

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOD, MYSELF AND OTHERS

An AA “Big Book” Step and Tradition Study

July 5 through October 4, 2021

(All page cites from Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition, unless otherwise noted.)

(Note that *spiritual principles* are noted in italics throughout the text.)

Healthy Relationships in the Twelve Traditions, including God.

October 4, Appendix I, “The AA Tradition, pp. 561-566.

“... having shared in a **common peril** ... we have discovered a **common solution** ...” (p. 17)

“As we discovered the principles by which the individual alcoholic could live, so we had to evolve principles by which the AA groups and AA as a whole could survive and function effectively.” (Forward to Second Edition, 1955 - p. xix)

Ten of the principles that evolved into the Twelve Traditions are mentioned or implied in the “Foreword to the First Edition” of Alcoholics Anonymous (1939):

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| “It is important that we remain anonymous ...” | Trad. 12. |
| “... our alcoholic work is an avocation.” | Trad. 8. |
| “... publicly ... each of our Fellowship to omit his personal name ...” | Trad. 11. |
| “... we are not an organization in the conventional sense ...” | Trad. 4, 9. |
| “There are no dues or fees whatsoever.” | Trad. 7. |
| “... requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking.” | Trad. 3. |
| “We are not allied with any particular faith, sect or denomination ...” | Trad. 6, 10. |
| “We simply wish to be helpful to those who are afflicted.” | Trad. 5. |
| | (pp. xiii-xiv) |

Two principles, perhaps the most important, were absent from the First Edition and would only emerge after the book was published in 1939—Traditions One and Two.

Unhealthy Relationships in AA prior to the Twelve Traditions.

During the five years from 1939 to 1944 hundreds of AA groups were formed in America, Canada and other countries. Differences within groups and among groups were growing. There was disagreement and discontent everywhere. It became clear that the “common peril” of alcoholism and the “common solution” of the spiritual awakening resulting from the Twelve Steps were not such a “powerful cement” as had been envisioned. (p. 17).

Ego-driven, unhealthy relationships were threatening the very existence of AA. (p. xix)

So Bill W. began writing a more thorough set of principles “by which the AA groups and AA as a whole could survive and function effectively.” These principles were first published in the April 1946 Grapevine under the title “Twelve Points to Assure Our Future.” The Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous were formally adopted at AA’s first convention in 1950.

Healthy Relationships in the Twelve Traditions, including God.

The two principles that were not part of the original set of principles mentioned in the Foreword to the First Edition became Traditions One and Two. As we consider the healthy relationship principles of all Twelve Traditions, it is important that we first recognize the “order of healthy relationship principles” for our AA groups that is set out in these first two traditions:

In Tradition One, the “we” becomes slightly more important than the “me”;

In Tradition Two, the “ultimate authority” guiding the human “we” is “a loving God”.

The “ego deflation” of the individual alcoholic accomplished in the Twelve Steps continues as we stay “right-sized” in the Twelve Traditions, as well. We continue to learn to stay together, work together and survive together, sharing our “**common peril**” (illness) and our “**common solution**” (spiritual awakening) in the spiritual work of “**our common welfare**”.

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“... the remarkable unity of AA is one of the greatest assets that our Society has.” (p. xix)

The Twelve Traditions enable us to experience the spiritual power of the “liberation of self” through the “limitation of self”—supporting healthy relationships.

Traditions One through Five guide us to *trust* and *accept responsibility* for “who and whose” we are, “who” we are here to help and “how” we are to help them and ourselves.

Tradition One. “Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.”

“Selfishness—self-centeredness! That, we think, **is** the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate.” (p. 62)

Tradition One keeps our self-centered egos in check when we are willing to *accept* and *trust* that our individual lives, including our recovery, is improved by learning to have *consideration* for the other person’s welfare, not just our own. Our healthy common welfare is more important than just getting our way all the time—inside and outside of AA.

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.”

“... the consciousness of the Presence of God **is** today the most important fact of their lives ...” (p. 51)

Tradition Two “sets the tone” for healthy relationships in AA. We are reminded that God *loves* each one of us; that exercising *restraint* of our desire to control the group and/or other people really is in our best interest; that *patiently* waiting for God’s *loving* guidance is never a waste of our time. We are all “God’s kids”—here to help one another.

Tradition Three. “The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.”

Tradition Three reminds us that we will need to exercise *patience*, *tolerance*, *restraint*, *kindliness* and *forgiveness*, sooner or later, with the newcomer. As we learn to treat newcomers this way, we can learn to apply the same principles in all our relationships, especially with those who don’t always make us feel comfortable, or at ease, or content or safe.

Tradition Four. “Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.”

Tradition Four helps us remember that “no man is an island”. We are all connected eventually. “Our common welfare” isn’t limited to the individual or the group. In the broadest application, “our common welfare” includes every human being on the planet. Being *responsible* for our part while taking others into *consideration* is vital to healthy relationships.

Tradition Five. “Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.”

“The alcoholic who still suffers” isn’t just the newcomer—it is any one of us on any given day. Our “message” is the spiritual awakening we have had as the result of the Twelve Steps. To “carry the message” is to share “what we used to be like, what happened and what we are like now”, as the meeting speaker, in sharing or in one-on-one conversation. We avoid outside issues when we “carry the message” to avoid distorting or garbling the message of our spiritual awakening. *Restraint*, *honesty* and *service* are vital to our practice of Tradition Five.

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Traditions Six through Twelve teach us to accept healthy limitations on ourselves as we seek the common welfare of all others in our group, as well as family members, friends and all those around us. Every “limitation” brings with it one or more benefits.

Traditions Six through Twelve provide healthy *restraints* for us so that we can be responsible, honest and considerate in our fulfillment of Traditions One through Five!

Tradition Six. “An AA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise ...”

The Benefit: Problems of money, property and prestige will not divert us from our primary purpose—to share our spiritual awakening with the alcoholic.

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

The Benefit: Avoids futile disputes over property, money and authority; prudent reserve is sufficient ... learn to live with less, not more.

Tradition Eight. “Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional ...”

The Benefit: Keeps “carrying the message” on a spiritual basis, not a financial one.

Tradition Nine. “AA, as such, should never be organized ...”

The Benefit: No “top-down” control or authority. The Twelve Concepts guide AA communication, safe-guard the Traditions and enable the message to be carried. There are no “bosses” in AA; only one “rank” in AA—member.

Tradition Ten. “Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues ...”

The Benefit: Our spiritual message of recovery will not be distorted, diluted or garbled by public controversy.

Tradition Eleven. “Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion ... maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.”

The Benefit: We attract as we behave in gratitude to God for what we have been given, and in humble and *responsible service* to others. We avoid self-promotion.

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

The Benefit: “... practice a genuine humility ... may our great blessings never spoil us ... live in thankful contemplation of [God] who presides over us all.”

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This concludes our study of “Healthy Relationships with God, Myself and Others”. As we said, “‘We’ is a relationship word. Without ‘we’, there is only ‘me’.”

AA’s Twelve Steps are a program to produce a spiritual awakening in us. This spiritual awakening enables us to establish and grow in healthy relationships with God, ourselves and others, our new “we”. AA’s Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts enable us to carry our message of spiritual awakening to others. With this foundation of healthy relationship practices, we try to practice the principles of healthy relationships in all our affairs, inside and outside AA.

“We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. May God bless you and keep you until then.”