

Historical  
Perspective  
Of the  
Twelve Traditions  
&  
Personal  
Work Book

NOT FOR USE IN NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS MEETINGS  
UNAPPROVED LITERATURE

NOT FOR USE IN NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS MEETINGS OR GROUPS

NOT FOR USE IN MEETINGS - NOT APPROVED LITERATURE

# **Traditions Workbook**

## NOT FOR USE IN NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS MEETINGS OR GROUPS

Here is what was contained in the April 1946 AA Grapevine. Bill Wilson said that the Traditions are a result of the Steps manifested in ones life.

### **Twelve Suggested Points for AA Tradition**

by Bill W.  
April 1946

NOBODY INVENTED ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS. It grew. Trial and error has produced a rich experience. Little by little we have been adopting the lessons of that experience, first as policy and then as tradition. That process still goes on and we hope it never stops. Should we ever harden too much, the letter might crush the spirit. We could victimize ourselves by petty rules and prohibitions; we could imagine that we had said the last word we might even be asking alcoholics to accept our rigid ideas or stay away. May we never stifle progress like that! Yet the lessons of our experience count for a great deal - a very great deal, we are each convinced. The first written record of AA experience was the book Alcoholics Anonymous. It was addressed to the heart of our foremost problem - release from the alcohol obsession. It contained personal experiences of drinking and recovery and a statement of those divine but ancient principles that have brought us a miraculous regeneration. Since publication of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1939 we have grown from 100 to 24,000 members. Seven years have passed; seven years of vast experience with our next greatest undertaking - the problem of living and working together. This is today our main concern. If we can succeed in this adventure - and keep succeeding - then, and only then, will our future be secure. Since personal calamity holds us in bondage no more, our most challenging concern has become the future of Alcoholics Anonymous; how to preserve among us AA's such a powerful unity that neither weakness of persons nor the strain and strife of these troubled times can harm our common cause. We know that Alcoholics Anonymous must continue to live. Else, save few exceptions, we and alcoholics throughout the world will surely resume the hopeless journey to oblivion. Almost any AA can tell you what our group problems are. Fundamentally they have to do with our relations, one with the other, and with the world outside. They involve relations of the AA to his group, the relation of his group to Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole, and the place of Alcoholics Anonymous in that troubled sea called modern society, where all humankind must presently shipwreck or find haven. Terribly relevant is the problem of our basic structure and our attitude toward those ever-pressing questions of leadership, money, and authority. The

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future may well depend on how we feel and act about things that are controversial, and how we regard our public relations. Our final destiny will surely hang upon what we presently decide to do with these danger-fraught issues! Now comes the crux of our discussion. It is this: Have we yet acquired sufficient experience to state clear-cut policies on these, our chief concerns? Can we now declare general principles which could grow into vital traditions - traditions sustained in the heart of each AA by his own deep conviction and by the common consent of his fellows? That is the question. Though full answer to all our perplexities may never be found, I'm sure we have come at last to a vantage point whence we can discern the main outlines of a body of tradition; which, God willing, can stand as an effective guard against all the ravages of time and circumstance. Acting upon the persistent urge of old AA friends, and upon the conviction that general agreement and consent between our members is now possible, I shall venture to place in words these suggestions for an Alcoholics Anonymous tradition of relations-twelve points to assure our future:

Our AA experience has taught us that:

# THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF N.A.

We keep what we have only with vigilance, and just as freedom for the individual comes from the Twelve Steps, so freedom for the group springs from our Traditions.

As long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well.

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.
2. 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.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or N.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. 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.
7. Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. N.A., as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Understanding these Traditions comes slowly over a period of time. We pick up information as we talk to members and visit various groups. It usually isn't until we get involved with service that someone points out that "personal recovery depends on N.A. unity", and that unity depends on how well we follow our Traditions. Because we hear about "suggested steps" and "no musts" so often, some of us make a mistake and

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assume that this applies to groups the way it applies to the individual. The Twelve Traditions of N.A. are not negotiable. They are the guidelines that keep our fellowship alive and free.

By following these guidelines in our dealings with others and society at large, we avoid many problems. That is not to say our Traditions eliminate them all. We still have to face difficulties as they arise: communication problems, differences of opinion, internal controversies, and troubles with individuals and groups outside the fellowship. However, when we apply these principles, we avoid some of the pitfalls.

Many of our problems are like those our predecessors had to face. Their hard-won experience gave birth to the Traditions, and our own experience has shown that these principles are just as valid today as they were when these Traditions were formulated. Our Traditions protect us from the internal and external forces which could destroy us. They are truly the ties that bind us together. It is only through understanding and application that they work.

# TRADITION CHECKLIST

These questions were originally published in the AA Grapevine from Nov. 1969 – Sept. 1971. The original language has been altered slightly to make them more accessible to Narcotics Anonymous members and groups. The main content remains unchanged.

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## **Tradition One:**

1. Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. AA must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.

### **TRADITION ONE**

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

Our First Tradition concerns unity and our common welfare. One of the most important things about our new way of life is being a part of a group of addicts seeking recovery. Our survival is directly related to the survival of the group and of the fellowship. To maintain unity within Narcotics Anonymous it is imperative that the group remain stable, or else the entire fellowship perishes and the individual dies.

It wasn't until we came to Narcotics Anonymous that recovery became possible. This program can do for us what we could not do for ourselves. We became part of a group and found that we could recover. We learned that those who did not continue to be an active part of the fellowship faced a rough road. The individual is precious to the group, and the group is precious to the individual. We never experienced the kind of attention and personal care that we found in the Program. We are accepted and loved for what we are, instead of "in spite" of what we are. No one can revoke our membership or make us do anything we do not choose to do. We follow this way of life by example rather than direction. We share our experience and learn from each other. In our addiction, we consistently placed our personal desires before anything else. In Narcotics Anonymous we found that what is best for the group is usually good for us.

Our personal experiences while using differed from one another. However, as a group we have found many common themes in our addiction. One of these was the need to prove self-sufficiency. We had convinced ourselves that we could make it alone and proceeded to live life on that basis. The results were disastrous, and in the end, each of us had to admit that self-sufficiency was a lie. This admission was the starting point of our recovery and is a primary point of unity for the fellowship.

Not only are these common themes in our addiction, but we find that in our recovery we have much in common. We share a common desire to stay clean. We have learned to depend on a Power greater than ourselves. Our purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. Our Traditions are the guidelines that protect us from ourselves. They are our unity.

Unity is a must in Narcotics Anonymous. This is not to say that we do not have our disagreements and conflicts; we do. Whenever people get together there are differences of opinion. However, we can disagree without being disagreeable. Time and time again, we have seen that in crises we set aside our differences and work for the common good. We have seen two members who usually do not get along well working together with a newcomer. We have seen a group doing menial tasks to pay rent for their meeting hall.

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We have seen members drive hundreds of miles to help support a new group. These activities and many others are commonplace in our fellowship. They must be because without these things, N.A. could not survive.

We must live and work together as a group to insure that in a storm our ship does not sink and members perish. With faith in a Power greater than ourselves, hard work, and unity we will survive and continue to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

1. Am I in my group a healing, mending, integrating person, or am I divisive (conflicting)? What about gossip and taking other members inventories?

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2. Am I a peacemaker? Or do I, with pious (Commendable; worthy: *a pious effort*) precludes such as "just for the sake of discussion," plunge into argument?

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3. Am I gentle with those who rub me the wrong way, or am I abrasive?

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4. Do I make competitive NA remarks, such as comparing one group with another or contrasting NA in one place with NA in another?

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5. Do I put down some NA activities as if I were superior for not participating in this or that aspect of NA?

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6. Am I misinformed about NA as a whole? Do I support, in every way I can, NA as a whole, or just the parts I understand and approve of?

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7. Am I as considerate of NA members as I want them to be of me?

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8. Do I spout platitudes about love while indulging in and secretly justifying behavior that bristles with hostility?

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9. Do I get to enough NA meetings or read enough NA literature to really keep in touch?

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10. Do I share with NA all of me, the bad and the good, accepting as well as giving the help of fellowship?

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## **Tradition Two:**

2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.

### **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."***

In Narcotics Anonymous, we are concerned with protecting ourselves from ourselves. Our Second Tradition is an example of this. By nature, we are strong-willed, self-centered people, thrust together in N.A.; mismanagers all; not one of us is capable of making consistently good decisions.

In Narcotics Anonymous, we rely on a loving God as He expresses Himself in our group conscience, rather than on personal opinion or ego. In working the steps, we learn to depend on a Power greater than ourselves, and utilize it for our group purposes. We must be constantly on guard that our decisions are truly an expression of God's will. There is often a vast difference between group conscience and group opinion, as dictated by powerful personalities or popularity. Some of our most painful growing experiences have come as a result of decisions made in the name of "group conscience". True spiritual principles are never in conflict; they complement each other. The spiritual conscience of a group will never contradict any of our Traditions. The Second Tradition concerns the nature of leadership in N.A. We have learned that for our fellowship, leadership by example and by selfless service works and that direction and manipulation fail. We choose not to have presidents, masters, or directors. Instead we have secretaries, treasurers and representatives. These titles imply service rather than control. Our experience shows that if a group becomes an extension of the personality of a leader or a certain member, it loses its effectiveness. An atmosphere of recovery in our groups is one of our most valued assets, and we must guard it carefully lest we lose it to politics and personalities.

Those of us who have been involved in service or in getting a group started sometimes have a hard time letting go. Egos and unfounded pride and self-will would destroy a group if given authority. We must instead remember that offices have been placed in trust, that we are trusted servants and that at no time do any of us govern. Narcotics Anonymous is a God-given Program, and we can maintain our group in dignity only with group conscience and God's love.

Some will resist. However, many will become the role models for newcomers to follow while the self-seeking soon find they are on the outside, causing dissension and eventually disaster to themselves. Many of them change; they learn we can only be governed by a loving God as expressed in our group conscience.

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11. Do I criticize or do I trust and support my group officers, NA committees, and office workers? Newcomers? Old-timers?

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12. Am I absolutely trustworthy, even in secret with NA twelfth step jobs or other NA responsibility?

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13. Do I look for credit in my NA jobs? Praise for my NA ideas?

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14. Do I have to save face in group discussion, or can I yield in good spirit to the group conscience and work cheerfully along with it?

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15. Although I have been clean for a few years, am I still willing to serve my turn at NA chores?

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16. In group discussions, do I sound off about matters on which I have no experience and little knowledge?

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## Tradition Three:

3. Our membership ought to include all who suffer alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought AA membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group.

### **TRADITION THREE**

***"The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using."***

This Tradition is important for both the individual and the group. Desire is the key word; desire is the basis of our recovery. In our stories and in our experience of trying to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers, one painful fact of life has emerged again and again. An addict who does not want to stop using will not stop using. They can be analyzed, counseled, reasoned with, prayed over, threatened, beaten, locked up, or whatever, but they will not stop until they want to stop. The only thing we ask of our members is that they have this desire. Without it they are doomed, but with it miracles will happen.

Desire is our only requirement, and rightly so. Addiction does not discriminate. This Tradition is to insure that any addict regardless of drugs used, race, religious beliefs, sex, sexual preference or financial condition is free to practice the N.A. way of life. That only the desire to stop using is needed insures that no caste system will develop making one addict superior to another. All addicted persons are welcome and equal in obtaining the relief they are seeking from their addiction; every addict can recover in this program on an equal basis. This Tradition guarantees our freedom to recover.

Membership in Narcotics Anonymous is not automatic when someone walks in the door or when the newcomer decides to stop using. The decision to become a part of our fellowship rests with the individual. Any addict who has a desire to stop using can become a member of N.A. We are addicts and our problem is addiction.

The choice of membership rests with the individual. We feel the ideal state for our fellowship exists when addicts can come freely and openly to an N.A. meeting, whenever and wherever they choose, and leave just as freely if they want. We realize that recovery is a reality and that life without drugs is better than we ever imagined. We open our doors to addicts hoping that they can find what we have found, knowing only those who have a desire to stop using and want what we have to offer will join us in our way of life.

17. In my mind, do I prejudge some new NA members as losers?

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18. Is there some kind of addict whom I privately do not want in my group?

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19. Do I set myself up as a judge of whether a newcomer is sincere or phony?

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20. Do I let language, religion (or lack of it), race, education, age, or other such things interfere with my carrying the messages?

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21. Am I over impressed by a celebrity? By a doctor, a clergyman, an ex-convict? Or can I just treat this new member simply and naturally as one more sick human, like the rest of us?

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22. When someone turns up at NA needing information or help (even if he can't ask for it outloud), does it really matter to me what he does for a living? Where he lives? What his domestic arrangements are? Whether he had been to NA before? What his other problems are?

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## **Tradition Four:**

4. With respect to its own affairs, each AA group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect AA as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation [now the AA General Service Board]. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.

### **TRADITION FOUR**

***"Each Group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other Groups, or N.A. as a whole."***

The autonomy of our groups is necessary for our survival. A dictionary defines autonomous as "having the right or power of self government...undertaken or carried on without outside control". This means our groups are self-governing and are not subject to outside control. Every group has had to stand and grow on its own.

One might ask, "Are we truly autonomous? What about our service committees, our offices, activities, and all the other things that go on in N.A.?" The answer is that these things are not N.A. They are services we utilize to help us in our recovery and to further the primary purpose of our groups. Narcotics Anonymous is a Fellowship of men and women; addicts meeting in groups and using a given set of spiritual principles to find freedom from addiction and a new way to live. All else is not N.A. Those things we mentioned are the result of members caring enough to reach out and offer their help and experience so that our road might be easier. Whether we choose to utilize these services is up to the group.

A Narcotics Anonymous group is any meeting which meets regularly at a specified place and time for the purpose of recovery provided that it follows the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous. There are two basic types of meetings: those which are opened to the general public and those closed to the public (for addicts only). Meetings vary widely in format from group to group. Some are participation meetings, some speakers, some question and answer, some special problems discussion.

Despite the type or format a group uses for its meetings, the function of a group is always the same: to provide a suitable and reliable environment for personal recovery and to promote such recovery. These Traditions are part of a set of spiritual principles of Narcotics Anonymous, and without them, N.A. does not exist.

We say that for N.A., autonomy is more than this. It gives our groups the freedom to act on their own to establish their atmosphere of recovery, serve their members, and fulfill their primary purpose. It is for these reasons that we guard our autonomy so carefully.

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It would seem that we, in our groups, can do whatever we decide regardless of what anyone says. This is partly true. Each group does have complete freedom, except when their actions affect other groups or N.A. as a whole. Like group conscience, autonomy can be a two-edged sword. Group autonomy has been used to justify the violation of the Traditions. If a contradiction exists, we have slipped away from our principles. If we check to make sure that our actions are clearly within the bounds of our Traditions; if we do not dictate to other groups, or force anything upon them; and if we consider the consequences of our action ahead of time, then all will be well.

23. Do I insist that there are only a few right ways of doing things in NA?

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24. Does my group always consider the welfare of the rest of NA? Of nearby groups? Of loners in Alaska? Of Internationalists miles from port? Of a group in Rome or El Salvador?

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25. Do I put down other members behavior when it's different from mine, or do I learn from it?

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26. Do I always bear in mind that, to those outsiders who know I am in NA, I may to some extent represent our entire beloved fellowship?

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27. Am I willing to help the newcomer go to any lengths – his lengths, not mine – to stay clean?

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28. Do I share my knowledge of NA tools with other members who may not have heard them?

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## Tradition Five:

5. Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose – that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

### **TRADITION FIVE**

***"Each group has but one primary purpose-to carry the message to the addict who still suffers."***

"You mean to say that our primary purpose is to carry the message? I thought we were here to get clean. I thought that our primary purpose was to recover from drug addiction." For the individual, this is certainly true; our members are here to find freedom from addiction and a new way of life. However, groups aren't addicted and don't recover. All our groups can do is plant the seed for recovery and bring addicts together so that the magic of empathy, honesty, caring, sharing, and service can do their work. The purpose of this Tradition is to insure that this atmosphere of recovery is maintained. This can only be achieved by keeping our groups recovery-oriented. The fact that we, each and every group, focus on carrying the message provides consistency; addicts can count on us. Unity of action and purpose makes possible what seemed impossible for us-recovery.

The Twelfth Step of our personal Program also says that we carry the message to the addict who still suffers. Working with others is a powerful tool. "The therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel." For the newcomers, this is how they found Narcotics Anonymous and learned to stay clean. For the members this reaffirms their commitment to recovery. The group is the most powerful vehicle we have for carrying the message. When a member carries the message, he is somewhat bound by interpretation and personality. The problem with literature is language. The feelings, the intensity, and the strengths are sometimes lost. In our group, with many different personalities, the message of recovery is a recurring theme.



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"What would happen if our groups had another primary purpose?" We feel our message would be diluted and then lost. If we concentrated on making money, many might get rich. If we were a social club, we could find many friends and lovers. If we specialized in education, we'd end up with many smart addicts. If our specialty was medical help, many would get healthy. If our group purpose were anything other than to carry the message, many would die and few would find recovery.

What is our message? That an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. Our message is hope and the promise of freedom. When it is said and done, our primary purpose can only be to carry the message to the addict who still suffers because that is all we have to give.

29. Do I ever cop out by saying, "I'm not a group, so this or that tradition doesn't apply to me?"

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30. Am I willing to explain firmly to a newcomer the limitations of NA help, even if he gets mad at me for not giving him a loan?

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31. Have I today imposed on any NA member for a special favor or consideration simply because I am a fellow addict?

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32. Am I willing to twelfth-step the next newcomer without regard to who or what is in it for me?

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33. Do I help my group in every way I can to fulfill our primary purpose?

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34. Do I remember that NA old-timers, too, can be addicts who still suffer? Do I try both to help than and to learn from them?

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## Tradition Six:

6. Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to AA should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. An AA group, as such, should never go into business. Secondary aids to AA, such as clubs or hospitals which require much property or administration, ought to be so set apart that, if necessary, they can be freely discarded by the groups. The management of these special facilities should be the sole responsibility of those people, whether AAs or not, who financially support them. For our clubs, we prefer AA managers. But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside AA – and medically supervised. An AA group may cooperate with anyone, but should bind itself to no one.

### **TRADITION 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."***

Our Sixth Tradition tells us some of the things we must do to preserve and protect our primary purpose. This Tradition is the basis for our policy of non-affiliation and is extremely important to the continuation and growth of Narcotics Anonymous.

Let's take a look at what this Tradition says. The first thing a group ought never do is endorse. To endorse is to sanction, approve or recommend. Endorsements can be either direct or implied. We see direct endorsements everyday in T.V. commercials. An implied endorsement is one that is not specifically stated.

Many other organizations wish to ride on the N.A. name. To allow them to do so would be an implied endorsement and a violation of this Tradition. Hospitals, drug recovery houses, probation and parole offices are some of the facilities we deal with in carrying

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the N.A. message. While these organizations are sincere and we hold N.A. meetings in their establishments, we cannot endorse, finance or allow them to use the N.A. name to further their growth. However, we are willing to carry the N.A. principles into these institutions to the addicts who still suffer so that they can make the choice.

The next thing we ought never to do is finance. This is more obvious. To finance means to supply funds or to help support financially.

The third thing warned against is lending the N.A. name to fulfill the purposes of other programs. For example, several times other programs have tried to use Narcotics Anonymous as part of their "services offered" to help justify funding.

This Tradition also tells us "who". A related facility is any place that involves N.A. members. It might be a halfway house, a detox center, a counseling center, a clubhouse or any one of a number of such places. People are easily confused by what is N.A. and what are the related facilities. Recovery houses which have been started or staffed by N.A. members have to take care that the differentiation is clear. Perhaps the most confusion exists when it involves a clubhouse situation. Newcomers and even older members often identify the clubhouse with Narcotics Anonymous. We should make a special effort to let these people know that these are not the same. The second "who" are outside enterprises. An outside enterprise is any agency, business venture, religion, society, organization, related activity, or any other fellowship. Most of these are easy to identify, except for the other fellowships. Narcotics Anonymous is a separate and distinct fellowship in its own right. Our problem is addiction. The other Twelve Step fellowships specialize in other problems, and our relationship with them is one of "cooperation, not affiliation". The use of literature, speakers, and announcements of other fellowships in our meetings constitutes an implied endorsement of an outside enterprise.

This Sixth Tradition goes on to warn us what may happen: "lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose". These often become obsessions and shut us off from our spiritual aim. For the individual, this type of abuse can be devastating; for the group, it can be disastrous. When we as a group waver from our primary purpose, addicts die who might have found recovery.

35. Should my fellow group members and I go out and raise money to endow several NA beds in our local hospital?

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36. Is it good for a group to lease a small building?

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37. Are all our group members clear on our relationship with other twelve step organizations being of co-operation not affiliation?

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38. Should the secretary of our group serve on the majors advisory committee on addiction?

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39. Some addicts will stay around NA only if we have a TV and card room. If this is what is required to carry the message to them, should we have these facilities?

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## Tradition Seven:

7. The AA groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members. We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous; that acceptance of large gifts from any source, or of contributions carrying any obligation whatever, is usually unwise. Then, too, we view with much concern those AA treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.

### **TRADITION SEVEN**

***"Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."***

Being self-supporting is an important part of our new way of life. For the individual, this is usually quite a change. In our addiction, we were dependent on people, places and

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things. We looked to them to support us and supply the things we found lacking in ourselves. As recovering addicts, we find that we are still dependent, but our dependence has shifted from the things around us to a loving God and the inner strength we get in our relationship with Him. We, who were unable to function as human beings, now find anything is possible of us. Those dreams we gave up long ago can now become realities. Addicts as a group have been a burden to society. In N.A., our groups not only stand on their own, but demand the right to do so.

Money has always been a problem for us. We could never find enough to support ourselves and our habits. We worked, stole, conned, begged and sold ourselves; there was never enough money to fill the emptiness inside. In our recovery, money is still often a problem.

We need money to run our group: there is rent to pay, supplies and literature to buy. We take a collection in our meetings to cover these expenses and whatever is left over goes to support our services and to further our primary purpose. Unfortunately, there is little left over once a group pays its way. Sometimes members who can afford it kick in a little extra to help. Sometimes a committee is formed to put on an activity to raise funds. These efforts help and without them, we could not have come this far. N.A. services remain in need of money, and even though it is sometimes frustrating, we really would not have it any other way; we know the price would be too high. We all have to pull together, and in pulling together we learn that we really are part of "something greater than ourselves".

Our policy concerning money is clearly stated: We decline any outside contributions; our fellowship is completely self-supporting. We accept no funding, endowments, loans, and/or gifts. Everything has its price, regardless of intent. Whether the price is money, promises, concessions, special recognition, endorsements, favors, or anything else, it's too high for us. Even if those who would help us could guarantee no strings, we still would not accept their aid. We cannot afford to let our members contribute more than their fair share. We have found that the price paid by our groups is disunity and controversy. We will not put our freedom on the line.

40. Honestly now, do I do all I can to help NA (my group, my central office, my region) remain self-supporting? Could I put a little more into the basket on behalf of the new guy who can't afford it yet?

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NOT FOR USE IN NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS MEETINGS OR GROUPS

41. Should the NA Way (newsletter/magazine) sell advertising space to book publishers and drug companies, so it could make a big profit and become a bigger magazine, in full color, at a cheaper price per issue?

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42. If NAWs runs out of money some year wouldn't it be okay to let the government subsidize NA groups in hospitals and prisons?

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43. Is it more important to get a big NA collection from a few people, or a smaller collection in which more members participate?

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44. Is a group treasurers report unimportant NA business? How does the treasurer feel about that?

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45. How important in my recovery is the feeling of self-respect, rather than feeling of being always under obligation for charity received?

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## **Tradition Eight:**

8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional. We define professionalism as the occupation of counseling alcoholics for fees or hire. But we may employ alcoholics where they are going to perform those full-time services for which we might otherwise have to engage non-alcoholics. Such special services may be well recompensed. But personal "Twelfth Step" work is never to be paid for.

### **TRADITION EIGHT**

***"Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers."***

The Eighth Tradition is vital to the stability of N.A. as a whole. In order to understand this Tradition we need to define "non-professional service centers" and "special workers". With an understanding of these terms, this important Tradition is self-explanatory.

In this Tradition we say we have no professionals. By this, we mean we have no staff psychiatrists, doctors, lawyers, counselors, etc. Our program works by one addict helping another. By employing professionals in N.A., we would destroy our unity. We are simply addicts of equal status freely helping one another.

We recognize and admire the professionals. Many of our members are professionals in their own right. It is just that there is no room for professionalism in N.A.

A service center is defined as a place where N.A. service committees operate. The World Service Office or local regional and area offices are examples of service centers. A clubhouse or halfway house, or similar facility, is not an N.A. service center and is not affiliated with N.A. A service center is, very simply, a place where N.A. services are offered on a continuing basis.

"Service centers may employ special workers." This statement means that service centers may employ workers for special skills such as phone answering, clerical work, or printing. Such employees are directly responsible to a service committee. As N.A. grows, the demand for these workers will grow. Special workers are necessary to insure efficiency in an ever-expanding fellowship.

The difference between professionals and special workers should be defined for clarity. Professionals work in specific professions which do not direct services of N.A., but are for personal gain. Professionals do not follow N.A. Traditions. Our special workers, on the other hand, work within our Traditions and are directly responsible always to those they serve, to the fellowship.

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In regards to our Eighth Tradition, we do not single out our members as "professional"; by not placing professional status on any member, we insure that we remain "forever non-professional".

46. Is my own behavior accurately described by the traditions? If not, what needs changing?

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47. When I chafe about any particular Tradition, do I realize how it affects others?

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48. Do I sometimes try to get some reward – even if not money – for my personal NA efforts?

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49. Do I try to sound in NA like an expert on addiction? On recovery? On medicine? On sociology? On NA itself? On psychology? On spiritual matters? Or humility?

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50. Do I make an effort to understand what NAWS employees do?

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51. Have I paid enough attention to the "It Works How and Why" book?

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## Tradition Nine:

9. Each AA group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is usually the best. The small group may elect its secretary, the large group its rotating committee, and the groups of a large metropolitan area their central committee, which often employs a full-time secretary. The trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation are, in effect, our general service committee. They are the custodians of our AA tradition and the receivers of voluntary contributions by which they maintain AA General Headquarters and our general secretary at New York. They are authorized by the groups to handle our overall public relations and they guarantee the integrity of our principal publication. The AA Grapevine. All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of service, for true leaders in AA are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority from their titles. Universal respect is the key to their usefulness.

### **TRADITION NINE**

***"N.A. as such ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve."***

This Tradition defines the way our Fellowship functions. We must first understand what N.A. is. Narcotics Anonymous is addicts who have the desire to stop using, and have joined together to do so. Our meetings are a gathering of members for the purpose of staying clean and carrying the message of recovery. Our Steps and Traditions are set down in a specific order. They are numbered, not random and unstructured. They are organized, but this is not the type of organization referred to in the Ninth Tradition. For the purpose of this Tradition, "organized" means having management and control. On this basis, the meaning of Tradition Nine is clear. Without this Tradition, our Fellowship would be in opposition to spiritual principles. A loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience is our ultimate authority.

The Ninth Tradition goes on to define the nature of the things that we can do to help N.A. It says that we may create service boards or committees to serve the needs of the Fellowship. None of them has the power to rule, censor, decide, or dictate. They exist solely to serve the Fellowship, but they are not a part of Narcotics Anonymous. This is the nature of our service structure as it has evolved and been defined in the N.A. service manual.

52. Do I still try to boss things in NA?

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NOT FOR USE IN NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS MEETINGS OR GROUPS

53. Do I resist formal aspects of NA because I fear them as authoritative?

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54. Am I mature enough to understand and use all elements of the NA program – even if no one makes me do so – with a sense of responsibility?

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55. Do I exercise patience and humility in any NA commitment I take?

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56. Am I aware of all those to whom I'm responsible in any NA commitment?

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57. Why doesn't every NA group need a constitution and by-laws?

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58. Have I learned to step out of an NA commitment gracefully – and profit thereby – when the time comes?

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NOT FOR USE IN NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS MEETINGS OR GROUPS

59. What has rotation to do with anonymity?

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60. What has rotation to do with humility?

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## Tradition Ten:

10. No AA group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate AA, express any opinion on outside controversial issues— particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever.

### **TRADITION TEN**

***"Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy."***

In order to achieve our spiritual aim, Narcotics Anonymous must be known and respected. Nowhere is this more obvious than in our history. N.A. was founded in 1953. For twenty years, our fellowship remained small and obscure. In the 1970's, society realized that addiction had become a worldwide epidemic and began to look for answers. Along with this came change in the way people conceived the addict. This change allowed addicts to seek help more openly. N.A. groups sprang up in many places where we were never tolerated before. Recovering addicts paved the way for more groups and more recovery. Today N.A. is a worldwide fellowship; we are known and respected everywhere.

If an addict has never heard of us, he cannot seek us out. If those who work with addicts are unaware of our existence, they cannot refer them to us. One of the most important things we can do to further our primary purpose is to let people know who, what and where we are. If we do this and keep our reputation good, we will surely grow.

Our recovery speaks for itself. Our Tenth Tradition specifically helps protect our reputation. This Tradition says that N.A. has no opinion on outside issues. We don't take sides. We don't have any recommendations. N.A., as a fellowship, does not participate in politics; to do so would invite controversy. It would jeopardize our fellowship. Those who agree with our opinions might commend us for taking a stand, but some would always disagree.

With a price this high, is it any wonder we choose not to take sides in society's problems? For our own survival, we have no opinion on outside issues.

61. Do I ever give the impression that there really is an "NA opinion" on Medication? Doctors? Psychiatrists? Churches? Hospitals? Rehabs? Jails? Drugs (including the drug alcohol)? The Federal or State government? Legalizing drugs? Vitamins? Nar-Anon? Other twelve step programs?

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NOT FOR USE IN NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS MEETINGS OR GROUPS

62. Can I honestly share my own personal experience concerning any of those without giving the impression I am stating the NA opinion?

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63. What in AA history gave rise to the 10<sup>th</sup> tradition?

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64. Have I had a similar experience in my own NA life?

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65. What would NA be without this Tradition? Where would I be?

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66. Do I breach this or any of its supporting Traditions in subtle, perhaps unconscious, ways?

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67. How can I manifest the spirit of this Tradition in my personal life outside NA? Inside NA?

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## Tradition Eleven:

11. Our relations with the outside world should be characterized by modesty and anonymity. We think AA ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.

### **TRADITION ELEVEN**

***"Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films."***

This Tradition deals with our relationship to those outside the fellowship. It tells us how to conduct our efforts at the public level. Our public image consists of what we have to offer which is a successful proven way of maintaining a drug-free lifestyle. While it is important to reach as many persons as possible, it is imperative for our protection that we are careful about ads, circulars and any literature that may reach the public's hands.

Our attraction is that we are successes in our own right. As groups gathered together we offer recovery. We have found the success of our program speaks for itself; this is our "promotion".

This Tradition goes on to tell us that we need to maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films. This is to protect the membership and reputation of Narcotics Anonymous. We do not give our last names nor appear in the media as a member of Narcotics Anonymous. No individual inside or outside the fellowship represents Narcotics Anonymous.

68. Do I sometimes promote NA so fanatically that I make it seem unattractive?

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69. Am I always careful to keep the confidences reposed in me as an NA member?

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NOT FOR USE IN NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS MEETINGS OR GROUPS

70. Am I careful about throwing NA names around – even within the fellowship?

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71. Am I ashamed of being a recovered, or recovering, addict?

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72. What would NA be like if we were not guided by the ideas in Tradition Eleven?  
Where would I be?

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73. Is my NA recovery attractive enough that a sick addict would want such a quality for himself?

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## **Tradition Twelve:**

12. And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a truly humble modesty. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.

May it be urged that, while these principles have been stated in rather positive language they are still only suggestions for our future. We of Alcoholics Anonymous have never enthusiastically responded to any assumption of personal authority. Perhaps it is well for AA that this is true. So I offer these suggestions neither as one man's dictum nor as a creed of any kind, but rather as a first attempt to portray that group ideal toward which we have assuredly been led by a Higher Power these ten years past.

### **TRADITION TWELVE**

***"Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."***

A dictionary definition of anonymity is "a state of bearing no name". In keeping with this, the "I" becomes "we". The spiritual foundation becomes more important than any one particular group or individual.

As we find ourselves growing closer together the awakening of humility occurs. Humility is a by-product which allows us to grow and develop in an atmosphere of freedom and removes the fear of becoming known by our employers, families, or friends as addicts. Therefore, we attempt to rigorously adhere to the principle that "what is said in meetings stays in meetings".

Throughout our Traditions, we speak in terms of "we" and "our" rather than "me" and "mine". By working together for our common welfare we achieve the true spirit of anonymity.

We have heard the phrase "principles before personalities" so often that it is like a cliché. While we may disagree as individuals, the spiritual principle of anonymity makes us all equal as members of the group. No member is greater or lesser than any other member. The drive for personal gain in the areas of sex, property and social position, which brought so much pain in the past, falls by the wayside if the principle of anonymity is adhered to. Anonymity is one of the basic elements of our recovery and so it pervades our Traditions and our fellowship. It protects us from our own defects of character and renders personalities and their differences powerless. Anonymity in action makes it impossible for personalities to come before principles.

74. Why is it a good idea for me to place the common welfare of all NA members before the individual welfare? What would happen to me if NA as a whole disappeared?



NOT FOR USE IN NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS MEETINGS OR GROUPS

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75. When I do not trust NA's current servants, who do I wish had the authority to straighten them out?

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76. In my opinions of and remarks about other NA members, am I implying membership requirements other than a desire to stop using?

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77. Do I ever try to get a certain NA group to conform to my standards, not its own?

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78. Have I a personal responsibility in helping an NA group fulfill its primary purpose? What is my part?

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79. Does my personal behavior reflect the sixth tradition – or belie it?

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80. Do I do all I can do to support NA financially? When is the last time I anonymously gave away a basic text?

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NOT FOR USE IN NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS MEETINGS OR GROUPS

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81. Do I complain about certain NA members behavior – especially if they are trusted servants? Who made me so smart?

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82. Do I fulfill all NA responsibilities in such a way as to please privately even my own conscience? Really?

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83. Do my utterances always reflect the tenth tradition, or do I give NA critics real ammunition?

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84. Should I keep my NA membership a secret, or reveal it in private conversation when that may help another addict (and therefore me)? Is my brand of NA so attractive that other addicts want it?

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85. What is the real importance of me among millions of NA members worldwide?

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