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NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS GUIDE TO THE TWELVE TRADITIONS

“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 will tear us apart, all will be well. 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. 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 that our Traditions eliminate all problems. 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 that 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 that could destroy us. They are truly the ties that bind us together. **“It is only through understanding and application that they work.”**

It is very important that we understand and abide by our Traditions. The very survival of our Fellowship is at stake. By these principles we are committed to one another, not only to those addicts who are here but those yet to come. The Traditions were built upon anonymity, the spiritual foundation from which we grow. **Applying the Traditions is an obligation to us all.**

Despite our personal views or feelings, we must keep our Traditions first. This guide is designed to help us understand the Traditions and to work through any differences that we might have.

ADDENDUM A

PRACTICING THE PRINCIPLES OF OUR TRADITIONS

The program of Narcotics Anonymous is based on the spiritual principles embodied in the Twelve Traditions. Working the Steps forms the basis of our personal recovery and leads to a spiritual awakening. Part of our spiritual awakening may involve being of service to our fellowship. It is through service to Narcotics Anonymous that we begin to understand our Traditions.

Gradually, we learn we can use the Traditions in our everyday lives. The Traditions have much to teach us about simply getting along with one another. When we practice the principles of our Traditions in dealing with all people, our lives become more manageable.

This pamphlet represents the collective experience of a group of addicts trying to “practice these principles in all our affairs.” We would like to share our experience with you.

You will be asked to look up definitions of words and a good dictionary will have the word “LEST” in it. That could be your judge of a good dictionary.

Read the chapter in the BASIC TEXT for the Tradition you are working. Read the chapter in IT WORKS HOW & WHY on the Tradition. Write the definition of all the words of the Tradition and the definition of the spiritual principles of that Tradition from the dictionary. Then answer all the questions in the working guide.

TRADITION ONE

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

Narcotics Anonymous is more than just the meetings we attend. We are part of a greater whole. **We share an equal membership in NA, and we all have an interest in maintaining the unity that underlies its common welfare.** Unity is the spiritual link 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 NA’s well being. In our recovery, we have found that living clean is difficult 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. Even members who can’t get to meetings depend on the support of fellow addicts. They maintain contact through phone calls, letters, and NA loner groups. As individual members rely on support of the Fellowship for survival, so NA’s survival depends on its members.

- 1. How would you define unity in relation to our common welfare?**
- 2. How do I place the welfare of Narcotics Anonymous first?**
- 3. As an individual member, what are my responsibilities to NA?**
- 4. How can I promote unity within the Fellowship?**
- 5. How can lack of unity affect my personal recovery?**
- 6. How will unity as described in the Traditions help me in my personal recovery?**

Our First Tradition encourages not only our members but also our groups to place our common welfare first. Most groups conduct most of their affairs on their own. In attending to the details of their daily routines, autonomous NA groups may lose sight of the bigger picture. In the larger frame, each group is a strand in the supporting fabric of Narcotics Anonymous as a whole; without that fabric, there would be no NA. **The importance of our unity encourages our groups**

to look to the welfare of the worldwide NA Fellowship before their own.

7. Why is unity in Narcotics Anonymous so important?

8. How important is it that our groups conduct their affairs with the whole NA Fellowship in mind?

9. In what ways can I place the common welfare of the NA Fellowship first?

10. What part do I play in the overall picture?

11. How do I place principles before personalities while promoting unity?

The relationship described in the First Tradition is reciprocal. Groups work together in a spirit of cooperation to ensure the survival of Narcotics Anonymous; in turn, those groups receive strength and support from every other group and all our services. The strength of our mutual commitment to NA creates the unity that binds us together in spite of all that might divide us. The common welfare of NA depends on the continued growth and well being of the Fellowship in every corner of the world. **Our shared commitment to recovery and to our common welfare gives us a personal stake in the unity of NA.** 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 do what we can to support each other and our group. Sometimes we comfort each other merely by being present; at other times, a phone call or letter to say hello can make a world of difference. 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 our mutual reliance on spiritual principles and a Higher Power.

12. In what ways do I see the commitment of NA to the individual group?

13. What services does Narcotics Anonymous provide?

14. What responsibility do I share in the unity of Narcotics Anonymous?

15. In what way does my personal recovery depend on the unity of NA?

16. What can I do to better serve NA as a whole?

NA 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 NA accessible to more addicts. Many groups are formed when members of a more established group help to start another group. Sharing the responsibility enhances our common welfare and creates unity among NA members who work together. Groups flourish with the loving support of addicts helping addicts. We strengthen our unity by participating in each other's recovery.

17. How can one addict helping another addict strengthen the unity of NA?

18. What are some ways in which I can participate in each other's recovery?

19. In what ways can I reach other addicts?

Communication goes a long way toward building and enhancing our common welfare. 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, but our common welfare depends on more than just information. True communication involves an effort on our part to "listen" as we read or hear reports, seeking a better understanding of the needs and problems of both our own group and other groups, wherever they may be. Encouraging each member to speak openly from the heart enhances our ability to work together. Regular reports, thorough discussion, and active listening lead us to the kind of understanding that helps 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 it's also important to remember the "unseen member" in our discussion-the member yet to come. When we work to ensure the vitality of NA, we're not working just for ourselves but for those yet to join us.

20. Why is communication so important to us as a Fellowship?

21. Why is open-mindedness necessary to our common welfare?

22. Why is it imperative that we always have the group's conscience?

23. Are we thorough in our decision making processes?

24. Do I seek to be understood rather than to understand?

25. Does our group seek to serve itself rather than the addict yet to come?

The unity that supports our common welfare is created not only by working together but also by playing together. The friendships we develop outside meetings strengthen NA unity. 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, and sports days, for example, 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 NA unity.**

26. What are some other ways to strengthen the unity of NA?

27. What are the ties that bind us together?

APPLYING SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

In the Twelve Steps of NA 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 being of service in NA. In supporting our unity, we first apply principles to guide our own behavior. As groups, we use the same principles for guidance. That guidance creates a sense of unity that strengthens our ability to reach out to others, enhancing our common welfare. Some of the principles that seem particularly important to unity include **surrender and acceptance, commitment, selflessness, love, and anonymity**. As we practice these principles, we will find others who strengthen unity as well. **Surrender and acceptance open 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 each other's 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 our own desires and accept guidance that enhances 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.**

28. What does surrender mean in the context of Tradition One?

29. What does acceptance mean in the context of Tradition One?

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

30. What does commitment mean to me?

31. Have I found what I am comfortable doing in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous?

32. What can I do to help the addict who still suffers?

33. Am I giving back that which was so freely given to me?

34. In what other ways do I live out the belief that NA is a way of life?

Selflessness is another indispensable element in unity. The principles we learn in the Steps help us let go of our selfishness and lovingly serve the needs of others. 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.**

35. What does selflessness mean in the context of Tradition One?

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 in the way we speak to and the way we treat one another. We try to share our experience, strength, and hope in a way, which 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 we show each other attracts newcomers and strengthens us all, fueling our sense of unity and common welfare.

36. How can I show the love I have for the Fellowship?

37. What is unconditional love?

Anonymity, the spiritual foundation of our Traditions, supports NA 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. 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.** 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 our common welfare strengthens our understanding of all the other Traditions. Many questions can be answered simply by determining how the action we contemplate will affect the unity of the Fellowship. Will it serve to divide us, or will it bring us closer together?

38. Are we practicing anonymity in our group?

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. Our Second Tradition is an example of this. By nature, we are strong-willed, self-centered people, who are thrust together in N.A. We are mis-managers and not always capable of consistently making 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. **By working the Steps, we learn to depend on a Power greater than ourselves and to use this Power for our group purpose.** 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 NA. We have learned that leadership by example and by selfless service works for our Fellowship. 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 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, unfounded pride, and self-will destroy a group if given authority. We must remember that positions 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 the newcomer. The self-seekers soon find that they are on the outside, causing dissension and eventually disaster for themselves. Many of them change; they learn that we can only be governed by a loving God as expressed in our group conscience.

1. What is group conscience?

2. Why is it important that we invite God into that process?

3. What is a trusted servant?

To both lead and serve simultaneously requires a delicate balance. This balance is composed of many assets such as: being able to listen to the needs of the Fellowship, being able to actually hear its needs, and being able to fulfill those needs.

4. Are we governed by any of our chosen leaders? Why?

5. What is effective service?

6. How can I serve?

7. Who is the ultimate authority?

8. What is the difference between ego and egotism?

9. How can I keep my ego from interfering with the group's conscience?

10. What is meant by unfounded pride?

11. If self-will destroys the group, how does selflessness put us in line with a God consciousness?

12. How can I apply God consciousness in my other relationships outside the Fellowship?

Personal service arises from the application of principles. Ideally, personal service is founded in a relationship with the same Higher Power that guides our personal recovery. This Higher Power also guides the various elements of our fellowship. Our direction in service comes from a God of our understanding, whether we serve as individuals, as a group, or as a service board or committee.

Whenever we come together, we seek the presence and guidance of this loving Higher Power. 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 choose among them? 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.

If we are to find guidance from an ultimate authority, we need to find means of hearing that guidance together. 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 guidance into the group setting.

13. What part does my Higher Power play in my service efforts?

14. Why can't my service efforts be effective without practicing spiritual principles?

15. Why is it so important that we reach the conscience of the group?

16. How do our group decisions affect the Fellowship as a whole?

17. How do my service efforts affect the Fellowship as a whole?

When we practice Steps and apply principles, we develop a conscience, an awareness of our behavior and its effects on others and ourselves. This conscience is a reflection of our relationship with a Higher Power. It reflects the expression we receive from the God of our understanding and our commitment to follow that guidance. Whenever we come together in our groups and apply these same principles, a collective conscience exists. **Our relationship with a loving Higher Power, when consulted regularly, guides us in fulfilling our primary purpose while preserving our unity and common welfare.**

18. How are the principles of my personal recovery reflected in service?

19. How am I willing to be guided by my Higher Power?

20. How can I keep my personality out of service?

Group conscience reflects a collective adherence to spiritual principles. The conscience of a group takes shape and is revealed when its members take the time to talk with each other about their personal needs, the needs of the group, and the needs of NA as a whole. Each member draws upon his or her relationship with a higher power when sharing with the group. As members listen carefully to each other and consult their personal understanding of a loving God, something happens: Solutions appear that consider 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.

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

21. Why is communication so important in group conscience?

22. Why is it important that everyone be heard?

23. How can we find solutions to our daily problems?

24. Is clean-time a requirement for group conscience? Why?

25. How important is patience in this process?

26. How does group conscience contribute to unity and our common welfare?

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 collective relationship with a loving higher Power. We extend that trust to the members we have selected 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 do so with dedication and fidelity (Implies strict and continuing faithfulness to an obligation, trust, or duty), and those who've chosen them are responsible to support their servants.

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 of our actions.** We can look to our individual conscience as well as the collective conscience for guidance in all we must do in fulfilling our responsibilities.

This connection with the group conscience is enhanced when, as trusted servants, we carry a continuous flow of information that is honest and open; it is further strengthened when we seek to serve, not to govern. We help form the conscience of our group or committee, 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 conscience.

Our trusted servants lead us best when they lead by 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 become knowledgeable about all aspects of service in NA, and to continue to seek personal recovery. All these attributes are essential to their ability to serve us well.

27. What should I look for when choosing a trusted servant?

28. How do I seek my Higher Power's guidance in this decision?

29. What part does trust and faith play in choosing a trusted servant?

30. What is my responsibility to the trusted servant after they've been entrusted?

APPLYING SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

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 common welfare of NA when we place the needs of the fellowship ahead of our own desires.

31. What does surrender mean in the context of Tradition Two?

32. How do I know when I have surrendered?

33. Why is it so important that the needs of the fellowship be met?

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 our own. We must practice courage in spite of our fears. Our faith is strengthened through the experience of seeing a loving Higher Power work in our fellowship.

34. Why is it necessary that I have faith in this process?

35. What happens when I trust our Higher Power?

36. What is my definition of faith?

Humility in practice is the honest assessment of our strengths and weaknesses. That kind of assessment is a necessary principle in our willingness to surrender. Humility prepares us to set aside our personal wishes so that we can effectively serve our 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.

37. What is humility in this context?

38. Why is humility so important in our group conscience?

39. How are my strengths and weaknesses shown through humility?

By practicing humility in our efforts to serve, we make room for open-mindedness. We remember that, just as we need the experience of other addicts to recover, so do we need their direction and ideas in order to serve. We learn to actively cultivate our listening skills, using our ears more than our mouths in conversation. 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 others 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.

40. What is the role of open-mindedness in a group conscience?

41. How is listening the key to open-mindedness?

42. What part does humility play in open-mindedness?

43. How does being open-minded take me out of self?

Integrity is the consistent application of spiritual principles, no matter what the circumstances. 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.

44. What is integrity?

45. How do I know when I am practicing integrity?

46. What part does honesty play in integrity?

The spiritual principle of anonymity reminds us that we are all equal in Narcotics Anonymous. No one member or group has a monopoly on knowledge of a Higher Power's will. We practice anonymity by offering our love, attention, and respect to everyone, regardless of our personal feelings toward any individual. 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.

47. What is the relationship between anonymity and the group conscience?

48. How do I practice anonymity in the context of Tradition Two?

49. Who has a part in making up a group conscience?

Tradition Two offers guidance for our relationship with others. A loving Higher Power is the source of direction for NA 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, groups, service boards, or committees.

Service is for those we serve. Our best talents in service are 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 ensure that newcomers 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.

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 NA 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.

50. What does selfless service mean to me?

51. Who benefits from my service efforts?

52. In what ways am I benefited spiritually?

TRADITION THREE

“The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.”

Desire is the key word; desire is the basis of our recovery. Narcotics Anonymous offers recovery to addicts around the world. **We focus on the disease of addiction rather than any particular drug.** Our message is broad enough to attract addicts from any social class or nationality. When new members come to meetings, our sole interest is in their desire for freedom from active addiction and how we can be of help.

The Third Tradition helps NA offer recovery to so many addicts by freeing us from having to make judgment about prospective members. It eliminates the need for membership committees or applications. We are not asked to make decisions about anyone’s fitness for recovery. Since the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using, we as members have no reason to judge each other.

- 1. What is the requirement for membership in Narcotics Anonymous?**
- 2. Who determines membership in Narcotics Anonymous?**
- 3. As members of NA, do we have the right to judge who can or cannot be members? Why**
- 4. How have I judged others in their search for membership?**

Desire is not a measurable commodity. It lives in the heart of each individual member. Because we can’t judge the sole requirement for membership, we are encouraged to open wide the doors of our meetings to any addict who wishes to join. We are asked to extend to others the care and concern that helped each of us find a sense of belonging. The Third Tradition helps NA grow by encouraging us to welcome others unconditionally.

- 5. What happens when I try to measure the desire of others?**
- 6. Who decides if I can be a member in Narcotics Anonymous?**
- 7. How does the Fellowship grow as a result of the Third Tradition?**
- 8. How can I extend care and concern to foster a sense of belonging in newcomers?**

Membership is a personal decision reached by each individual. We can do a lot to allow addicts the freedom to make that decision and reaffirm their commitment to recovery. We can help them feel comfortable in our groups by greeting them at the door, sharing with them before or after the meeting, and exchanging telephone numbers. We try to make sure that any addict who attends our meeting is not turned away. To the extent that it's possible, we choose the most accessible location for our meetings. We choose a format that reflects an invitational tone to everyone regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion or lack of religion. Most of all, we encourage every addict to keep coming back.

9. Why is it so important that I generate an atmosphere of recovery?

10. What is an invitational tone?

11. What part can I play in this process?

12. What are some other things I can do to help the newcomer feel welcome?

The strength of any member's desire is not necessarily connected to any outside circumstance. What makes one addict stay clean while another returns to using? No one of us can judge who will stay to recover and who will return to active addiction. There are no guarantees based on types of drugs used or using history. We cannot predict a higher success rate for addicts of a certain age, or those who used for a certain number of years, or women over men, or any other external factor. Just as we are not capable of measuring another's desire to stay clean, neither are we equipped to decide who should join. We offer welcome instead of judgment.

13. Why are member's backgrounds not a factor in their chances for recovery?

14. What happens when I place expectations on another's chance for recovery?

15. Does it matter what my drug of choice was? Why?

16. Why is it impossible for me to determine who will stay clean?

We look for ways to help; we encourage each other not to judge. Our task is to fan the flame of desire, not dampen it. Any addict who walks into a meeting, even a using addict, displays a level of willingness that cannot be discounted. While maintaining an emphasis on the importance of total

abstinence, still-using addicts are welcomed into our meetings with special encouragement to keep coming back. Many recovering addicts do not have access to regular meetings because of incarceration, geography, physical disability, or employment. These addicts are members in every respect as long as they have the desire to stop using, and they are entitled to the same consideration and support as any other member.

Addicts attend their first meeting for many reasons. Our motives for coming to NA aren't particularly important. The desire to stop using may not be clearly realized; it may be no more than a subtle yearning for relief from pain. But that yearning often drives us to seek solutions we might otherwise never consider. Often the experience of hearing other addicts share about recovery will ignite the desire to stop using. Others come to a meeting, hear the message, and return to active addiction. Those who return to meetings after relapse often say their desire to stop using was born from the pain of relapse. We come to NA for many reasons, but we stay to recover when we find and keep the desire to stop using.

17. Why doesn't it matter how we get to Narcotics Anonymous?

18. How do honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness figure into a desire to stop using?

19. Who is welcome to attend our meetings?

The group is not the jury of desire. We cannot measure or arbitrate willingness. Any addict's willingness to come to a meeting ought to be a sufficient indication of desire. It may take a while for an addict to find the desire that will keep her or him in Narcotics Anonymous. No addict should be denied an opportunity to stay long enough to develop that desire. We can nurture that desire with loving acceptance.

The wording of the Third Tradition reflects the broad focus of our First Step. It's written simply enough to include addicts of all countries and cultures, no matter what drugs they used. Before finding recovery in NA, many addicts don't think that alcohol is a problem. Others abuse prescription medication, thinking that "legal" drugs are okay. Because of the wording of this Tradition, we are able to attract and welcome addicts who might think they didn't use the "right" drugs to qualify for

membership in NA. **Each addict should be allowed to decide if NA is the answer for him or herself. We cannot make the decision for others.**

20. What can the group do to help in the process of desire for new members?

21. Does the group have the right to decide who can or cannot be a member?

Many of us know when we walk into our first meeting that we're addicts. It's not something we have to decide; it's a fact of life. Membership, however, means more than just being an addict; it means making a decision. If we identify with what we hear in NA and relate with the people we meet, we will want what NA offers. **So long as we have a desire to stop using, we are free to make the decision to join Narcotics Anonymous. Then, once we've made that decision, we need to follow it with a commitment to the principles of NA.** With that commitment, we set ourselves squarely on the road of recovery.

22. What does being a member of Narcotics Anonymous mean to me?

23. What does commitment mean in the context of the Third Tradition?

24. Why is it important for me to continue to identify myself as an addict?

APPLYING SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

The Third Tradition encourages freedom from judgment. It leads us on the path of service toward an attitude of helpfulness, acceptance, and unconditional love. As we've seen in the previous Traditions, our path of service arises from the application of principles. **Some of the principles that support this Tradition include tolerance, compassion, anonymity, and humility.**

Tolerance reminds us that judgment is not our task. The disease of addiction does not exclude anyone. NA, likewise, cannot exclude any addict who desires to stop using. We learn to be tolerant of addicts from different backgrounds than ours, remembering that we are not better than any other addict in a meeting.

Addiction is a deadly disease. We know that addicts who don't find recovery can expect nothing better than jails, institutions, and death. Refusing admission to any addict, even one who comes merely out of curiosity may be a death sentence for that addict. **We learn to practice tolerance**

of addicts who don't look like us, think like us, or share like us. We teach by example. Pressuring new members to talk or act like we do may send them back to the streets. It certainly denies them the right to recover and learn in their own way.

25. How can we practice tolerance as a group?

26. What does tolerance mean to me as a member?

27. What can I do as a member to show tolerance?

28. How can intolerance affect both the individual and the group as a whole?

Compassion lends kindness to all our efforts in service to others. With compassion as the foundation of our actions, we learn to support members through any difficulties they may experience. All too often, we are quick to judge the quality of another's recovery or willingness. Tradition Three asks us to set aside our self-righteousness. Because the only requirement for membership is a quality we cannot measure, the right to judge another's desire is denied us. Our attitude ought to be one of loving acceptance toward all addicts, regardless of any other problems they may experience. Generous application of compassion is more therapeutic to the suffering addict than a free application of judgment.

29. In what ways can I show compassion to those with a desire to stop using?

30. What is compassion in the context of Tradition Three?

31. What is unconditional love?

32. Why is it so important that I show compassion?

Humility reminds us that we are not God; we cannot predict another's readiness to hear the message. We try to remember our own fear and confusion in our first meeting. We need each other's help and encouragement, not criticism or rejection. Our awareness of our own shortcomings, exercised in humility, helps us remember this. The self-acceptance that often accompanies humility makes us reluctant to judge others harshly.

33. What was it like for me when I came to my first meeting?

34. What part does humility play in Tradition Three?

35. How does knowing my own shortcoming help me see others in a different light?

Anonymity is the principle that supports the openness of our groups and our freedom to welcome everyone as equals. NA has no classes of membership and no second-class members. The common denominator in NA is the disease of addiction. We are all equally subject to its devastation. **We share an equal right to recovery.**

The practice of anonymity ensures the integrity of Tradition Three. **In the spirit of anonymity, we remember that no individual member or group is more important than the message we carry.** The single requirement for membership helps ensure that no addict need die without having a chance to recover. We celebrate our equality and the freedom we share by welcoming any addict who has the desire to stop using.

Tradition Three spells freedom for the members of NA. It sets the sole requirement for membership in the heart of each individual member. We don't have to decide for anyone else. We don't have to expend time and energy on deciding who should stay or who we should help. Instead, we are free to extend loving assistance to anyone who walks into a meeting desiring freedom from addiction.

36. How does anonymity apply to the Third Tradition?

37. What can I do to ensure that anonymity is applied?

38. Why is anonymity so important to the Traditions?

TRADITION FOUR

“Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole.”

Through working the Steps, we learn that with freedom comes responsibility. In recovery, we become responsible for ourselves. As we accept that responsibility, we see how Tradition Four encourages us to act responsibly as groups and as a Fellowship. NA groups are vehicles for the message of recovery. In the strength of the personal commitment group members make to one another, a group character forms. As this group character grows and evolves, the group finds ways in which it can do what no other group in town may be doing. The members of each group design a blueprint for meetings that reflect that particular group’s personality.

Group autonomy gives groups the creative freedom to find individual ways to carry the message. NA is made up of a vastly diverse assortment of addicts joined together by the strength of their mutual commitment to recovery. We speak many different languages and live in different cultures; one type of meeting will not appeal to every addict who comes to Narcotics Anonymous. In order to reach every addict who may need our help and to support the recovery of every member, groups have the freedom to vary their format and other meeting characteristics. Each group has the freedom to pursue our primary purpose in the manner it feels will work best.

- 1. Why is creative freedom so important in Narcotics Anonymous?**
- 2. What is autonomy in the context of Tradition Four?**
- 3. How can we best achieve our primary purpose?**
- 4. Why is it important that each group have its own character?**
- 5. Being as diverse of a Fellowship as we are, why is it important that we vary in format in our groups?**

Every group has a niche to fill both in the Fellowship as a whole and in the local NA community. As a Fellowship, our ability to reach still-using addicts is tied to our willingness to offer

meetings that are accessible and attractive to those addicts. With the creative freedom offered by autonomy, we are encouraged to seek the particular role that meets the needs of both the NA community and our own group. We are free to make each group the very best it can be. The vitality of Narcotics Anonymous is enhanced by each group's willingness to find its niche and fill it.

Creative freedom challenges the groups to be strong and responsible. Members may support many meetings with their attendance, but most make a commitment to support one group in particular. Members grow in their personal recovery when they take responsibility for their lives. In the same way groups grow and become stronger when their members take collective responsibility for maintaining their meetings. **Groups reflect the responsibility and commitment of their members.**

6. What parts do responsibility and commitment play in the group?

7. Why is it important that I participate in my home group?

8. In what ways does the group reflect the commitment of its members?

9. How does our group seek to attract members from its surrounding community?

One of the most common ways in which groups express their autonomy is in the choice of meeting format. Most NA communities will offer a number of different types of meetings, from speaker meetings to Step studies to topic discussion or any other format or combination of formats that meets the needs of local members. Some meetings will be open to the public, while others will be for addicts only. Larger communities may offer several different types of meetings each night. Some addicts will hear the message of recovery better in one type of meeting, while others prefer another format. An NA community that offers a variety of meetings is more likely to reach a broad cross-section of addicts. In a spirit of cooperation, we try to respect the autonomy of other groups by allowing them the freedom to carry the message in whatever manner seems best to them.

In the spirit of autonomy, many groups hold meetings that appeal to members with similar needs. The freedom from judgment expressed in the Third Tradition is aimed at helping any addict anywhere feel comfortable in NA. **No matter how a group structures its meetings, all NA groups are encouraged to keep their focus, recovery from the disease of addiction. As long as a group**

observes the Twelve Traditions and espouses the Twelve Steps of NA in its meetings, it may consider them Narcotics Anonymous meetings.

10. How is autonomy expressed in the NA group?

11. Why is it important that each group forms its own identity?

12. What is the focus of NA groups?

13. What are the guidelines that each group must follow to be called a NA meeting?

Sometimes it's hard to know what affects NA as a whole. The Fourth Tradition offers a way to balance the freedom of autonomy with our responsibility to preserve NA unity. We are challenged in Tradition Four to apply autonomy in ways that will enhance the growth and vitality of NA. **Autonomy encourages groups to become strong and lively but also reminds them that they are a vital part of a greater whole: the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. We consider our common welfare when we make decisions in our groups.**

Since most groups are not directly connected with each other, we might think that whatever happens in our meetings has no effect on anyone else. **When we consider whom our group affects, we have to look at other groups, the addict yet to come, the newcomer, and the neighborhood in which we hold our meetings. We have an effect on other groups or NA as a whole if we're not recognizable as an NA meeting.** It helps to remember what we needed to hear when we were new: hope for recovery from drug addiction. Addicts first coming to NA often look closely for differences, hoping that somehow they won't fit in. It's not difficult to alienate an addict. It's important to think about the message we send to newcomers in our meetings. Thoughtful consideration of our primary purpose may help ensure that meetings will be available for those addicts yet to come.

14. As groups, how do we know what affects Narcotics Anonymous as a whole?

15. In what ways do we address issues that affect NA as a whole?

16. What can we do to ensure that the Fellowship is not affected?

17. Why are our decision-making processes so important?

18. What part does affective communication play in a group?

It's also important to consider how we're viewed by society. When NA meetings first began in many places, it was illegal for addicts to meet under any circumstances. Even where meetings are legal, the public often views groups of addicts with alarm. Until NA has established a good public reputation, it may be difficult for addicts to find meeting places. If our behavior as NA members is still destructive and selfish, we will once again have difficulty meeting openly. We help protect our reputation as a Fellowship when we use our meeting facilities with respect, keeping them clean and in good repair. We should take care to act like good neighbors, conducting ourselves respectfully. Even something as simple as the name a group chooses may reflect on NA as a whole. If the public reputation of Narcotics Anonymous is somehow impaired, addicts may die.

Autonomy does not relieve groups of their obligation to observe and apply the spiritual principles embodied in the Traditions. Careful consideration of the group's observation of the Fourth Tradition often takes the form of a group inventory, helping members gauge their success at carrying the message and reaching addicts in their neighborhood. At the same time, groups can examine their part in contributing to the unity of NA as a whole. **The Fourth Tradition guides us away from self-centeredness by giving us the freedom to act responsibly as groups.**

19. Why is the image of NA so important in the community?

20. Who is responsible for portraying that image?

21. What can we do as individual members to help in this process?

22. Why is a group inventory so important?

23. How can we benefit from a group inventory?

APPLYING SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

The Fourth Tradition helps groups achieve a balance between independence and responsibility. This mirrors the freedom of the individual recovering member and the responsibility, which supports that freedom. Together with **open-mindedness, unity, and anonymity**, these principles help protect NA as a whole when applied in our group affairs.

While autonomy gives us certain freedoms, it also implies responsibility for our actions and for the continued well being of NA. As groups, we exercise our responsibility to the Fellowship by taking inventory of our behavior and how we hold our meetings. Our group exercises its autonomy in a responsible way when it takes care to consider the common welfare of the Fellowship as a whole before it acts.

24. What is the balance we seek between independence and responsibility?

25. What can we as members do to show responsibility for the Fellowship as a whole?

26. How can excessive autonomy have a negative effect on other groups or NA as a whole?

Open-mindedness is essential if we are to use autonomy to help NA grow. With an open-minded attitude, we are more receptive to new ways of reaching addicts. We learn to find and fill our niche in the NA community. We encourage each member of the group to contribute thoughts and ideals. **Our attitude of open-mindedness helps us remember that each group is part of something bigger than ourselves** and prompts us to look at still more new ideas. Our diversity can enrich us only when we are open to its richness.

Remembering our part in the greater whole, we consider unity when we think about applying the Fourth Tradition. **Any decision that we make as an autonomous group ought to be founded first in our common welfare.**

27. What are some of the effects of closed-mindedness?

28. What is the importance of open-mindedness in our group's decisions?

29. What can we do as members to ensure the unity of NA as a whole?

Love is the principle that guides us to see NA as a greater whole. This impacts our responsibility as autonomous groups. **Our group's autonomous decisions, based on our love for NA, will serve to strengthen our efforts to serve others.** Love encourages us to reach out to other members and other groups, finding ways to cooperate with them in carrying the message of recovery.

30. What part does love play in the Fourth Tradition?

31. In what ways can we show our love as members? As groups?

Anonymity applied to the Fourth Tradition reminds us that each group has an equal place in the Fellowship of NA. Larger groups are not more important than smaller groups; older groups are not “better” than newer groups. While all groups have the freedom to apply principles in whatever ways seem best to them, those same principles make each group an equal partner in recovery. **Each group bears an equal responsibility in the work and in the reputation of NA.**

Autonomy in NA gives groups the freedom to act on their own to establish an atmosphere of recovery, serve their members, and fulfill our primary purpose. The responsibility that balances our autonomy reflects the principles expressed in the first three Traditions. Preserving the unity of the NA Fellowship comes first. Next, we seek direction from a loving Higher Power. Then, we hold meetings that welcome everyone with a desire to stop using.

Healthy, vital groups are essential to the growth of Narcotics Anonymous. Groups provide a place where we can offer our basic service: one addict reaching out to another with the message of recovery. Without our autonomous groups, we would be unable to fulfill our primary purpose.

32. How does anonymity apply to the Fourth Tradition?

33. Why isn't one group more important than another group?

34. What part does each group play in the overall reputation of NA as a whole?

35. Having the freedom to run our groups as we please; how important is it that we stay within the confines of the Traditions of NA?

36. How can we preserve the unity of NA?

37. What part does our Higher Power play in this process?

TRADITION FIVE

“Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.”

Our primary purpose is at the heart of our service. With guidance from a loving Higher Power and a clear focus on this purpose, NA groups become a channel for the healing power of recovery. Narcotics Anonymous exists to help addicts find freedom from active addiction. If we were to espouse other ideas or pursue other goals, our focus would be blurred and our energies diminished. The Fifth Tradition asks us to practice integrity by keeping our purpose foremost.

What is the message that we are asked to carry? **Groups carry the message of NA: hope and freedom from active addiction.** This message may be voiced in many ways. Sometimes we simply share that if we won't use any drugs, we won't get loaded. Other members share that they have found satisfying, productive lives in recovery. Sometimes the message we share is that, even though life may be painful, we can stay clean. The spiritual awakening we experience when we work the Steps is also our message. When addicts experience the message of recovery, we find healing from our suffering. No matter what the cause, we can live drug-free and establish new lives. **That is our message: that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live.**

- 1. What is the primary purpose of NA?**
- 2. As a member, what is the message that I carry?**
- 3. In what ways can I best carry this message?**
- 4. Do I limit who I carry the message to?**
- 5. What is the role of the group in carrying a clear message?**

The groups' focus on carrying the message is so important to the survival of NA that it is called our primary purpose. **That means it is the most important thing we do. Nothing ought to take precedence over it.** This is the most basic guideline by which groups may examine their motives and their actions.

There are many ways in which groups can further our primary purpose. Generally speaking, group members start by creating an atmosphere of recovery in their meetings. This includes extending a welcome to every addict who attends. Stable meetings that start on time carry a message of recovery. Effective meeting formats keep the primary focus and encourage members to participate in a way that expresses recovery. We lead by example, sharing experience instead of advice. Group members help further our purpose when they take personal responsibility for keeping the meeting recovery oriented. All of our actions convey a message, and Tradition Five reminds us to make it a message of recovery.

- 6. What is the message that we carry as a group?**
- 7. How can we best carry the message of recovery?**
- 8. As members, what can we do to further our primary purpose?**
- 9. How important is it that the group and I portray a positive image in NA?**
- 10. How do we keep in check our actions and examine our motives?**

Many distracting influences can divert us from our primary purpose. But each time our focus is diverted from our primary purpose, the addict seeking recovery loses out. Other influences can distort our group's focus on its primary purpose. From the money members contribute, our groups pay rent on their meeting space, buy literature and supplies, conduct activities, and support NA services. All of these can either help further our primary purpose or distract us from our focus. **Some groups seek to outdo others with luxurious meeting spaces, extravagant refreshments, huge supplies of literature, and elaborate activities. When we do this, our focus is distracted away from our primary purpose and onto money, property, and prestige.** We should try to establish a reputation for carrying the message—nothing more, nothing less. Money, literature, and meeting space are tools we can use to help us carry the message; however, they should serve us, not rule us.

- 11. What are some of the distractions that will divert us from our primary purpose?**
- 12. How do we determine when we are being lead down that path of distraction?**
- 13. How have I seen my group distracted from its primary purpose?**
- 14. What can we do as groups to avoid these distractions?**

15. How can I as a member contribute to avoiding these distractions?

16. How can we best use the tools available to us to help us serve well?

The group can provide many services to carry the message. Our primary service is the NA meeting, where addicts share their recovery directly with one another. Additional services like Phone lines, Public Information work, and Hospitals & Institution panels also help carry the message. In rural areas and newer NA communities, groups are sometimes the only source of such services. However, most groups find they cannot maintain their focus on their recovery meetings and also carry out other services. For this reason, groups usually assign responsibility for such services to their area committees. That way, groups reserve their time and energy for carrying the message directly to the addict who still suffers.

Because carrying the message is so important, many groups take inventory periodically to help ensure that our primary purpose is still in focus. The Twelve Traditions may be used as an outline for a group inventory. Some groups use a specific set of inventory questions, such as:

17. How well are we carrying the message of recovery?

18. What addicts are not being reached by our group?

19. How can we make our meetings more accessible?

20. What can we do to make all members feel more welcome?

21. Has the atmosphere of recovery diminished?

22. Would a change in our meeting format strengthen that atmosphere?

Considering the needs of the larger NA community may lead to other changes. For instance, if there are no Step meetings in one town, a group may consider having meetings that focus on the Steps. There are many ways to carry the message and meet the needs of both the group and the NA community.

Tradition Five focuses the group's priority on carrying the message. Members can do many things to further our primary purpose. When members come together as a group to undertake the task of carrying the message, they offer an attractive picture of recovery in action.

Many meetings are structured to carry the message to our newest members. These new members often need more encouragement to stay, more answers to their questions, more of our love and care. But the newest members are not the only addicts who need the message of recovery. The still-suffering addict with whom we share our hope may be any one of us, regardless of clean time.

Tradition Five is not limited to helping newcomers. The message of recovery is for all of us.

23. Does our group set aside time to study the Steps and Traditions?

24. Why is it so important that we not exclude any addict seeking recovery?

25. Why is it so important that we consider the needs of the whole NA community?

26. What can we do as groups to make NA attractive to the still suffering addict?

27. How does the group carry the message to more experienced members who have drifted away?

28. In what ways have I thought I had outgrown the NA program?

APPLYING SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

The Fifth Tradition complements the Twelfth Step; it asks groups to carry the message to addicts. As individuals, we are asked in the Steps to apply principles in all our affairs; this is also important in our actions as groups.

29. How are Tradition Five and Step Twelve tied together?

30. What does the phrase “spiritual awakening” mean to me and how does it apply to Tradition Five?

Some of the principles we have applied to help us observe the Fifth Tradition include **integrity, responsibility, unity, and anonymity**. Integrity, or fidelity to the spiritual principles embodied in the Twelve Traditions, is demonstrated when groups carry the NA message of recovery. Many of our members have much to offer on a variety of subjects, **but our Fellowship has its own special message: freedom from active addiction through practice of NA’s Twelve Steps and the support of the Fellowship of recovering addicts**. Groups demonstrate this when they offer vigorous,

conscious support for addicts seeking to work the NA program. When groups conscientiously cultivate this kind of integrity, their meetings further our primary purpose.

31. **What is integrity?**
32. **How do I practice integrity in my group?**
33. **What can I hope to achieve through integrity?**
34. **What part does integrity play in Tradition Five?**

Tradition Five gives our groups a great responsibility: to maintain our Fellowship's primary purpose. Each group is responsible to become as effective a vehicle for carrying the NA message as it can be. Allowing our groups to lose sight of our primary purpose may deprive an addict of a chance to hear our message of hope. **Each member is responsible to help the group keep our primary purpose in focus.**

35. **Why is it my responsibility as a member to make sure that our primary purpose is kept?**
36. **How can I show that responsibility?**
37. **What is the responsibility of the group?**
38. **How does the group share responsibility to the Fellowship of NA as a whole?**

Unity is one of our greatest strengths in carrying the message. Unity of purpose keeps our focus on carrying the message. As groups, we work together to ensure not only our own personal recovery but also the recovery of every NA member. The evidence of many addicts staying clean and seeking our common good is very persuasive. We don't recover alone.

39. **What part does unity play in Tradition Five?**
40. **Who is responsible for the unity of NA?**
41. **What can I do as a member to maintain unity in my group?**
42. **What can my group do to maintain the unity of NA as a whole?**
43. **Why is it important for my group to actively participate in the Area Service Committee and its various subcommittees?**

In anonymity, our personal differences are insignificant compared to our primary purpose. When we come together as a group, our first task is to carry the message; all else ought to be set aside. Groups can practice the Fifth Tradition by reminding their members that the recovery message, not individual personalities, is primary in Narcotics Anonymous.

- 44. What is the importance of anonymity?**
- 45. What does anonymity mean in the context of Tradition Five?**
- 46. Why is the message more important than the messenger?**
- 47. What can I do to maintain anonymity in the group as well as the Fellowship at large?**
- 48. How does anonymity apply in the context of service to the Fellowship?**
- 49. Why should we bring our skills to service work but leave behind our titles?**

Narcotic Anonymous is a Fellowship with meetings around the world. Our primary purpose is a common thread that unites us. Tradition Five defines the focus of Narcotics Anonymous. This focus also helps to ensure our survival as a Fellowship. The Fifth Tradition asks us to serve other addicts by carrying the message that recovery is possible in Narcotics Anonymous. This concentrated focus protects the integrity of our fellowship.

- 50. What can I do to maintain our Fellowship's focus?**
- 51. What can we do as a group to maintain our primary purpose?**
- 52. Where does the final responsibility lie?**

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.”

While each group has but one primary purpose, there are many ways to fulfill that purpose. Our groups often go to great lengths to carry the message. We carry out our primary purpose as individuals, as groups, and through our service structure. In carrying the message, groups come in contact with other organizations in their areas. Good public relations can help our groups better fulfill their primary purpose, but cooperation with other organizations can also lead to conflict, diverting our groups from carrying the message. Tradition Six tempers our zeal to carry the message, establishing boundaries for our relations with others in the area.

- 1. What are some ways that we can carry the message?**
- 2. Who’s responsible for carrying the message of NA?**
- 3. What other organizations do we come in contact with?**
- 4. Why is it so important that we be careful with outside interests?**

Our Fellowship’s primary purpose defines us. We are a society of addicts sharing with others the hope of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. When NA’s identity becomes too closely tied to the identity of another organization, the clarity of our primary purpose is muddied, losing some of its power.

The Sixth Tradition warns us of three things that could blur the distinction between Narcotics Anonymous and other enterprises: endorsement, financing, and the lending of our name. An endorsement is a public statement of support for another organization. Financing another organization further endorses its purpose. Lending our name to a related facility or outside enterprise—allowing an addiction treatment facility, for example, to call itself The NA Medical

Center—is the ultimate endorsement, permanently tying our primary purpose to theirs in the public eye.

5. How is our primary purpose defined?

6. What can we do to insure that our primary purpose is kept?

7. What is an endorsement?

8. How could accepting money from outside enterprises cause us problems?

9. Why shouldn't we lend our name?

By establishing boundaries, the Sixth Tradition helps our groups avoid some of the problems that commonly arise between organizations. If we endorse an organization that later runs into trouble, our reputation will be damaged along with theirs. If we support an outside enterprise that some find obnoxious, addicts seeking recovery may be discouraged from coming to our meetings. If we voice support for another organization, the public, the addict who still suffers, even our own members might confuse that organization's purpose with ours. If we fund a related facility or outside enterprise, money that could be used to fulfill our primary purpose is diverted; if we later withdraw that funding, other problems occur. If we finance or lend our name to one organization instead of another, we can be drawn into a conflict between the two. By helping our groups avoid such problems, Tradition Six allows us to devote all our energy to carrying a clear NA message to addicts seeking recovery.

10. What is the importance of the group setting and maintaining healthy boundaries?

11. How can we fall into the trap of endorsing, financing or lending our name to outside enterprises?

12. How is our primary purpose diverted when we do so?

We must exist in the world. It is not possible to be entirely separate, evading all contact with outside agencies. Not only is it impossible, it's not a good idea. Cooperation with others is healthy for Narcotics Anonymous. Contacts between our groups and the public help others understand NA better. They help increase public goodwill toward NA. They lead doctors, teachers, friends, and relatives to recommend NA to addicts who want recovery. They help us carry the message to addicts who cannot

get to regular meetings. Letting others know who we are and what we offer increases the chance that addicts seeking recovery will hear our message.

13. What is the importance of keeping outside contact with the public?

14. Why is public information work a must?

15. What part can these contacts play in helping to spread our message?

NA groups often cultivate good relations with nearby treatment facilities and make them feel welcome when they visit. There is a difference, though, between cooperation and endorsement. When a group's primary purpose becomes blurred by its relationship with some other facility or organization, it is time for the group to step back and examine that relationship. For instance, when a group or an area holds a dance, should it offer a reduced entry price to patients from such facilities? Why not just extend such reductions to all newcomers? We should ask these kinds of questions whenever our group's relationship with a related facility or outside enterprise become so close that our group appears to be linked with the other organization. By asking ourselves these questions, we help ensure that our cooperation with an outside agency does not inadvertently become an endorsement of that agency.

16. What is the difference between cooperation and endorsement?

17. Why shouldn't we offer reduced rates only to addicts from specific outside agencies?

18. Why shouldn't we ever align ourselves with outside enterprises?

19. Though it is important for us to cooperate with others outside the Fellowship, how are we hurt by our endorsements?

There are many related facilities and outside enterprises devoted to understanding addiction and aiding recovery. Like NA, each has its particular primary purpose that is reflected in its literature and its message. While that purpose may be similar to ours, it will not be the same as ours because the organization is separate from us. We use NA literature and speakers in our meetings to help us fulfill NA's purpose. An NA group that uses another organization's literature or speakers endorses that organization's primary purpose, not ours.

20. Why is it so important that we not confuse our primary purpose?

21. Why is using only NA literature and speakers important to fulfilling our primary purpose?

22. Why should we separate ourselves from outside facilities and enterprises?

Although a few NA groups meet in their own buildings, most do not. Those who rent meeting space from other organizations need to take special care never to endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to the organizations from which they rent their meeting space. For instance, is the group paying substantially more to meet in a particular facility than it would somewhere else? Does this make it appear that the group endorses the facility, or is the group funding an outside enterprise with its “rent” payment? When we devote our energies and funds to carrying the NA message, we free ourselves from distractions or confusion with the primary purpose of other organizations.

It is important to remember that we as NA members and groups are responsible for observing our Twelve Traditions. The facilities in which we meet do not have this responsibility; neither do other organizations. If it appears that some outside organization or facility is compromising our traditions, we are responsible to discuss their actions with them. While we cannot demand that they change their behavior, a reasonable approach and open discussion will often lead to mutually satisfactory solutions.

23. What are our motives for where we hold our meetings?

24. Who is responsible for following our Traditions?

25. How should we handle our disagreements with outside facilities or organizations?

A group’s meetings provide a forum in which individual members can share their recovery with one another. The message we carry in our meetings can either enhance our efforts to fulfill our primary purpose or distract us from it. Each of us can play a part in carrying out Tradition Six by asking ourselves, “What do I do to clarify NA’s relations with other organizations?”

Many of us use a variety of resources in our personal programs of recovery and spiritual growth. Not all of them, however, relate directly to NA’s primary purpose. Do we imply an endorsement of a related facility or outside enterprise when we share in a NA meeting about the good things we’ve found elsewhere? Do we distract other members at the meeting from NA’s message of

recovery or give new members the wrong impression about the Narcotics Anonymous program? No one can answer these questions for us. But by answering these questions for ourselves, we can each help free our group of problems that could divert us from our primary purpose.

- 26. Why is it so important that we keep the forum at our meetings in line with our primary purpose?**
- 27. Name some ways we could become distracted from our primary purpose in our meetings?**
- 28. What can I do as an individual member to ensure that I stay within the guidelines of Tradition Six?**

APPLYING SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

The application of principles is the basis of our freedom. When we adhere to the principles of recovery, we are free to carry the message and interact with others, knowing that we will not compromise our purpose. Some of the principles that help us observe Tradition Six include **humility, integrity, faith, harmony, and anonymity.**

Humility reminds us of NA's role in society. We have a program that has provided much help to many addicts seeking recovery. We do not, however, have any other purpose in society than to carry the NA message, nor do we pretend that Narcotics Anonymous offers anything more than freedom from active addiction. **It may be tempting to think of other good things we might do in the world or for each other if we extended our focus or closely allied ourselves with a wide range of related facilities or outside enterprises. These grandiose dreams serve only to divert us from our primary purpose. Carrying our message to the still-suffering addict is sufficient for us.**

- 29. How do humility, integrity, faith, harmony, and anonymity apply to the Sixth Tradition?**
- 30. As groups, how do we practice all of these principles?**

Carrying a clear message of recovery in NA reflects integrity. Our message is outlined in our Twelve Traditions and further articulated in NA literature. Because our message is also our identity, we take care not to confuse it with our beliefs or literature of other organizations.

- 31. How do we measure our integrity as a group?**

32. How can I as a member measure my integrity?

33. What is reflected through our message?

34. Why is it important that we not confuse our literature with that of other organizations?

We demonstrate faith when we don't trade our endorsements, funds, or name for the cooperation of others. It's true that our friends in society can help us carry our message to addicts who need us. **But our faith lies in the effectiveness of our message and the Higher Power that guides our recovery, not in the related facilities and outside enterprises we deal with. If a relationship with another organization compromises our devotion to carrying the recovery message, we need not be afraid to let go of that relationship. Our strength is in the power of the NA program.**

After all, it works!

35. How is faith defined in the Sixth Tradition?

36. How can we practice faith in this Tradition?

The principle of **harmony** is both assumed and supported by Tradition Six. Our groups seek to cooperate with others in society whenever possible and as much as possible. Our contacts with others are made simple and straightforward when we let them know, right from the start, how far we can go in cooperating with them. By respecting the Sixth Tradition's boundaries in our group's relations with other organizations, we generate harmony in those relations.

37. What can we do to ensure harmony with outside organizations?

38. Who is responsible for creating that harmony?

39. What can we do as groups to improve our relations with outside entities?

Our identity as a Fellowship is founded in anonymity and selfless service, carrying the message one addict to another. The relationships we have with outside organizations are based on the personalities of our leaders; our groups themselves are responsible for their cooperation with other organizations, making those contacts stronger and more effective.

Additionally, anonymity helps us avoid blurring our purpose in our contacts with other organizations. Our relationships with outside agencies exist to help us fulfill our primary purpose, not

merely to build our reputation or prestige. When we observe the spirit of anonymity, we seek nothing other than to carry the recovery message to the addict who still suffers.

40. How is anonymity defined in the context of the Sixth Tradition?

41. What qualities should we look for in individuals whom we chose to interact with outside agencies on behalf of NA?

Within the limits established by Tradition Six, we have a tremendous freedom to carry the message of recovery and help other addicts. We have clear boundaries set by our identity as Narcotics Anonymous. When we take care to observe those boundaries, our outside relationships enhance our ability to carry the message to the addict who still suffers rather than diverting us from our primary purpose.

TRADITION SEVEN

“Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”

The Seventh Tradition adds further clarity to our group’s dealings with the public. Tradition Six cautioned us against funding other organizations, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose. Tradition Seven encourages us to decline funding from other organizations for the same reason: to maintain our group’s focus on its primary purpose. **By paying our own expenses, we remain free to carry our own message.**

We encourage every NA group to be fully self-supporting. We also recognize that many meetings don’t start that way. Some meetings are started by one or two NA members who want to help carry the message to other addicts. Frequently, such members pay rent and buy literature for these meetings out of their pockets. Sometimes they’re given help by established NA groups or by the nearest Area Committee. Either way, it may take some time before a new meeting is able to stand on its own feet.

1. Where should help come from when starting a new meeting?

2. What is the importance of declining outside funding to the NA group?

Other meetings – for instance, many in institutions – are started by nonmember professionals who’ve become acquainted with the Narcotics Anonymous program. Wanting to provide their clients with access to what NA has to offer, these professionals set a time, find a room, buy some literature, give a group booklet to the addicts who’ve gathered, and help them start a meeting. After some exposure to the principles underlying the NA program, these recovering addicts begin taking responsibility for their meetings themselves.

How a meeting is begun is not nearly so important as how it grows. Our experience is that, once a meeting is established, it gathers momentum. The meeting begins attracting a group of addicts who attend on a fairly consistent basis. These addicts share their experiences with one another and

help each other better understand NA's principles of recovery. At this point, the meeting has become more than just an event; an NA group evolved from the meeting, complete with members committed to supporting one another. The group as a whole is ready to take full responsibility for its obligations.

3. Why doesn't it matter how a group is started? Or who starts the group even?

4. When do the members begin to take some responsibility for the group themselves? What do these responsibilities include?

Many of us think of the Seventh Tradition as the money tradition. While we have come to associate this tradition of self-support with the funds we contribute, the spirit of the Seventh Tradition goes much farther than that. Whatever a group needs to fulfill its primary purpose should be provided by the group itself.

The question then is, what does a group need? First and foremost, it needs a message to carry-and that, it already has. In the course of its evolution, the group has attracted members who've proven to one another that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. Without that message, the group has no reason to exist; with it, an NA group needs little more. Beyond that, the needs of the group are simple. Groups need to rent meeting places where their members can gather and where newcomers can find them. Most groups find it important to buy NA literature, which they make available at their meetings. The expenses associated with these things may be substantial, yet most groups can meet such expenses by passing the hat.

5. As members, how do we support our Seventh Tradition?

6. Why isn't our support limited to just the dollars we put in the basket? Explain...

7. Who is responsible for supporting Narcotics Anonymous? Explain...

After paying their basic expenses, most groups contribute to the NA Service Boards and Committees that serve them. Phone lines, Meeting lists, NA literature, H&I panels, and Public Information presentations all benefit the group. That's why service contributions are just as surely a part of a group's self-support obligation as the rent for its meeting room. Like the

groups, NA Service Boards and Committees decline contributions from sources outside the Fellowship. Unlike the groups, however, our service boards and committees are not themselves fully self-supporting. **They have been created to help the groups fulfill their primary purpose more effectively, and they depend on group contributions for the money they need to do their work.**

8. Who's responsibility is it to support our service boards and committees? Why?

9. Who holds the responsibility for making sure that we fulfill our primary purpose?

10. Why do the NA Service Boards and Committees decline outside contributions?

11. Why is it important that we pass along our excess monies up through our service structure?

To fulfill its purpose, the group also needs some things that don't cost a penny. A group needs someone to open its meeting room, set up the chairs, and prepare the literature table. In some groups, a member offers to prepare refreshments, helping establish a hospitable environment for the newcomer.

Most importantly, a group needs the consistent commitment of its members to show up and take part in its meetings. Upon that commitment rests the group's stability; without it, no group can survive long. Just as our group's survival depends on its members, so does the survival of our service boards and committees. It's through our members support that our recovery message is carried.

12. What can I do to support our Seventh Tradition in my group, service board or committees?

13. What does self-support mean to me?

14. Why is it important for members to consistently show up at meetings?

As simple as a group's needs are, a group's decision to become fully self supporting does not usually require the commitment of extensive amounts of its member's money, time, or other resources.

If a group is having problems sustaining itself, it may want to ask itself some questions during a group inventory:

15. What is our primary purpose, and how do we fulfill it?

16. Are our service committees doing everything that they can to fulfill our primary purpose?

17. What does our group need to fulfill its primary purpose?

18. How have we confused our wants with our needs?

When a group's sense of its needs have become unreasonable, the simplicity of the Fifth Tradition can help deflate those needs to their proper size.

19. What can a group do if it is still unable to pay its own way even after examining its understanding of the Fifth Tradition?

20. Tradition Seven tells our groups that they should not seek outside contributions, but what considerations keep us from seeking money outside the NA Fellowship?

First, the group will want to consider its identity as a part of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. Recovery in NA is very different in a number of ways from our using. When we were using, many of us took whatever we could from whomever we could as often as we could. Our group's decision to become fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions, reflects the new way our members are living in recovery. Rather than taking what we want or need from others, we are paying our own way.

The group will also want to examine its identity as a group. When we were using, most of us looked out for ourselves and ourselves alone, not giving any thought for one another's welfare. An NA recovery group, on the other hand, is founded on its members' commitment to one another. Many of us have tried to find a way of making it on our own, but without success. We've found we need one another to survive and to grow. The NA group is both the expression and fulfillment of that need we have for one another's support. An NA group reinforces the solidarity of its members and the foundation of their continued recovery by declining outside contributions.

21. Why is it so important that a group remain committed to being fully self-supporting?

22. How does a group draw strength from its members?

23. How is our foundation reinforced through our self-supporting efforts?

24. What would happen to a group if its' members acted in the same selfish ways they did in active addiction?

“Alright,” we say, “our group has made a commitment to become self-supporting. But what if the money we collect from passing the hat still isn’t sufficient to meet our needs? What if we sold some T-shirts or jewelry to raise some cash or held a dinner and asked for a donation at the door? Perhaps the energy our members put into such activities could be turned into money we need to pay our bills.”

On the face of it, there doesn’t seem to be any contradiction between the Seventh Tradition and these kinds of money-raising activities. Before engaging in such activities, however, the group might want to ask itself why it wants these funds?

We might also ask ourselves whether such activities, intended to raise money to help our group carry the message, might end up diverting us from carrying the message. Money-raising activities usually take a good bit of time to manage, time that might be better spent in fulfilling our primary purpose more directly. If fundraising activities are successful, bringing in more money than the group needs to meet its obligations, controversy over control of that money may well arise, distracting the group from its primary purpose. A group may also want to consider whether the atmosphere created by selling goods and services at its meetings might detract from the free, open atmosphere so conducive to recovery.

- 25. What should a group do to meet its obligations?**
- 26. If passing the hat doesn’t work, what alternatives does a group have?**
- 27. What problems could arise should a group sell goods or services at its meetings?**
- 28. How do you know when these money- making activities are distracting the group from its primary purpose?**

By and large, our groups have found that the simplest, straightest path to full self-support is through the voluntary contributions of their own members. For this reason, we discourage groups from engaging in fundraising activities. If a group is unable to provide for its own needs from the contributions of its members, perhaps group members will want to consider increasing their contributions.

In the same breath as we speak of this, however, we need also recall our fellowship's Third Tradition, which affirms that the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. Our membership, whether we are speaking of membership in NA as a whole or group membership, does not depend on the amount of money we give; indeed, we aren't required to give any amount at all in order to consider ourselves NA members.

29. What is the importance of our own contributions?

30. What part does anonymity play in the Seventh Tradition?

31. How can depending on funds other than our own contributions divert us from our primary purpose?

If our group has carefully examined its expenses, trimmed them to match only what it needs to fulfill its primary purpose, and still doesn't bring in enough money to pay its own way, the group's members will be left with some questions only they can answer for themselves, individually:

32. What do I get from the group?

33. Does my personal recovery depend on its survival?

34. Am I able to give more than I've already given and still meet my own financial responsibilities?

At the same time as we consider our levels of personal contributions to the group, we should remember that Tradition Seven speaks of the group as being self-supporting, not of one or two well-off group members paying all the group's expenses or doing all its work. We each do well in giving our part toward the group's self-support obligations without making the group overly dependent on our individual contributions.

35. What could happen if we allow members to contribute more than their share?

36. Who has the responsibility of our groups' support?

37. Am I doing my part as a group member? Explain...

In the end, our individual decisions and group commitments are entirely up to us because we are the ones who have to live with them. However, certain lines from our White

Booklet, written in reference to the Twelve Steps, seem to apply equally to the observance of the Seventh Tradition—indeed, to all the traditions: “If you want what we have to offer, and are willing to make the effort to get it... these are the principles that made our recovery possible.” If we want what the group has to offer us individually, and if our group wants to reap the benefits associated with self-support, we will practice the principles that make those things possible.

APPLYING SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

Our Twelve Traditions describe those specific things that have been found to help our groups remain strong, lively, and free. Underlying the specifics of our traditions, however, are dozens of spirituals principles, any one of which could be applied to almost any the Twelve Traditions. This broad field of principles is the ground upon which the traditions have grown. The more we cultivate this ground, the stronger our understanding and application of each of the traditions themselves will be. Some of the principles that will strengthen our understanding and application of the Seventh Tradition are **gratitude, responsibility, faith, integrity, anonymity, and freedom.**

38. How does the group gain strength by being fully self-supporting?

39. What spiritual principles are involved and how do they apply? Explain...

The **gratitude** we speak of in regard to Tradition Seven is like the collective sense of direction the Second Tradition talks about; it is the gratitude of the NA group. When NA members gather to share their recovery, they generate a sense of gratitude among themselves. They are grateful the group exists and want it to continue to be there for them and for the members yet to come. The gratitude of the group speaks, in part, through the group’s collective commitment to support itself.

40. What is my understanding of gratitude in the Seventh Tradition?

41. How do I show my gratitude for the group?

The group’s decision to become fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions, reflects the group’s sense of responsibility for itself. In recovery, we discard the illusion that the rest of the world is responsible to take care of us; rather, we take due pride in caring for ourselves. Individually, we demonstrate our newfound maturity by accepting the weight of our own burdens; collectively, we

demonstrate our maturity by accepting responsibility for our group, neither seeking nor accepting outside contributions.

The burden of **responsibility**, however, may seem unbearable without an appreciation for the simplicity of the group's needs. The commitment to become self-supporting is not a commitment to raise vast sums of money to fulfill sweeping programs. Rather, the group determines it will muster the few basic resources it needs to fulfill its simple primary purpose: to carry the message to the still-suffering addict. The ideal of **simplicity**, when applied to Tradition Seven, helps our groups avoid the heated conflicts that often arise over the control of great resources. **Problems of money, property, and prestige need not divert our groups from their primary purpose when simplicity of that purpose and of our needs is kept squarely in focus.**

42. How do I accept responsibility in Tradition Seven?

43. How important is simplicity to this tradition?

44. As a group, how do we accept and achieve our responsibilities?

Simplicity walks hand and hand with our faith in a Higher Power. So long as we take our direction from that Power, our needs are met. The decision to decline outside contributions by meeting the group's needs from the group's own resources is based firmly in **faith. So long as our group remains devoted to fulfilling its primary purpose, its needs are met.**

45. How do we demonstrate faith in our Higher Power by practicing the Seventh Tradition?

46. Why is it important that we keep it simple?

As members of an NA group, we have made a commitment to support one another in our recovery. Our group's commitment to become fully self-supporting reflects the group's integrity and faithfulness to its fundamental identity. We support each other in recovery and, together, we fulfill our collective responsibilities as members of a self-supporting group.

47. How is integrity applied to the Seventh Tradition?

48. How important is commitment to this tradition?

The anonymity we exercise in accepting our group responsibilities reflects our integrity. The anonymity of the Seventh Tradition means more than just contributing anonymously, without thought of recognition, though of course it does involve that. **Anonymity in the context of Tradition Seven also means that all the contributions of a group's members are important. Money put in the basket, time put into setting up the meeting room, energy put into making newcomers welcome—all are part of the responsibility of the group, and all are equally important contributions to the self-supporting NA program.**

49. What does anonymity mean to me in the context of the Seventh Tradition?

50. How can I practice anonymity in Tradition Seven?

Our anonymity, our integrity, our faith, our sense of simplicity, our acceptance of responsibility, our gratitude-together, all these things spells freedom. By encouraging our group to pay its own way, the Seventh Tradition gives our group freedom to share its recovery as it sees fit, not obligated to outside contributors. Further, it gives our group the freedom that comes from inner strength, the strength that develops through applying spiritual principles. By making the decision to become fully self-supporting, our NA group assures that it will always have the resources it needs to survive and continue fulfilling its primary purpose.

51. Define freedom as it is related to being fully self-supporting?

52. How does my freedom come from being self-supporting?

TRADITION EIGHT

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

Narcotics Anonymous offers a distinctly non-professional approach to the disease of addiction. We have no hospitals, no treatment centers, no outpatient clinics, none of the facilities associated with a professional enterprise. We do not diagnose anyone's condition or track the progress of our patients—in fact, we have no patients, only members. Our groups do not provide professional therapeutic, medical, legal, or psychiatric services. We are simply a Fellowship of recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean.

- 1. Define professionals.**
- 2. What is the difference between a non-professional approach and a professional approach?**
- 3. Define special workers.**
- 4. What is the difference between professionals and special workers?**

In discussing the Sixth Tradition, we considered the sufficiency of our message. Narcotics Anonymous groups need not rely on outside enterprises in order to effectively offer recovery from addiction. In the same way, Tradition Eight reminds us that our members need no professional credentials to be effective in carrying the NA message. The heart of the NA way of recovery from addiction is one addict helping another. We have no certified NA counselors; our varied experience in recovery from drug addiction is all the credentials we need. The firsthand exposure each of us has in recovery from addiction is more than sufficient to qualify us to carry the message to other addicts.

This is not to say that a member of Narcotics Anonymous should never take a job as a professional therapist of one sort or another. It is only to say that, at an NA meeting, a member's vocation is irrelevant. The therapeutic value in the message we share with one another lies in our personal experience in recovery, not in our credentials, our training, or our professional status.

- 5. What is the heart of the NA way?**

6. **What is the message we share as members?**
7. **Should our professional status have any bearing on our ability to carry the message of recovery?**
8. **As a professional and a NA member, how do I not treat a member as a client?**
9. **Define therapeutic value in Narcotics Anonymous.**

We don't sell recovery; we share it freely with others in a spirit of love and gratitude. However, Narcotics Anonymous groups, service boards and committees may require professional help in fulfilling their responsibilities. Tradition Eight makes a distinction between "selling our recovery" and paying people to help us do our service work. If one of our committees requires professional assistance in a service task, it's alright, for example, to contract the help of a lawyer or an accountant. If we need to employ someone to help us on a regular basis, a "special worker" we may give them a paycheck in return for the services they provide us. Special workers who are also NA members are not selling their recovery. They are simply providing professional service support we would otherwise have to hire non-addicts to provide.

10. **What are some examples of a special worker?**
11. **When is it proper for us to hire professionals to help us? List possible examples.**
12. **Who determines when it is necessary to hire outside workers? List possible examples.**

APPLYING SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

Tradition Eight is one of the simplest and most straightforward of the Twelve Traditions. Likewise, the **principles underlying the Eighth Tradition** are eminently practical ones: **humility, prudence, anonymity, and integrity.**

An NA group exercises **humility** when it does not pretend to be anything more or less than it is. We do not claim to be professionals or experts in anything. We are not physicians, or therapists; we are recovering addicts. All we offer is our collective practical experience in getting clean and learning to live clean. The value of our program comes from the identification and trust that exist between one addict and another.

13. Define humility.

14. How are we practicing humility in the context of Tradition Eight?

15. What do we have to offer another addict seeking recovery?

16. Where does the value of our program come from?

We further exercise humility when we recognize that sometimes we need professionals to help us fulfill our services. We place great emphasis on the therapeutic value of one addict helping another, sometimes to the extent that we are reluctant to hire professional assistance when we need it. But some NA services require too much time or expertise for our members to fulfill on a strictly volunteer basis. We mustn't allow our pride to prevent our Fellowship from hiring the help it needs to support its services.

17. In what other way can we practice humility?

18. Should pride ever be a factor in our decision making process?

19. How does an addict determine when their volunteer status is interfering with their recovery?

20. What are some reasons for seeking professional assistance?

Neither should we hire special workers for jobs we can do for ourselves. We must exercise **prudence** in employing professional assistance for our services. Most NA service responsibilities do not require special expertise or large consistent commitments of time. Our members are perfectly capable of fulfilling such responsibilities on a volunteer basis. By exercising prudence, we can distinguish between those we can fulfill voluntarily.

21. Define prudence as it applies to the Eighth Tradition?

22. How do we exercise prudence in fulfilling our responsibilities?

23. Who holds the responsibility for the welfare of NA as a whole?

24. In what ways can we help fulfill service responsibilities?

Tradition Eight reminds our groups of the value of **anonymity**. Professionals are people with certain specialized skills, often recognized by the credentials given them by a certifying panel. An NA

group has no such recognized experts. All group members are experts in their own recovery, fully qualified to share that recovery with another addict.

25. As members of NA, what qualifies us to share our experience, strength, and hope?

26. Define anonymity as it relates to Tradition Eight.

Finally, Tradition Eight supports the **integrity** of the NA group by helping it preserve what is most important about its fundamental identity. What is Narcotics Anonymous, after all, but a Fellowship of addicts freely sharing with one another the simple message of their own experience? Tradition Eight is a firm and permanent commitment on the part of each NA group to steadfastly maintain the feature of our program that is, indeed, of foremost value. By agreeing that Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, we reaffirm our belief that the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel! This is the heart of our program; so long as that heart beats strongly, our Fellowship and our recovery shall remain vital.

27. Define integrity as it relates to the Eighth Tradition.

28. Why is practicing integrity so important to this Tradition?

29. Who holds the responsibility of the integrity of the Eighth Tradition?

30. What is the therapeutic value of one addict helping another addict?

TRADITION NINE

"NA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve."

In our White Booklet, we read that "NA is a nonprofit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean." This is NA, as such—a simple fellowship using a nonprofessional, addict-to-addict approach to the disease of addiction. We are a fellowship, not a lobbying organization or a medical service or a chain of treatment facilities. We are non-professional. We have no rules, no fees, no governing bodies, and only one membership requirement: a desire to stop using. Our primary purpose is, quite simply, to carry the message. These are some of the traditional standards by which our groups may guide themselves, and our ultimate guiding authority is a Higher Power as it finds expression in the conscience of our members. Our groups work as well as they do because they keep it simple, least anything get in the way of carrying our message as simply and directly as possible, one addict to another.

- 1. What is our fellowships only requirement? Explain.**
- 2. Who is in control of Narcotics Anonymous?**

Yet for all its emphasis on keeping things simple, Tradition Nine is not an excuse for disorganized service work; instead, it recognizes that our fellowship does require a certain degree of organization to fulfill its primary purpose. Rather than recommend that NA groups themselves become organized, the Ninth Tradition suggests that groups organize separate boards and committees to serve their needs. Just as we are nonprofessional but may hire professionals to help us, so we are not organized but may organize boards and committees to serve us. This arrangement ensures that NA, as such, maintains its uncluttered, direct approach to recovery while assuring our ability to fulfill service tasks requiring a certain amount of organization.

- 3. What are service boards and committees?**

4. What is the importance of forming service boards and committees to serve the group?

5. When is it okay for us to be organized?

6. Should our organization ever interfere with our primary purpose and why?

Okay, so we may create service boards or committees. Now we must ask ourselves, why would we want to create such things? What are the needs these boards and committees would fulfill? To answer this question, let's look at how an NA group evolves, as we did when considering the Seventh Tradition.

In the beginning, an area's first NA group only needs to gather its members together so they can help one another stay clean and carry their message to other addicts. As the group grows, it begins taking care of a variety of business related to its meetings, trying to ensure that the message is carried as effectively as possible. To maintain the focus of its recovery meetings, the group usually conducts its business meeting separately, keeping NA, as such, as simple as possible.

As the group grows even larger, it often sprouts new groups. To maintain some of the unity and camaraderie that existed when there was only one group in the area, these groups elect representatives who meet periodically. These representatives share information with one another about how their individual groups are doing and help one another find solutions to problems one group or another may be having. From time to time, they may even organize a joint recovery meeting or social activity, gathering the entire NA community together.

7. What is a GSR?

8. How does the GSR serve its group?

9. How is an area service committee formed? Explain.

10. What is an area subcommittee? Give Examples.

11. What are the needs these service boards and committees fulfill?

Sooner or later, the groups realize the potential they have in this committee of representatives. Through this committee, the groups can combine their guidance and resources so that each of them can function more effectively and all together, can carry the message farther. The groups may ask their

committee to buy bulk supplies of literature, making it easier for each group to procure NA books and pamphlets. The groups might ask their committee to compile a directory for distribution at meetings throughout the area, making it easier for addicts to find out where NA meetings are being held. The groups may ask that Public Information, Hospitals and Institutions, and Phone line programs are set up, letting still-suffering addicts who might not hear of NA by word of mouth know of the fellowship's existence and increasing general awareness of Narcotics Anonymous. The point is, the development of these services is based squarely on the groups' needs. We create these boards and committees to serve us in fulfilling those needs.

12. Do the committees and service boards serve the groups or do the groups serve them? Give examples.

13. What part does unity play in the area committee? Give examples.

14. Where should the support for our service boards and committees come from and why should it be given?

As our groups grow, so do our needs from our area grow. Explain.

First, the groups define their needs; then, they create the boards and committees which will serve them. Once created, how do we assure that our service boards and committees will remain directly responsible to those they serve? We do this, first and foremost, through consistent communication. Through their representatives, groups communicate with the boards and committees serving them. The groups provide regular information about their condition and their activities. They communicate their concerns, their needs, their ideas, and their wishes. This information helps our boards and committees better understand and serve the needs of the groups.

15. What subcommittee is created at the area level to assure that our service boards and committees remain directly responsible to the groups they serve?

16. How do we hold our representatives accountable to the groups they serve?

17. Why is communication so important? Explain.

18. How does this apply to our primary purpose?

19. What kind of information should the groups communicate to these boards and committees?

Be specific.

Communication is a two-way street. Groups share information and guidance with the boards and committees serving them. Then these boards and committees report back to the groups to which they are responsible, describing their operation, discussions, and plans. Responsible service boards and committees consult the groups in matters directly affecting them and seek direction from the groups in matters not already covered by existing policy. By maintaining regular two-way communication between NA groups and the boards and committees serving them, we create an atmosphere of responsibility that serves our fellowship and its primary purpose well.

20. Communication is a two-way street. Explain.

21. What is the difference between responsible service boards and committees and irresponsible service boards and committees? Give three examples of each.

22. What are policies generated to achieve?

APPLYING SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

Because the Ninth Tradition empowers the group to establish a service structure-not a simple thing-many of us think of Tradition Nine as being very complex. In reality, the spiritual principles underlying this tradition are very simple. The Ninth Tradition focuses, first, not on the relationship between groups and service committees but on NA, as such. We are a fellowship of recovering addicts who help one another stay clean, nothing more.

Whenever possible, organized service work should be kept distinct from the groups so that they can remain free to simply and directly fulfill our primary purpose, addict to addict. The boards and committees we do organize, we organize on the basis of need only, using the simplest guidelines possible. We organize them solely to serve us, not to establish a complex governing bureaucracy. The Ninth Tradition is far from complicated; in fact, it speaks throughout of **simplicity**.

23. What is the most important focus of Tradition Nine? Explain.

24. What does simplicity mean in reference to Tradition Nine? Give examples.

In the same way, Tradition Nine speaks of **anonymity**. When the Ninth Tradition exhorts NA, as such, never to become organized, it is telling us that we ought not create a governing hierarchy, a top-down bureaucracy dictating to our groups and members. As we noted in the Second Tradition, our leaders are not governors but servants taking their directions from the collective conscience of those they serve. Our primary purpose, not the personalities of our trusted servants, is what defines NA, as such. To reinforce the anonymity of Tradition Nine, our groups, service boards, and committees practice various systems of rotating leadership so that no one personality ever dominates.

25. What does NA, as such mean to me?

26. Why should NA as such, not become organized?

27. Why should we rotate our leaders periodically?

28. How do we apply anonymity in Tradition Nine? Explain.

Another principle implicit in the Ninth Tradition is the principle of **humility**. Each group on its own is somewhat limited in its ability to fulfill its primary purpose; it has only so many members, so much time, and so many dollars to use in carrying the message by itself. However, when a number of groups combine their resources by joining together to form a service board or committee, they enhance their ability to fulfill their primary purpose. Together, they become able to do what they could not do alone.

The principle of humility also applies to the boards and committees spoken of in our Ninth Tradition. These service boards and committees are established to serve only, not to govern. They are directly responsible to the groups and are always subject to the explicit direction of the groups. Although our service boards and committees may do much more to help our groups fulfill their primary purpose, it is in the groups where NA, as such, come to focus, not in the boards and committees that they serve.

29. What are the limitations that the group faces in fulfilling its primary purpose?

30. Define humility as it applies to the group as well as its boards and committees?

Prudence is one of the guiding principles behind the Ninth Tradition relationship between the groups and the boards and committees that serve them. Groups are responsible to consider their needs carefully, planning prudently before they create boards and committees. There is nothing that will complicate the simplicity of NA, as such, more than a needlessly elaborate array of committees, boards, and subcommittees.

31. Define the principle of prudence.

32. How do we apply this principle to the Ninth Tradition?

The group's responsibility does not end with the establishment of a board or committee to fulfill their service needs; in fact, that is only the beginning. As long as the committee remains active, the groups should maintain familiarity with its affairs. The groups should also provide continuing guidance to the committee. Our boards and committees cannot be held accountable to the groups they serve unless the groups play a responsible role in their service relationship.

33. Who has the responsibility of the committees? Explain.

34. To what extent should a group be supportive to a committee it has created? Give examples.

Finally, the Ninth Tradition speaks of **fidelity**. Narcotics anonymous groups join together, combining their resources to create service boards and committees that will help them better fulfill their primary purpose. Those boards and committees are not called to govern Narcotics Anonymous; they are called, rather, to faithfully execute the trust given them by the groups they serve. With a minimum of organization, our service boards and committees perform task on behalf of the groups, helping our groups remain free to do what they do best, simply and directly. Our fidelity to the Ninth Tradition assures that the simple, spontaneous atmosphere of recovery shared one addict to another in the NA group is never organized, legislated, or regulated out of existence.

35. When we speak of fidelity, as it pertains to Tradition Nine what do we mean?

36. What are the three things that we never want to happen to our NA groups?

37. How do we make sure that our program remains simple and humble?

TRADITION TEN

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

Narcotics Anonymous is a society of recovering addicts who help one another stay clean by applying certain simple spiritual principles. Our primary purpose, as groups and as a fellowship, is to offer that same help to any addict seeking recovery. **Aside from that, NA has no opinions whatsoever.** By refusing to take sides on other issues, we avoid becoming embroiled in public controversies that could distract us from our primary purpose. This is the message of our Tenth Tradition.

- 1. What spiritual principles do we apply in this Tradition?**
- 2. What is the primary purpose in Narcotics Anonymous?**
- 3. Why does NA have no opinion on outside issues? Explain.**
- 4. What is public controversy? Give examples.**
- 5. Elaborate on the message of Tradition Ten.**

To most of us, it probably seems obvious that Narcotics Anonymous, as a fellowship, has no opinion on the pressing world issues of our day. Most of these issues have little to do with either addiction or recovery. But there are a great number of addiction related issues that others might expect a worldwide society of recovering drug addicts to take positions on.

"What is NA's opinion," we are sometimes asked, "on the addiction treatment industry, other twelve step fellowships, the legalization of drugs, addiction related illnesses, and all the rest?"

Our answer, according to Tradition Ten, is that our groups and our fellowship take no position, pro or con, on any issues except the NA program itself. We maintain neutrality on

such issues so that we can maintain our focus on what we do best: sharing recovery from one addict to another.

- 6. Why doesn't NA express an opinion on addiction related issues?**
- 7. What do we have to lose by not remaining neutral?**
- 8. What benefits do we gain by maintaining neutrality?**
- 9. What is our position on issues outside the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous?**
- 10. Should we ever express our opinion on outside issues? Explain.**
- 11. How do outside entities get information on Narcotics Anonymous?**

However, even in explaining our own program in public, we may find ourselves treading on controversial ground. NA's views on total abstinence, on the possibility of recovering in society without long-term institutionalization, on the disease concept of addiction, even our broad views on spirituality are not met with universal acceptance. Others who deal with addiction and recovery may view these matters very differently than we do. We cannot deny those aspects of our program that others take exception to. We can, however, take care to explain our program in such a way as not to invite controversy deliberately. "We do not suggest that anyone adopt our views, nor do we oppose those with different views," we can explain. "We simply want you to know what the Narcotics Anonymous program is like." So long as we focus, as groups and as a fellowship, on our recovery experience rather than our opinions of why or how NA works, we will stay as far as possible from public controversy.

- 12. Should I ever represent NA alone?**
- 13. What views does NA have about getting clean?**
- 14. Should we ever have to defend our position as a fellowship? Explain.**
- 15. How can we explain NA without creating controversy?**

Tradition Ten restricts NA, as a fellowship, from stating opinions on outside issues. However, it places no such restriction on the individual member. In Narcotics Anonymous, we believe strongly in personal freedom. Addicts who have a desire to stop using can become members of NA simply by expressing that desire. We have no dues or fees, no pledges to sign, no promises to make to anyone, ever. Through a spiritual program, we encourage our members to develop their own understanding of a Higher Power. Even our leaders are but trusted servants, with no power to tell individual members what to do, think, or say. NA members are encouraged to think for themselves, to develop their own opinions, and to express those opinions as they see fit.

The only caution Tradition Ten offers individual NA members is that, when speaking publicly, we think through what we're going to say before we say it. In certain situations, anything an NA member says will be taken as NA's opinion, even when the situation itself has nothing to do with Narcotics Anonymous and the member clearly states that the views expressed are strictly personal. It is not our fault if others misinterpret what we say as individuals; this does not, make the complications arising from such misinterpretations any less serious for NA. We may be able to avoid such complications before they arise simply by thinking carefully before we speak in public.

- 16. What 3 things are not required to become a member of NA?**
- 17. How do we, as individuals, keep misinterpretations of NA from happening?**
- 18. Are we restricted as individual NA members? Explain.**
- 19. How does Spirituality come into play in Tradition Ten?**
- 20. How do we know if it's an NA opinion or an individual opinion? Explain.**
- 21. What are our responsibilities; as members to NA; as a whole? Explain.**

22. What is public opinion? Describe.

23. In what ways does PI work relate to the Tenth Tradition?

But what about speaking in a recovery gathering? Does the Tenth Tradition tell us that, as individual recovering addicts, we must not talk in NA meetings about the challenges we face?

No, it does not. While a particular problem may be an outside issue, its effect on our recovery is not; everything affecting a recovering addict's life is material for sharing. If a problem we are having impacts our ability to stay clean and grow spiritually, it's not an outside issue.

24. What is the difference between a recovery gathering and a NA meeting? Explain.

25. How do we share outside issues that affect our recovery, so we can get a solution?

Give examples.

26. What is the difference with outside issues and our personal experiences; can we share both of these in a NA meeting?

27. What is freedom in Narcotics Anonymous? Explain.

28. What precautions should NA members take in speaking at NA functions? Explain.

Many things can put us off balance and challenge our recovery. We often discuss such challenges with one another at our meetings, seeking to ease our personal burdens by sharing them with our fellow NA members. We ask others to share how they have applied the principles of the program in similar circumstances, recovering their balance and strengthening their recovery. We need no one's permission to talk about such things in our meetings.

But, for all that, we all know that controversial personal opinions can distract our meetings from their primary purpose. If everything is recovery material, yet we want to help our meetings retain their focus on recovery, how do we decide what to share? We can ask ourselves some questions:

29. **How do I really know if what I share is recovery material? Give examples.**
30. **Am I sharing from my experience, or am I expounding an opinion?**
31. **As an individual, am I dwelling in the problem or seeking the solution?**
32. **Do I share to draw the group together or to force the group into separate camps?**

Explain.

33. **Do I make it clear that what I say, I say for myself, not for Narcotics anonymous?**
34. **Do I share about how I use the spiritual principles of NA in my recovery? Give examples.**

So long as we keep our common welfare and our primary purpose in focus, we will avoid the kind of controversy that distracts us from recovery.

35. **What is our common welfare? Give examples.**
36. **What kinds of controversy can distract us from recovery? Give examples.**

APPLYING SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

Foremost among the principles our groups and our fellowship apply in practicing Tradition Ten is the principle of **unity**. For all the diversity of individual opinion among our members, Narcotics Anonymous itself is united in having no opinion on any issues apart from its own program. As a fellowship, we agree to take positions only on those ideals that have drawn us together, our principles of recovery, not on the many personal opinions that might divide us.

37. **How is the principle of unity expressed in the Tenth Tradition?**
38. **What can we do as individual members to ensure that the unity of NA continues?**

The Tenth Tradition is an exercise in responsibility. As groups and as a fellowship, we are responsible to carry our message to the still-suffering addict. We are responsible to provide an

atmosphere in which recovering addicts can share freely with one another. To do these things effectively, we must stay as free of the distractions of public controversy as possible. We absolutely can avoid any controversies, which might arise from groups or the fellowship taking positions on issues entirely outside the scope of our program.

Individual NA members responsibly exercise the Tenth Tradition by personally guarding NA's neutrality whenever and whatever they speak. Publicly, we differentiate between our personal opinions and those of NA, avoiding the expression of any personal opinions at all in circumstances where the difference might not be recognized. In meetings, NA members make it clear that what we share is our own experience, not the position of Narcotics Anonymous, providing as little opportunity as possible for misinterpretation. The way we speak as NA members often affects how others view NA; therefore, as responsible members, we speak carefully, guarding the neutrality that is so important to the welfare of us all.

39. Is it important to make it clear that what we share is our own opinion? Why?

40. What is our responsibility as a member, as groups, and as a fellowship in the Tenth Tradition?

41. When sharing in a NA meeting or public gathering is it appropriate to use “we” instead of “I”?

42. How do we fulfill our obligation to avoid controversy? Explain.

43. Why is it important we stay free from distractions?

To fulfill Tradition Ten, our groups, service boards, and committees must exercise **prudence** in their public contacts. Elements of our fellowship are constantly in touch with others in society. Groups maintain contacts with their meeting facilities and those in their neighborhood; H&I subcommittee, with facility administrators; Public Information workers,

with health professionals, charitable organizations, government agencies, and media. In all our contacts with society, we must take care not to express any opinions on issues outside the scope of our program. Such prudence will protect our credibility in the public eye on the only issue that truly concerns Narcotics Anonymous: our program of recovery from addiction.

44. What is prudence?

45. How do we exercise prudence in our public contact and why?

46. What is our only concern, in our dealing with the public?

47. How do we protect the credibility of NA as individuals and as a fellowship?

By practicing the Tenth Tradition, we demonstrate our belief in the value of **anonymity**. All of us have our opinions. But when we speak as groups and as a fellowship, we do not take positions on the opinions of individuals. What we have to share with the public is our fellowship's message, not our personal opinion.

Tradition Ten is supremely practical. The only issue upon which our fellowship is willing to publicly stake its reputation is the NA program itself. Underlying the practicality of the Tenth Tradition, however, can be found a fundamental spiritual principle, that of **humility**.

Narcotics Anonymous does not claim to have the answer to every trouble in the world. We do not even claim that we necessarily have the only answer to addiction. When we share in public, as groups or as a fellowship, we share only our message. We talk about what we do, neither supporting nor opposing what anyone else does. We are what we are, and that's all that we are: a society of recovering drug addicts sharing their recovery with one another and offering the same to the addict who still suffers. We speak simply about our program, knowing that our effectiveness will attract more goodwill than any amount of promotion. Our

program has worked for us and is available for others interested in recovery. If we can be of service, we stand ready to help.

48. Define anonymity?

49. Why is anonymity so important to the Tenth Tradition?

50. The welfare of Narcotics Anonymous is at stake, the public opinion should be considered. Explain.

TRADITION ELEVEN

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

The Eleventh Tradition is the cornerstone of NA's public relations policy. **But Tradition Eleven is only one of six traditions that address various aspects of our relations with the public.** The Third and Fifth Traditions talk about the primary purpose and ultimate target of our public relation efforts. Tradition Six and Seven describe the nature of our relations with other organizations, and the Tenth Tradition details our policy concerning public pronouncement on issues outside the scope of our recovery program. Clearly, our traditions are just as concerned with our public relations as they are with our internal relations.

1. What makes attraction more important than promotion?

Most NA groups have some sort of contact with the public in their everyday affairs. But the public relations spoken of in the Eleventh Tradition are more deliberate than our group's routine encounters with those outside the fellowship. The existence of a public relations "policy" implies the importance of a public relations "program" in carrying out our fellowship's primary purpose. **Public information work, done properly, is not promoted; rather, it seeks to make NA attractive to those who might need us.** As NA groups, service boards, and committees, we deliberately and energetically cultivate good public relations, not as an incidental result of our normal activity but as a way to better carry our message to addicts. Narcotics Anonymous is not a secret society; **Tradition Eleven speaks to personal anonymity, not fellowship anonymity.** The better known we are by the public, the more

likely it is that addicts seeking recovery-or their friends, relatives, co-workers will think of us and know where to find us when they decide to seek help. One way to take part in NA's public relations program is to become involved in the local Public Information Subcommittee.

2. Why is Tradition Eleven the cornerstone of NA's public relation policy?

3. Is NA a secret society? Explain.

4. Why do we have the Public Information subcommittee?

5. How is Public Information promoted and what does it seek to do?

6. Who is responsible for its support?

7. Who does the Public Information Subcommittee address?

8. How do I get involved in the Public Information Subcommittee?

9. What other Traditions involve public relations? Explain.

The Eleventh Tradition tells us that, when we engage in public relations activity, we speak simply and directly of what Narcotics Anonymous is and what we do. We are not to make exaggerated claims about NA. Our public relations efforts should be as inviting and non-promotional as our program itself, saying to addicts and society at large, and "If you want what we have to offer, this is what we are and how we work. If we can be of service, please let us know."

10. Why should we not make exaggerated claims about NA?

11. List examples of exaggerated claims about NA.

12. What does our public relations program offer? Give examples.

13. How important is it that we always represent who we are, what we do, and how we do it?

Some organizations use celebrity members as public spokespersons, hoping to enhance the organization's credibility by tying it to the celebrity's status. This may be fine for other organizations. But Tradition Eleven tells us in no uncertain terms that, in NA's public relations efforts, we must never do this-not with celebrity members, not with any member. If our fellowship used a celebrity member in a public announcement about NA and the celebrity later relapsed or otherwise suffered a loss of prestige, what good would that do to our fellowship's credibility? The same could apply to any individual member put in the public spotlight on NA's behalf. The credibility of NA's message can be greatly affected by NA's messengers. In the public eye-including press, radio, film, and all other media-we need always maintain personal anonymity.

14. Why should we never use celebrities as spokespersons for Narcotics Anonymous?

15. What makes NA's message credible without using a celebrity? Explain.

16. Why shouldn't just any NA member be a spokesperson for Public Information?

17. Why is personal anonymity so important in public relations? Explain.

18. How do I maintain anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films?

The same applies to other kinds of public information work. Public anonymity helps keep the focus of our public relations on the NA message, not the PI workers involved. We never do PI work alone because as a team-even a pair-better displays NA as a fellowship to the public, while individuals tend to draw attention to themselves. Teams also tend to keep the personalities of their members in check; the better to ensure that NA and not the individual addict is what we present to the public. The true statement that "an addict alone is in bad company" applies to our public relations efforts just as well as to our personal recovery.

19. Why is it that we never do PI work alone?

20. What should our Public Information work always be focused on?

In most circumstances, though, personal anonymity is a purely personal decision. However closely we may have guarded the secret of our addiction, most of those close to us probably knew we were in trouble when we were using. Today it may be helpful to tell them about our recovery and our membership in Narcotics Anonymous.

Other circumstances may also warrant the disclosure of our NA membership. When a friend tells us about the struggles another person is having with addiction, we may want to let that friend know about Narcotics Anonymous and what it has done for us. When a co-worker has a drug problem, we may want to share our experience with that person. None of us will want to indiscriminately trumpet all the gory details of our addiction to everyone in town, nor will we disclose our NA membership to everyone we meet. When we think we may be helpful to someone, it may be appropriate to share a bit of our story and the recovery we've found in Narcotics Anonymous.

21. List several reasons why we don't disclose our NA membership to everyone. Give at least four examples.

22. How do we share about NA without breaking our own anonymity?

23. When is it appropriate to disclose our NA membership?

24. Name some circumstances when anonymity becomes a personal decision.

25. Should we make it clear when this is our own experience with NA?

26. When I share my experience, strength, and hope is it okay to break someone else's anonymity?

All our members play a part in our public relations, whether or not they're involved in public information work. When individual addicts demonstrate recovery at work in their lives, they

become our strongest attraction, a living testament of NA's effectiveness. Seeing us now, those who know what we once were like will spread the word to those they meet that NA works. The further that message is carried, the more likely it is that addicts seeking recovery will be attracted to the warm, loving support of our fellowship.

By the same token, we must remember that, wherever we go, we always represent NA to some degree. If we are seen acting poorly while we prominently display an NA logo on our T-shirt, we carry a distinctly unattractive message about our fellowship to the public. What we say and what we do reflect on our NA recovery and the NA Fellowship. As responsible NA members, we want that reflection to be a source of attraction rather than a source of embarrassment.

- 27. Can any recovering addict play a part in Public Information work? Give examples.**
- 28. The best public relations in Narcotics Anonymous is the recovering addict. Explain.**
- 29. Give examples in which our behavior reflects on the NA fellowship, both in a positive and a negative light.**

APPLYING SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

Tradition Eleven is an expression of our **faith** in the effectiveness of our program. As a fellowship, our primary purpose is to carry the recovery message to the still-suffering addict. To fulfill that primary purpose, we do not need a promotional public relations policy. To gain public goodwill and attract addicts to our meetings, all we need to do is clearly and simply describe the Narcotics Anonymous program. We need neither fanfare, overblown claims, nor celebrity endorsements to build our public relations. We have faith that the effectiveness of our fellowship, once made known, will speak for itself.

- 30. What part does faith play in the Eleventh Tradition?**

31. Do we have to sell our program of recovery? Explain.

The principle of **service**, critical to the application of our Eleventh Tradition, is not a passive principle. To be of maximum service to the still-suffering addict, we must energetically seek to carry our message throughout our cities, towns, and villages. Our public relations policy is based on attraction, to be sure, not promotion. But to attract the still-suffering addict to our program, we must take vigorous steps to make our program widely known. The better and broader our public relations, the better we will be able to serve.

32. How can we use the spiritual principles of the program to attract new members?

33. Narcotics Anonymous is about attraction not promotion. Explain.

34. How can we vigorously make our program known?

35. How far reaching does NA extend in your city, state, country, and throughout the world?

Each of us has our own life, our own words, and our own story, all adding dimension and color to the message of our fellowship. But the message we carry to society is not the message of how great we are as individuals. The primary purpose of our public relations efforts is to tell the story of Narcotics Anonymous and what our program offers to the still-suffering addict. Our practice of public **anonymity** is built on the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

36. In your opinion, what is the story of NA?

37. The message of recovery is not about how great we are as individuals. Explain why.

38. Why is it important for us to always place principles before personalities as individuals and as the fellowship? Give Examples.

TRADITION TWELVE

“Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.”

In personal recovery, we seek to replace self-will with the guidance of a Higher Power in our personal affairs. In the same way, **the traditions describe a fellowship that takes its collective guidance from spiritual principles rather than individual personalities. That kind of selflessness is what the Twelfth Tradition means by the word “anonymity,” and it is the spiritual foundation upon which Narcotics Anonymous is built. Tradition Twelve is all the traditions rolled up in one, summarizing and reinforcing the message of the previous eleven.**

- 1. If the spiritual principles are the guiding force of the fellowship, what is our guiding force as individuals?**
- 2. What other Traditions are present in Tradition Twelve?**
- 3. The Traditions describe a fellowship that takes its collective guidance from spiritual principles rather than individual personalities. Explain.**
- 4. What does the principle of anonymity mean to the fellowship and me?**

Anonymity is essential in preserving the stability of our fellowship, making personal recovery possible. Recovery is a delicate thing. It grows best in a stable, supportive environment. Each of us and each of our groups play a part in maintaining that stability. Our unity is so precious that, given a choice between fulfilling our own wishes and preserving our fellowship’s common welfare, we put the best interests of NA first. We do this not only out of enlightened self-interest but also out of our sense of

responsibility to our fellow addicts. The principle of NA unity comes before the fulfillment of our personal wishes.

5. What are the member's part as well as the group's part in preserving the unity of NA?

6. What is essential in preserving the stability of our fellowship?

7. How does anonymity assure stability?

8. How can I practice the principle of anonymity?

9. In what kind of atmosphere does our recovery grow best?

10. The welfare of Narcotics Anonymous should always come first. Why?

Anonymity is the primary principle underlying our tradition of membership. While we all have our personal differences, NA's only membership requirement is what we have in common, a desire to stop using. This simple principle draws the diverse personalities of those who suffer from our disease together in a common fellowship of recovery.

11. What part does anonymity play in all of our traditions?

12. What are the ties that bind us all together?

13. We must always keep our membership requirements first and foremost. Why?

The principle of anonymity lies at the core of our fellowship's understanding of group conscience. The ideas of each individual group member have their importance, but the group takes its guidance from the collective conscience of all its members. Before the group makes a decision, its members consult their Higher Power, seeking spiritual guidance on the matter at hand. Their individual voices humbly join in developing a collective sense of God's will for the group, and a strong common voice arises out of that mix to guide us all. We call this group conscience. The same principle applies to NA's concept of leadership. Though individual

members serve as NA leaders, these leaders act only as our servants, carrying out their duties in accordance with the group's conscience. The principles of selfless service and collective guidance come before the personalities of our trusted servants.

- 14. What is the role of anonymity in our group conscience?**
- 15. Who are our leaders in Narcotics Anonymous and what is their responsibility to the fellowship?**
- 16. Where does the direction of our groups, as well as our trusted servants, come from?**
- 17. The unity of our groups and NA, as such, comes from the conscience of our membership. Why?**
- 18. List the spiritual principles that should always come before the personalities of our trusted servants?**

Just as the principle of anonymity guides the evolution of a group's collective conscience, so it also applies to group autonomy. Each group is, of course, entirely free to fulfill its primary purpose as it sees fit, developing its own way of doing things and its own group personality. Our fellowship places only one restriction on this near-total liberty: The group may not exercise its personality at the expense of neighboring groups or NA as a whole. The welfare of each NA group depends, to an extent, on the welfare of all NA groups. Our groups do not seek ascendancy over one another; rather, they join and cooperate to work for the greater good of the fellowship as a whole. The principle of anonymity draws our autonomous groups together for the common welfare of them all.

- 19. What is the difference between anonymity and autonomy?**
- 20. Why are both these principles so important in the unity of NA as a whole?**
- 21. What do our groups seek to do in reference to the Twelfth Tradition?**

22. What does “neighboring groups,” mean?

23. What does autonomy allow the groups to do?

24. Name the one restriction placed on group autonomy and why is this important to the fellowship as a whole?

The principle of anonymity shapes our primary purpose. Although individual ambition and personal purpose may provide motivation for our development as human beings, our fellowship is guided by its collective purpose: to carry our message to the still-suffering addict. When we enter Narcotics Anonymous, we leave our personal agenda at the door. We seek to help others rather than only ourselves. This selfless principle, not personal ambition, defines the primary purpose of our groups.

25. What shapes our primary purpose?

26. What is the difference between personal purpose and collective purpose?

27. Should we ever bring our personal agenda to Narcotics Anonymous?

28. What guides our fellowship?

29. What defines the primary purpose of our groups?

30. What role does anonymity play in our primary purpose?

Anonymity guides our fellowship’s interactions in society. We are not a secret organization; we are happy to see our name becoming better known throughout the world with each passing year. However, we do not trade that name for the endorsement of organizations that might possibly help us further our primary purpose. Nor do we attempt to gain public influence by asserting the prestige of our fellowship’s name. If we are fulfilling our primary purpose, society will see our usefulness. We will have no need to trade our endorsement for the support

of others. The good spoken of us by our fellowship's friends will be sufficient recommendation.

- 31. What part does anonymity play in our interaction with society?**
- 32. How does anonymity apply to the Sixth Tradition?**
- 33. How does fulfilling our primary purpose relate to the Sixth Tradition?**
- 34. Why is it that we need no endorsement from others? Explain.**

Anonymity is one of the guiding principles behind the way our groups practice the Seventh Tradition. We believe in the value of selfless generosity for its own sake. For this reason, we choose to receive support from our members anonymously. We also encourage each group as a whole to become fully self-supporting, not dependent on only one or two individual members. The principle of selfless giving, without expectation of personal distinction or reward, goes hand-in-hand with the principle of collective responsibility. Together, they assure both the spiritual solidarity and the financial stability of our groups.

- 35. What does selfless giving mean?**
- 36. How does the principle of selfless giving apply to the Seventh Tradition?**
- 37. Name some things we encourage the members and groups to do?**
- 38. Why is it important that no one member of a group do more than their fare share?**
- 39. What two principles go hand in hand?**
- 40. What do these principles assure our groups?**

This same principle of selfless anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our Eighth Tradition. In Narcotics Anonymous, we have no professional Twelfth Steppers. Rather, we use the simple language of empathy to freely share with one another the spiritual experience we call

recovery. A spiritual experience cannot be bought or sold; it can only be given away. The more we freely share that experience, the more we strengthen the empathy that joins us together. This tradition reminds us to place the principle of anonymous, selfless giving before whatever personal desires we may have for recognition or reward.

41. What is the difference between anonymity and empathy?

42. What is selfless anonymity?

43. It is the spiritual foundation of what Tradition? Why?

44. What simple language do we use when we share our spiritual experience? Explain.

In Narcotics Anonymous, we apply the principle of anonymity in the way we structure our service organization. Our fellowship has no authoritarian hierarchy. We create boards and committees solely to serve us, not to govern. The various elements of our service structure are guided by the primary purpose and collective conscience of our fellowship and are held directly accountable for the service they do on our behalf. Those who serve on our various boards and committees are expected to do so not to seek power, property, or prestige for themselves, but to selflessly serve the fellowship that has made their recovery possible.

45. Define authoritarian hierarchy.

46. Define selfless service.

47. Why is anonymity so important in our service efforts? Explain.

48. What guides our service structure?

49. For those that serve, why is it important they do not seek power, property, or prestige for themselves?

Almost all our groups, service boards, and committees rotate different members through their service positions, rarely asking one individual to serve in a particular position of responsibility more than one or two terms in a row. The practice of rotation emphasizes our fellowship's belief in the value of anonymity in service. NA service is not primarily a personal endeavor; rather, it is the collective responsibility of our fellowship as a whole. This doesn't mean that we do not appreciate the care, experience, and insight that individuals may offer in carrying out their service duties. However, we place the principle of anonymity in service before the personalities of our individual trusted servants. Collective responsibility, not personal authority, is the guiding force behind NA service.

50. The rotation of our trusted servants is very important in Narcotics Anonymous.

Why?

51. Who is responsible for NA service? Explain why.

52. What is the guiding force behind NA service?

53. What is the difference between collective responsibility and personal authority? (i.e. principles before personalities)

The principle of anonymity gives form to our fellowship's public voice. Each of our many members has personal opinions on a wide range of subjects. The public message our fellowship carries, however, is the message of our collective experience in recovery from addiction. As groups and as a fellowship, we have no opinions on anything but the NA program itself. In our interactions with society, we present only the principles of our program, not our members' personal opinions about other issues.

54. What is the difference in personal and fellowship anonymity and why is it so important?

55. What gives form to our fellowship's voice?

56. As members of NA, what do we have opinions on?

Anonymity applies not only to our public pronouncements but it is the principle underlying the whole of our fellowship's public relations policy. In our public contacts, we base the credibility of our program on NA's effectiveness, not on the personal reputation of any individual member. We seek to attract addicts and gain public goodwill solely by virtue of what we have to offer, not by grandiose promotional. Exaggerated claims about NA cannot take the place of the simple, proven validity of our message as the basis of our public relations policy.

57. Describe the principle of anonymity as it is applied to our public relations policy?

58. What does the message of our fellowship consist of?

59. What is the principle underlying the whole of our public relations policy?

60. How do we seek to attract addicts and public goodwill?

61. In our interactions with society, what do we present to the public?

Twelfth Tradition anonymity or "namelessness" serves a number of practical functions in our fellowship, each of which has broad spiritual implications. By reminding us that "what's said in this meeting stays in this meeting," our meeting formats help foster an atmosphere in which none of us need to fear public disclosure of what we share in the intimacy of our groups. They also remind us that the message, not the messenger, is what's most important about the sharing that occurs in our meetings.

62. Anonymity in our meeting is the most precious thing we have. That namelessness, that feeling of security from the public at large. Explain.

63. Give some reasons why anonymity in our meetings is priceless.

64. When attending a NA meeting, how are we reminded about anonymity? Give examples.

65. What are the dangers of not respecting a member's anonymity?

Twelfth Tradition anonymity also means that, in the final analysis, our personal differences make no difference: In NA, in recovery, we are all equal. It's true that we all come into Narcotics Anonymous with our own personal histories, using patterns, educational and social backgrounds, talents, and shortcomings. But for the purpose of our own recovery, our occupational identity has no bearing on our ability to care for one another in NA. A college degree, a trust fund, illiteracy, poverty-these circumstances that so powerfully affect so many other areas of our lives will neither help nor hinder our chances at recovery. Likewise, they will not aid or impede our efforts to carry the message one addict to another.

66. Our personal differences make no difference in Narcotics Anonymous. Explain.

67. Why are we all equal in Narcotics Anonymous? Explain.

68. What will neither hinder nor help our chances of recovery?

69. Will these things affect our ability to carry the message one addict to another?

70. Why does our occupational identity have no bearing on our ability to carry the message?

71. What part do you feel that diversity plays in the health of NA?

72. Explain the great paradox of NA recovery?

73. Why should we place spiritual principles first?

We are equal in NA membership. We are all, at last, anonymous “part of” rather than uniquely “apart from” the NA fellowship. The anonymity spoken of in our Twelfth

Tradition means that, we who have suffered so long from the isolating disease of addiction, “Finally belong.”

74. Being a part of rather than apart from is what Narcotics Anonymous is all about.

Explain.

Truly, anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions. Without it, the unity upon which personal recovery depends would dissolve in chaos of conflicting personalities. With it, our groups are given a body of guiding principles, our Twelve Traditions, helping them join the personal strengths of their members in a fellowship that supports and nurtures the recovery of us all.

We pray that Narcotics Anonymous never becomes a gray, faceless collection of addicts without personalities. We enjoy the color, the compassion, the initiative, and the rough-and-tumble liveliness that arises from the diverse personalities of our members. In fact, our diversity is our strength. We find that the stronger our individual members are, the more strongly united our fellowship becomes. This is a great paradox of NA recovery: In joining together in a commitment to the greater good of Narcotics Anonymous, our own welfare is enhanced beyond measure. In surrendering self-will, humbly placing whatever individual power we may have at the service of the whole, we find an amazing power not only greater than our own but greater than the sum of all its parts. In serving the needs of others selflessly-anonymously-we find our own needs served, in turn, far better than we ever could have imagined. In joining anonymously in a fellowship with other recovering addicts, placing the welfare of the group ahead of our own, our own spiritual growth is enhanced beyond measure, not diminished. This is what Tradition Twelve means when it says that anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our

traditions. So long as we place spiritual principles first, our individual personalities can grow and flourish like never before, ensuring that our fellowship also continues to flourish, strong and free.

Our common welfare depends upon our unity. The only hope we have of maintaining that unity amidst the tremendous diversity we find in Narcotics Anonymous is by the application of certain common principles: those found in the Twelve Traditions. So long as we place the practice of those principles before the exercise of our individual personalities, all will be well.

75. Unity and anonymity are the keys to all that we do in Narcotics Anonymous. The responsibility is all of ours as members of this fellowship. Explain.

76. Diversity is our strength. Explain.

77. What enhances our own welfare? Give examples.

78. What happens when we put spiritual principles first?

79. What does our common welfare depend on?

This is not the end, only the beginning. As the steps and traditions work in our lives, we must carry this message to other addicts and we must also be the message. To insure the Spiritual Integrity of the program of Narcotics Anonymous we must stand on all these principles in all areas of our lives and that is the power of the NA program. Our literature states in Tradition Two that this is a God-given program that can change and save lives, it is only through understanding and application that it works.