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November 2, 1990

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Dear firstname :

This is a special mailing to all the recipients of the regular reports from the Board of Trustees Traditions Ad Hoc Committee. Attached you will find the most recent report, as well as the third committee drafts on Traditions One and Two, with questionnaires for each. We are hopeful that you will take the time to look these drafts over and fill out the attached questionnaires. Also enclosed is a self-addressed envelope to facilitate the mailing of your response to the committee. **The deadline for the input is February 1, 1991.**

The committee felt it essential to provide some background information about the drafts to help you with your evaluation of the work. This information will include some of the major decisions made by the committee as reported within some of our past reports to the fellowship. The type of review desired at this point is essentially an informal, general, conceptual review. We need to find out whether we are in fact writing the type of material that is generally acceptable to the fellowship, and have included sufficient discussion of the concepts contained in the first two traditions.

At this point, we must indicate that the attached drafts are not to be considered "BOT approved", as the full Board has not had an opportunity to meet to review this material. The drafts have been reviewed by individual members of the Board, who have agreed to this pre-review of the material. We are planning to release the first six traditions to the fellowship for a formal review and input by or before WSC '91. The committee also plans to release the second half of the book approximately six months after the conference. After a formal review and input period, the approval version will be released to facilitate a vote on its approval at the 1993 World Service Conference.

As stated in our reports last year, the purpose of the traditions section of *It Works: How and Why* is to serve as a resource for N.A. 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. Some members have already commented that the drafts appear to be loosely structured and do not include adequate examples. The loose structure and lack of specific examples is intentional and is the result of lengthy committee discussions. The committee feels that the 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 local interpretation of the practical application of the principles contained in the traditions. On a final note, the committee hopes that this book will be able to stand the test of time, and to achieve this purpose has not included any specific references or examples.

This book is being written in more of an experiential, rather than in a didactic or "how to" manner, in order to engage the reader. The committee recognizes that some of the statements may not accurately reflect current practices within the fellowship, but feels strongly that the material should be "idealistic" in its presentation of the concepts involved in the traditions. The committee also feels that the tone should be non-judgmental, 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 express rather than impress the reader. The audience this book is aimed toward is the Narcotics Anonymous groups and the individual member, rather than non-members of the fellowship.

Thank you for your interest and continued support of our work. Please make as many copies of this material as you feel necessary to obtain any additional information you may need to present your comments. We are anxiously looking forward to your response to this material. If there is any additional information you need, please contact me through the WSO.

Yours in fellowship,

Danette Banyai, Chairperson  
BOT Literature Review Committee/  
BOT Traditions Ad Hoc Committee

DB/sl

Enc: October Traditions report  
Third committee drafts, Traditions 1 and 2  
Questionnaire on the attached drafts

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>QUESTIONNAIRE</b> <b>TRADITIONS ONE AND TWO</b></p>
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**TRADITION ONE**

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. How would you rate this draft? Good \_\_\_\_\_ Fair \_\_\_\_\_ Poor \_\_\_\_\_

4. General Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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**THE DEADLINE FOR INPUT IS FEBRUARY 1, 1991**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>QUESTIONNAIRE</b> <b>TRADITIONS ONE AND TWO</b></p>
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**TRADITION TWO**

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. How would you rate this draft? Good \_\_\_\_\_ Fair \_\_\_\_\_ Poor \_\_\_\_\_

4. General Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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**THE DEADLINE FOR INPUT IS FEBRUARY 1, 1991**

## **TRADITION ONE**

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

Narcotics Anonymous is more than just the first meeting we attend, or the other meetings in our community. We are part of a much greater whole. Addicts apply the principles of Narcotics Anonymous in their personal recovery across town and around the world. Just as we learned in early recovery that we need each other to stay clean, we come to believe that all of us, every N.A. meeting and group, are interdependent. We share an equal membership in N.A., and we all have an interest in its survival. Unity is the spirit that joins thousands of members around the world in a spiritual fellowship that has the power to change lives.

One way to look at placing our common welfare first is to say that each of us is equally responsible for N.A.'s well-being. In our recovery, we have found that living clean is impossible without the support of other members. Our individual recovery depends on meetings that take place regularly, other recovering addicts who participate, and sponsors who share with us how to stay clean. As each individual member relies on the support of the group for survival, so the group's survival depends on its members.

The relationship described in the First Tradition is reciprocal. Groups work together in a spirit of cooperation to insure the survival of Narcotics Anonymous. In turn, those groups receive strength and support from every other group, and from all our services. The strength of our mutual commitment to N.A. creates the unity that binds us together in spite of all that might divide us. The common welfare of N.A. is the continued growth and well-being of the fellowship, in every corner of the world.

Unity flows from that which we share in common. Unity has to do with a sense of belonging, as well as our shared commitment to personal recovery. In meetings, we find a new place to belong, new friends, and a hope for a better life. A feeling of care and concern grows between us and the group. We learn to treat others with kindness and respect, and to do what we can to support each other and our group. Sometimes, we comfort each other merely by being present. Our relationships with other addicts are a source of strength in our personal recovery. We come to rely on meetings, and on each other, for that support. The unity we see in our meetings is an expression not only of our reliance on each other, but of our mutual reliance on spiritual principles and on a Higher Power.

N.A. unity begins with our recognition of the therapeutic value of one addict helping another. We help each other in different ways. Sometimes we help each other one-on-one, as in sponsorship. Or we may help each other by participating in the formation of new meetings, to make N.A. accessible to more addicts. Many groups are formed when members of a more established group decide to start another meeting. Sharing the responsibility, then, helps N.A. grow and creates unity among N.A. members who work together. Groups flourish with the loving support of addicts helping addicts. Within existing groups, too, we foster the unity that is our lifeblood by giving attention to each member. Every addict needs the support of the group. We strengthen our unity by participating in each other's recovery.

The unity described in our First Tradition is not the same thing as uniformity. Our membership is richly varied, made up of many addicts from widely differing backgrounds. These members bring with them a variety of ideas and talents. That diversity enriches the fellowship, and gives rise to new and creative ways to reach addicts who need our help. Our purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers--allows room for everyone to serve. When we unite in support of this

purpose, we are able to overlook our differences. Working together for our mutual well-being is a significant source of unity in Narcotics Anonymous.

### **Unity in action**

While we often think of unity as a feeling or a condition, unity doesn't just "happen." Unity requires personal commitment and responsible action. A commitment to a group is one example of a personal commitment that furthers N.A. unity. The unity enhanced by our commitment strengthens our groups, allowing us to carry a message of hope. Meetings flourish in this atmosphere of hope. The fellowship grows as a result of our united efforts.

Communication goes a long way toward building and enhancing unity. With an attitude of open-mindedness, we seek to understand other perspectives. Reports may tell us a lot about what's happening in other groups or areas. Communication involves an effort on our part to listen carefully to the needs and problems of our own group, and to the needs and problems of other groups wherever those groups may be. Encouraging each member to speak openly, from the heart, enhances communication. Thorough discussion and active listening help us find creative solutions that benefit us all.

Today's decisions may affect tomorrow's members. When we think of solutions to our current problems, it's not hard to consider the needs of our group, our area, our region, or even the worldwide fellowship. But, in our discussions, it's also important to remember the "unseen members"--the members yet to come. When we work to insure the vitality of N.A., we're not working just for ourselves, but for those who will come after us.

Unity is created not only by working together, but also by playing together. The friendships we develop outside meetings strengthen N.A. unity, as well. Fellowship activities provide opportunities for us to relax, socialize with each other,

and have fun. Conventions, dinners, and holiday celebrations give us a chance to celebrate our recovery, while practicing social skills. Picnics, dances, campouts, and sports days often allow our families to participate, too. We strengthen our sense of community when we share more than just meeting time. Stronger relationships develop as we become more involved in each other's lives. The care and understanding born of these relationships are strong threads in the fabric of N.A. unity.

### **Applying spiritual principles**

In the Twelve Steps of N.A., we learn to apply principles to better our lives. Moved by the miracle of personal recovery, we reach out to share that miracle with others. This is the essence of service in N.A. In supporting our unity, we first apply principles to guide our own behavior. As groups, we use the same principles for guidance. That guidance engenders a sense of unity that strengthens our ability to reach out to others. Some of the principles that seem particularly important to unity include surrender, commitment, selflessness, love, and anonymity. As we practice these principles, we will find others that strengthen unity as well.

*Surrender* opens the door to unity. As our trust in a Higher Power grows, it gets easier to let go of our personal desires and stop fighting for what we want. With an attitude of surrender, working together in a group becomes easier. Tradition One presents a picture of addicts working together, worldwide, to support their recovery. We try to remember this goal in all our actions, as individuals or as groups. If we find that our personal desires, or the aims of our group, conflict with that ideal, unity asks us to surrender to the greater good of Narcotics Anonymous. Only by deciding to be part of that whole can we support the unity so essential to our personal survival.



*Commitment* is another essential ingredient in unity. Personal commitment to our shared sense of purpose is one of the ties that bind us together. When we know that we belong in N.A., and when we make a commitment to stay, we become a part of the greater whole. Our sense of belonging is closely related to our level of commitment to recovery in N.A. As groups, the combined strength of that commitment is a powerful force in serving others. With that strong commitment, we are able to carry the message of hope that will support us all in our recovery.

Commitment is a decision supported by our belief in N.A. as a way of life. Our commitment is reflected in service. Regular meeting attendance is one way to express that commitment. Greeting newcomers as they arrive, or giving our telephone number to someone who needs help, reflects our decision. Sponsorship, sharing in meetings, setting up chairs before a meeting, all these are ways in which we express our commitment. Each member finds service that fits comfortably into a balanced program of recovery.

*Selflessness* is another indispensable element in unity. The principles we learn in the steps help us let go of our selfishness, to lovingly serve the needs of others. In order to keep our groups healthy, we place the needs of our group ahead of our own personal desires. The same principle applies to our affairs as a group. Setting aside what we may want as a group, we think about the needs of the fellowship and seek ways to support our common good. Our ability to survive as a fellowship and to reach others depends on our unity.

*Love* is a principle that is expressed in the practice of goodwill toward one another. We contribute to unity in our meetings by exercising loving care when we speak, and in the way we treat one another. We try to share our experience, strength, and hope in a way that demonstrates that recovery is available in Narcotics Anonymous. An atmosphere of love and care in our meetings helps members feel

comfortable and safe. The love that we show for each other attracts newcomers and strengthens us all, fueling our sense of unity.

*Anonymity*, the spiritual foundation of our traditions, supports N.A. unity as well. When we apply anonymity to the First Tradition, we overlook the differences that would separate us. In the context of unity, anonymity means that the message of recovery is for every addict who wants it, regardless of physical or mental circumstance, geographic location, or any of the other things that might separate us. In order to preserve our common welfare, we learn to set aside our prejudices and focus on our common identity as addicts. Each of us has an equal right to--and responsibility for--the well-being of Narcotics Anonymous.

Just as anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our traditions, the unity spoken of in the First Tradition is the practical foundation on which we may build strong and successful groups. Each succeeding tradition builds upon the strength of our unity as a fellowship. With unity as our practical foundation, we find that our relationship with one another is more important than any issue that may arise to divide us. No problem or disagreement is more significant than our need for each other's support. The fundamental importance of unity strengthens our understanding of all the other traditions. Many questions can be answered simply by asking ourselves, "How will the action we contemplate affect the unity of the fellowship? Will this serve to divide us, or to bring us closer together?"

Our ultimate point of unity is our trust in a loving Higher Power. In this trust, we find the strength to work together toward our shared goal: recovery from addiction. In the unity that grows in trust, we can move ahead to the Second Tradition, ready to work together for our common good.

## TRADITION TWO

*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.*

Tradition Two builds on the practical foundation of Tradition One. We begin with unity, founded on the strength of our commitment to recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. Our commitment is reflected in service: supporting a meeting, sharing with other members, sponsorship, any of the ways in which we reach out to other addicts. As groups, too, our purpose is to serve, to carry the message. Everything we do in service to N.A. is related to that purpose. Without direction, however, our services might lack consistency. To guide us in serving others, then, the group seeks direction from a Higher Power, our ultimate point of unity.

Personal service arises from the application of principles. Ideally, personal service is founded in a relationship with the same Higher Power that guides our recovery. This Higher Power also guides our groups. Our direction in service comes from a God of our understanding, whether we serve as individuals or as a group. When we come together as groups, we seek the presence and guidance of this loving God. This direction then guides us through all our actions.

Everybody has opinions on how to serve more effectively. When we each propose a different plan for any course of action, how do we decide? Who has the final say in our discussions? Our answer is that a loving God, the source of our unity, has the final say--the same Higher Power that guides our personal recovery.

## **The group conscience process**

If we, as a group, are to find guidance from an ultimate authority, we need to find a means of hearing that guidance. The mechanism we use is group conscience. The success of the group conscience process depends on our willingness as individuals to seek guidance from a Higher Power on a personal level. We then bring that willingness into the group setting.

Something happens when we, as individuals, practice the steps and learn to apply principles in our lives. We develop an awareness of our behavior, and its effects on ourselves and others. In other words, we develop a conscience. This conscience is a reflection of our relationship with a Higher Power. It reflects the guidance we receive from the God of our understanding, and our commitment to follow that guidance. In our groups, a similar process occurs: a collective conscience develops. That conscience reflects the relationship of **the group's** members to a loving Higher Power. When consulted regularly, that collective conscience guides the group in fulfilling its purpose, while preserving its unity and common welfare.

Group conscience can be thought of in much the same way as personal conscience. Group conscience reflects a collective awareness of, understanding of, and surrender to spiritual principles. The conscience of a group takes shape and is revealed when members take the time to talk with each other about their personal needs, the needs of the group, and the needs of N.A. as a whole. Each member draws upon his or her relationship with a Higher Power when speaking to the group. As members listen carefully to each other, and consult their personal understanding of a loving God, something happens. Solutions to problems become apparent, solutions that take into consideration the needs of everyone concerned. In developing a group conscience, a clear mutual understanding, or consensus, arises. Based upon the understanding gained by sharing group conscience, a group may

move on to a vote in order to make decisions. In the best of circumstances, however, the group continues discussion until it reaches unanimity. The resulting solution may be so obvious that no vote is needed.

### **The evolving group conscience**

Group conscience is a process, and it may be expressed differently at various times. Because of the changing nature of group conscience, it's not reasonable to expect that the solution to one group's needs will be sufficient for every group. What works today for one group may not be appropriate for another--or even for the same group at a different time. The principles involved in group conscience are always the same, but our awareness or understanding may change. It's important for us to continue cultivating our group's conscience. We consult that conscience and seek the guidance of a loving Higher Power whenever a question arises.

A surrender to group conscience means we allow our groups to be shaped by a loving God. We are tempted sometimes to take control of the group's daily affairs, believing that our great concern for its welfare could never lead us astray. However, as we become more trusting, we realize that the group is directed by a loving Higher Power. Our reliance on that Higher Power is demonstrated by our willingness to carry out the direction expressed in our group conscience, in a belief that all will be well.

Any group may become bogged down in disagreement, or sidetracked by seemingly insurmountable problems. In these situations, it's important to look beyond the personalities involved in a controversy. We keep our focus on the solutions. Agreement is reached when we step out of the way and allow a loving God to direct us.

Only when we listen for the direction of a Higher Power are we able to hear it. The conscience of a group is most clearly expressed when every member is

considered an equal. God works through all of us, regardless of clean time or experience. Group conscience always exists, but we are not always willing or able to hear it or allow its expression. Hearing group conscience may take time and patience. A flexible approach invites a loving Higher Power into our group conscience process.

Group conscience is not fixed and inflexible. We know that personal conscience changes as an individual's relationship with a Higher Power grows and strengthens. In the same way, the conscience of a group evolves as its members mature in recovery, and as new members arrive. Group conscience is subject to change with the addition of new members, improved understanding, additional information, and personal growth.

In our personal recovery, as we stay clean and grow spiritually, our thoughts and actions change. We don't get better overnight, and sometimes our growth is sporadic and uneven. This same pattern of growth and maturation occurs in groups as well. As groups grow and evolve, their resources change, and so do their needs. Groups may change trusted servants, or meeting format, or even location, depending upon their resources and their needs. These changes in a group may not always feel like progress. Just as our personal recovery doesn't always progress in an orderly fashion, our group doesn't always evolve as we would expect. Often, as groups go through this growing process, the group's conscience evolves as well. Changes in the group conscience are not a cause for alarm, merely part of the growing process.

### **Leaders as servants**

When a group or committee has sought direction from a loving Higher Power, it may ask some of its members to help carry out that direction. When we ask members to serve, we don't set them apart as somehow better than the rest of us.

Leadership in N.A. is a service, not a class of membership. For this reason, we call our leaders "servants."

When we choose a member to serve us in some capacity, we exercise mutual trust. We trust the conscience that influenced our selection, since it reflects our relationship as a group with a loving Higher Power. And we extend that trust to the members we have elected to serve. We have faith that they will apply principles in their actions, seek and share the most complete information available, and work to further the group's well-being and our fellowship's common welfare. The relationship of trusted servants to the group is reciprocal: members chosen to serve are asked to serve with dedication and fidelity, and the group is responsible to support those members.

When we are asked to serve, we understand that we are responsible to a loving Higher Power as expressed in the group conscience. We acknowledge this responsibility when we approach service with a selfless and loving attitude. The principles embodied in the traditions apply to all our actions. We can look to our conscience, and to the conscience of our group, for guidance in all our group's affairs.

The spiritual relationship reflected in our personal conscience is influenced by our connection to the conscience of the group. This connection with the group conscience is completed when we, as servants, carry a continuous flow of information that is honest and open. We help form the conscience of our group, through the direction of a Higher Power, by presenting a complete and unbiased stream of information. The ideas and direction of the group, then, are conveyed in our representation of that group's conscience.

Our trusted servants lead us best when they lead by personal example. Ideally, we choose them for the principles of recovery we see at work in their lives. We encourage our trusted servants to remain open to new ideas, to be informed and

knowledgeable about all aspects of service in N.A., and to continue to seek personal recovery. All of these attributes are essential to their ability to serve us well.

### **Applying spiritual principles**

We noted earlier in this chapter that personal service arises from the practice of principles. By applying these principles, we learn to listen for direction from our Higher Power. Some of the principles that seem to be important in Tradition Two include surrender, faith, humility, open-mindedness, integrity, and anonymity.

We begin with *surrender* to our ultimate authority, the God of our understanding with whom we have developed a personal relationship. In this case, we surrender to the direction of that Higher Power as it is revealed in our group conscience. We renew our commitment to the unity of N.A. when we place the needs of the group and the fellowship ahead of our own desires.

*Faith* is our reliance on a loving Higher Power, put into action. The application of this spiritual principle lets us surrender to the group conscience with hope instead of fear. It is a constant reminder that our direction comes from a Power greater than ourselves. Faith demands courage, since we often practice an active demonstration of faith in spite of our anxiety. Our faith is strengthened through the experience of seeing a loving God work in our groups.

*Humility* in practice is the honest assessment of our strength and weakness. That kind of assessment is a necessary ingredient in our willingness to surrender. Humility prepares us to set aside our personal wishes so that we can effectively serve the group and the fellowship. We look to humility, first, to remind us that we aren't personally capable of guiding the affairs of Narcotics Anonymous. We are reminded of our source of strength, a loving Higher Power.

By practicing humility in our efforts to serve, we make room for *open-mindedness*. When we are open-minded, we hear and accept solutions offered by



others in the development of group conscience. Application of this principle teaches us to set aside our prejudices in order to work with others. By practicing open-mindedness, we nurture an attitude of goodwill toward other groups, and become willing to serve with our common good in mind. Only with an open mind can we recognize the guidance of a loving Higher Power.

*Integrity* is the consistent application of principles. Leaders who demonstrate this quality inspire our trust. We serve best when we display an honest respect for the trust placed in us by others. Fidelity and devotion to that trust reflect the personal integrity of our servants. When we choose members to serve us, we often look for integrity as a sign that they are trustworthy.

The spiritual principle of *anonymity* reminds us that we are all equal in Narcotics Anonymous. No one member or group has a monopoly on the knowledge of God's will. Regardless of our personal feelings for others, in practicing anonymity, we offer them our love, attention, and respect. Every member has a part in the development of group conscience. We are all equal in the expression of a conscious contact with a Higher Power of our understanding.

Tradition Two offers guidance for our relationships with others. A loving Higher Power is the guide, the source of direction for N.A. as a whole. This Higher Power is also the source of the principles that we apply when we serve. We can use these principles when we seek direction as individuals or as groups.

Service to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous has its own rewards. When we practice spiritual principles in our daily lives, a stronger relationship with our Higher Power develops. Our relationship with our group and the fellowship grows stronger, too. Service in N.A. is a learning experience that allows us personal growth. We begin to look beyond our own interests, setting aside our self-centered

view of life in order to better serve the whole. We benefit spiritually in return for our unselfish service.

Service is for those we serve. Our best talent in service is the ability to reach other addicts, to offer identification and welcome, to greet the addict walking in the door for the first time, and to help insure that newcomer's return again and again. Any one of us is capable of offering that service. With the guidance of a loving Higher Power, we become better able to help others. With that guidance, and with the willingness to serve, we look ahead to Tradition Three.

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