

NON-ADDICT MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

The service structure of Narcotics Anonymous allows for one-third of the members of the Board of Trustees to be non-addicts.

Non-addicts are chosen as trustees of special expertise they may provide the Fellowship. Experts in the fields of law, journalism, medicine, business administration, religion, prison administration, counselling, broadcasting, writing, nursing, the judiciary and other professions, who are also knowledgeable and appreciate of the 12-Step spiritual recovery program of Narcotics Anonymous, are potential non-addict trustees. Those of you who have participated in the growth of Narcotics Anonymous which occurs annually at the World Service Conference would agree with the need for additional expert assistance in some of the problem areas we have encountered such as tax law, administrative procedures and parliamentary procedures. Subcommittees would benefit from medical opinion, journalistic experience, prison experts and so on. Some of this expertise is available within the Fellowship, but more is needed. Non-addict trustees are not chosen as spokespersons for Narcotics Anonymous, nor are they trail blazers for N.A. They must work within the 12 Traditions, even though they are non-addicts. They provide advice and their counsel can be solicited by anyone in the Fellowship. They can recognize needs within the Fellowship and bring their ideas to open forum discussion at the Trustees' meetings and at the World Service Conference. They can strengthen N.A. and support its growth without starting meetings themselves, but indirectly by mentioning Narcotics Anonymous in press releases or at medical meetings, or in medical, nursing, legal journals and symposiums. This work can be done external to Narcotics Anonymous by participating in the workings of the World Service Conference, at various workshops and committees.

When they meet with other professionals and share their conviction that addiction need not be fatal and that Narcotics Anonymous offers a proven recovery program for addicts, they provide information which may not be known to these professionals. This is "spreading the message" and is done within the spirit of the Eleventh Tradition, which speaks of growth through attraction rather than promotion.

The positions of non-addict Trustees are not honorary positions. There is a lot of homework and a lot of travel and real dedication is required.

How can non-addicts become Trustees?

Their names must be placed in nomination at the World Service Conference by a member of the Conference, such as the RSRs, the Trustees, or other voting participants. The candidates must be present to speak to the Conference of their qualifications and to accept the position if elected. If you know a non-addict who has special gifts or expertise to offer the Fellowship, present his or her credentials to your local Trusted Servants, GSRs or ASR, so that your RSR can nominate that individual at the World Service Conference. It is essential that they be interested and they must be willing to attend the World Service Conference at their own expense. If nominated and selected, air fare home will be reimbursed if funds are available. Trustees should attend four regular meetings of the World Service Board of Trustees per year. One is held at the time of the World Service Conference.

which is held annually in late April; one which is traditionally held at the World Convention over Labor Day weekend at various locations [the 1986 World Convention will be held in London, England]; and two others which are held in November and February at the World Service Office in Van Nuys, California. Reimbursement for travel to these meetings will be provided if funds are available.

Currently I am one of two non-addict members of the Board of Trustees. I am a physician, but that doesn't mean we cannot have other physicians. Generally, however, it would be good to have some balance of representation from other professions.

Please don't think that non-addicts have a natural handle on honesty or are free of anger, guilt and resentment. Association with addicts does not come by natural inclination. Predictable unconscious factors are usually involved. There is a greater chance than not that the non-addict trustee or non-addict trustee-elect is a co-addict (parent, child, spouse or close friend of an addict), thus affected with some emotional and spiritual deficits, characteristic of the disease of co-addiction. Unless co-addiction is recognized and dealt with in a recovery program such as Nar-Anon, the co-addict trustee can do serious damage to himself or herself and to members of the Fellowship, or to the Fellowship as a whole. Narcotics Anonymous does not need "enablers"; persons serving with all sincerity but actually serving sick needs which have been unrecognized. These remarks should not be taken to mean that Nar-Anon is a prerequisite or mandatory for non-addict trustees, but objectivity is enhanced by Nar-Anon attendance for the non-addicts working with Narcotics Anonymous. Speaking for myself, I was late (considering the number of years I spent treating addicts) in recognizing the impact of co-addiction in my life. I had long been addicted to addicts, but I did not know why. The Nar-Anon recovery program helped me to "see." Some new awareness comes to me regularly by working the Nar-Anon Program, just as it does for you in working your recovery program of Narcotics Anonymous.

When I awoke to realize how deeply I was involved in helping addicts -- me, a co-addict -- my first inclination was to stop because I might be more dangerous than helpful. Further reflection suggested to me that I should stick around because what better way to force a recovery program for me and a greater in-depth understanding of the relationship between co-addiction and addiction. If co-addiction places us in the role of the helper, then let us learn to help in a loving and spiritual way. Jimmy K., N.A.'s first recovering addict, pencilled in the cover of my Basic Text, "...Recovery is not only the area of the addict -- we all need to strip away the illusions from the past."

Michael Bohan,
Non-addict Member,
Board of Trustees
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