDS or specific medical information because we are not competent to do so, and this is clearly outside of our traditions. Our suggestion is that these workshops focus on Twelve Step work with people with AIDS, encouraging members to share their fears about this disease and what they are doing about these fears. Sexuality workshops which focus on sexual responsibility are a good way of indirectly dealing with this issue, and at the same time addressing that rarely talked about matter of so-called 13th stepping (the practice of sexually exploiting N.A. members) which has cost many newcomers their recovery.

If your area or region or convention committee is planning such a workshop, do establish some boundaries for it. We believe it is important to remain within some general guidelines.

1. Use workshops as a forum for discussion of how this issue can be dealt with working the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.
2. Discuss how to become more spiritually fit to reach out to individuals suffering from this disease.

3. Choose members who are either positive for the AIDS virus, have AIDS related complex, or have AIDS to share their experience.
4. Discuss Twelve Step work and sponsorship of people with AIDS.
5. We are not doctors, so don't give medical facts or information. Obtaining information about this disease is the responsibility of the individual member.
6. We are not affiliated with any other organization. Do not provide handouts.
7. Do not discuss treatment approaches to this disease. We are a Twelve Step program of recovery from addiction.

The Traditions are not restrictive nor are they repressive. As long as we remain under their umbrella, we may openly talk about those issues which affect our recovery and are relevant to us.

ONE ASPECT OF THE FIRST TRADITION: UNITY VS. PREJUDICE

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The Twelve Traditions are not laws; they are spiritual principles which guide our activities and behavior in Narcotics Anonymous. They allow us to understand who we are, what we do, and where we are going as a Fellowship. Many people believe that N.A. has twenty-four steps which lead to our spiritual principles. By this they mean the Traditions are connected directly to the N.A. Steps and grow from them in a natural and orderly progression. The Traditions stem from the Twelfth Step in the sense that they create a climate of recovery that encourages us all to carry the N.A. message to addicts.

Perhaps then there is nothing more important in our life of shared recovery from addiction than the message of our First Tradition which tells us that "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity."

Unity in N.A. is the key to the recoveries of all of us. It must be our constant aim, our consistent goal, our guiding principle.

The unity that keeps N.A. together is a dynamic and God-given force that allows all willing addicts to belong to and serve the N.A. Fellowship in harmony. Unity is creative, loving, and all inclusive. It is not stifling, hateful, and exclusive.

Currently in Narcotics Anonymous we are hearing a lot of talk about supposed violations of our First Tradition. A number of members are concerned that people are coming to N.A. and insisting on "being different." They feel that people who express differences in recovery are a threat to the unity which holds N.A. together.

Sometimes, however, when people talk about "unity" they are referring to something other than our guiding spiritual principle. They are speaking about uniformity--a state of affairs that is actually quite different from unity, although the two may seem the same on the surface. It is crucial that all addicts understand the differences between unity and uniformity.

Unity means a condition of harmony, a continuity of purpose or action. Unity implies oneness, especially of what is varied and diverse in its elements or parts. The synonyms of unity are integrity and union. Integrity implies unity that

indicates interdependence of the parts and completeness and perfection of the whole; union implies a thorough and harmonious cooperation of the parts.

On the other hand, uniformity means a condition of having always the same form, manner, or degree, not varying or variable; of the same form with others; conforming to one rule or mode; presenting an undiversified appearance of surface, pattern, or color.

Words like "harmony", "integrity", and "cooperation" seem to express the spiritual goals of unity much better than terms like "not varying", "conforming", and "same".

Many N.A. members--whether they come from ethnic, racial, gender or affectional majorities or minorities--come to the Fellowship with their prejudices and misconceptions intact. The active disease of addiction unfortunately does not allow people to grow in the virtues of acceptance and understanding; only recovery and the Steps seem to do that.

It occasionally happens that by not understanding that human beings have legitimate differences, N.A. members retain some of their old prejudices and demand uniformity of all addicts, instead of striving for unity. They seem to expect everyone to conform to their standards.

The prejudices that are sometimes brought to N.A. have names and we should begin to use them: racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism, class hatred, anti-semitism, contempt for the mentally ill are just some of them.

Bigotry of any type--however trivial it seems--is the real violation of our First Tradition. Unity draws people in; it doesn't drive them out. An increase of acceptance of others which is the necessary key for unity should lead not to uniformity but to a maximum of unified variety.

When newcomers are ignored at meetings, when any members are treated as sexual prey, when certain types of people are met with hostility and laughter, when addicts are asked to say prayers which violate their beliefs, when new members are patronized as not being "real addicts"--when these things occur, the First Tradition is surely not working in our lives.

The belief that addicts need to grow in recovery and develop their own identities seems a more valid and spiritual model for the interpretation of the Traditions than an attitude which looks for a sameness which is impossible for everyone to follow and which will certainly drive people away from Narcotics Anonymous.

Addicts come to N.A. with many different backgrounds, experiences, and lifestyles. Sometimes these backgrounds are dissimilar to the experiences of the majority of N.A. members. But since these dissimilarities are frequently inherent, we must not see these members as "destroying our unity". On the contrary, we should recognize that diversity in background is perfectly natural. We must respect the background of all N.A. members and not attempt to change or demean addicts for who or what they are.

While some of our members are concerned that diversity in N.A. obscures our underlying unity, this is probably an unfounded fear. It is the responsibility

of all N.A. members to make any addict feel welcome and at home in the N.A. Fellowship. We must help people to recognize our commonality as addicts and to treat our diversity with respect. This is the harmony that true unity brings.

Uniformity results from fear, unity from love.

The quality of recovery consists of spiritual values, not convenience and comfort. In the Basic Text we are reminded of this when one passage tells us that "social acceptability does not equal recovery." We cannot insist on our private definitions of "social acceptability" when it comes to our shared recovery. The spirit of the First Tradition asks that all addicts be made to feel a part of N.A. not apart from it.

What we share--recovery, the Steps, the Traditions--is primary, essential, and unifying. What distinguishes us is secondary and subordinate to what unites us.

Our differences should be seen as complementary. Authentic diversity in recovery enriches us all. To acknowledge the integrity of all human beings as they are is a sign of recovery.

Pettiness and prejudice have the potential to destroy N.A. **We must never forget this.**

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THE USE OF LANGUAGE IN NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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The Board has had the most difficulty in providing the article on the use of language in Narcotics Anonymous. With the benefit of hindsight, we believe that our manner of presenting the article on Language at the 1986 World Service Conference was a mistake.

The article on N.A. Language was presented as a means of providing information on the use of language for the Fellowship's consideration. We did not intend for members who are pro N.A. language to mount an assault on those disagreeing with them. The Trustees do not endorse dictating how people express themselves while participating in a Narcotics Anonymous meeting. Abusive confrontations, demands, and unwelcome attitudes are undesirable methods which have no place in N.A. meetings. The defiance which can result from insensitive and inappropriate presentation of concepts is usually more indicative of the individual than of the concepts themselves. These approaches are counterproductive and do not help anyone to understand the Narcotics Anonymous program of recovery from the disease of addiction. Our meetings are a place where love and concern for one another should be exhibited and the only uniformity we strive for is becoming totally drug free. Sometimes, we treat our members who relapse with far more love and compassion than we treat those with whom we disagree. The issue of "N.A. Language" as it applies to our meetings is not one that can be left up to a Group Conscience, but must be left to the individual member to decide for themselves. There are no requirements for membership, no pledges to sign and no promises to make to anyone. We are not supposed to be under surveillance by anyone, least of all ourselves.

The issue of "N.A. Language" was born out of a reaction to people attending N.A. meetings that were members of other Twelve Step Fellowships. These people carry a message to our newcomers of how to recover in another Fellowship and many members of N.A. were deeply concerned. As was stated in a Trustee article written several years ago:

"Speakers need to talk about the N.A. Steps, the N.A. Traditions, and N.A. recovery. We need to keep in mind the confusion that can result for the newcomer in attendance at an N.A. meeting, hearing about how to recover in another Twelve Step Fellowship. Any

member may attend another Twelve Step Fellowship as part of his or her personal program, but when speaking in Narcotics Anonymous he or she needs to be able to talk about their N.A. experience. We are a separate Fellowship in our own right. Under the guidance of a Higher Power, we are growing, we are getting better; we have our own literature and our own experience of recovery. We need to have pride in ourselves as such. It is essential that we adhere to our traditions, including Tradition Six; our survival is dependent upon our standing on our own and not affiliating with another Twelve Step program.

There is much available in the nature of self-help literature, literature from other 12 Step programs, and inspirational reading which can be helpful to the individual personally, and can be incorporated into that person's recovery. However, there is a vast difference between reading and benefitting from a variety of sources, and bringing them into an N.A. meeting for others to read or listen to.

The use of literature other than N.A. approved literature constitutes a violation of the Traditions. Speakers for N.A. meetings, conventions, functions, etc., need to talk about the N.A. Steps, the N.A. Traditions, and N.A. recovery in order to avoid confusion and not be in violation of our Traditions."

The language of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous (i.e. clean, clean time, recovery, recovering addict, disease of addiction, etc.) can be instrumental in helping drug addicts find recovery. Our terminology, common identification, our unity, and full surrender as drug addicts depend on a clear understanding of our most basic fundamentals. We are powerless over a disease that gets progressively worse when we use any drug, and it does not matter what drug was at the center for us when we got here. The use of language which indicates that any one drug is unique or requires special terminology contradicts our belief and knowledge that we suffer from addiction - a disease which is not specific to any one chemical.

Originally, we thought that just focusing on terminology would be a means of keeping N.A. meetings for the N.A. message only. The problem with this approach is that many people can carry the spirit of an N.A. message of recovery even though they use words learned elsewhere. We know that by acting as examples and sharing with people about the principles involved, all N.A. members can reach a deeper understanding of the value of the language which best serves N.A., the N.A. message, and the drug addict. However, experience has shown us that this type of sharing is most beneficial outside of the meetings (i.e., one to one, learning days, workshops, etc.). Our literature, the Twelve Steps, and our Twelve Traditions are uniquely worded to reflect the language of Narcotics Anonymous and of addicts who are recovering from the disease of addiction.

We believe the conscience of the Fellowship will determine what language will go into our literature, but we have no business telling people how to express themselves in meetings. We believe that recovery is a language of the heart. If this is true, then we can best work our Twelfth Step and carry our Fifth Tradition with love.