

Questions regarding tradition violations, Part One

This article was written by Sally E., a member of the World Service Board of Trustees, in November 1983. It represents her views at the time of writing.

Questions regarding tradition violations arise most frequently over the use of literature and speakers from other Twelve Step fellowships. A rereading of our Sixth Tradition and the following words of experience may be helpful in resolving these problems before they start.

Tradition Six: "An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose."

Narcotics Anonymous, as we know it today, evolved out of a group called AA for addicts, which met in the San Fernando Valley. In 1953, the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous informed this group that they were in violation of the traditions of AA and that AA was for alcoholics. This group formed the first meeting of Narcotics Anonymous and since then we have grown from one small meeting in Southern California to a worldwide fellowship.

We are deeply grateful to AA for granting us permission to adapt their Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions to our program. We have gained much from AA and wish to maintain a spirit of "cooperation, but not affiliation" with AA.

The World Service Board of Trustees of NA has consistently held that, at NA meetings, the use of literature other than NA approved literature constitutes a violation of the traditions. Further, that speakers need to talk about the NA steps, the NA

traditions, and NA recovery. We need to keep in mind the confusion that can result for the newcomer attending an NA 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 NA 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 Twelve 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 NA meeting for others to read or listen to.

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

If you are concerned about a violation of traditions in your group, area, or region, we suggest that you approach the individual, or individuals involved, with a positive and friendly attitude. Every effort should be made to discuss and resolve possible violations at the time and place they appear to be generated.

In a future article, we will provide guidance on the correct procedure to follow when a suspected violation cannot be avoided or stopped by direct and immediate discussion.

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