

Tradition 4: “Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as whole.”

**Autonomy:** (in Bold) the right or condition of self-government. Refers to the capacity to be one’s own person, to live one’s own life according to reasons and motives that are taken as one’s own and not the product of manipulative or distorting external forces; independence, freedom.

“But in relation to us, it means very simply that every A.A. group can manage its affairs exactly as it pleases, except when A.A. as a whole is threatened.” (Bill’s definition. Page 146, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph)

**How are we as a whole and individual characterized?** (page 146, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph)

- a. “We are so largely a band of ego-driven individualist.”
- b. “Children of chaos”

**What has been tried?** (page 146, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph)

“every conceivable deviation from our Twelve Steps and Twelves Traditions has been tried.”

**What did they learn, see?** (page 146, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph)

“We saw that the group, exactly like the individual, must eventually conform to whatever tested principles would guarantee survival.”

**What was discovered?** (page 146, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph)

“We had discovered that there was perfect safety in the process of trial and error.”

**Result of this discovery?** (page 147, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph)

- a. “Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A group provided that as a group they had no other affiliation.” (Segway into Tradition 5, 6) (also echo’s Matthew 18:20 – “For where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them.”)
- b. “that we had been given the courage to declare each A.A. group an individual entity, strictly reliant on its own conscience as a guide to action.”

**What are two warnings? Two storm signals?** (page 147, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph)

“In charting this enormous expanse of freedom, we found it necessary to post only two storm signals”

- A. “A group ought not do anything which would greatly injure A.A. as a whole”
- B. “nor ought it (group) affiliate itself with anything or anybody else.”

**Where is the real danger?"** "There would be real danger should we commence to call some groups..." (page 147, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph)

- a. Wet
- b. Dry
- c. Republican
- d. Communist
- e. Catholic
- f. Protestant

What other adjectives or classifications, distinguish, separate or divide us?

What does it mean to affect other groups or A.A.? (examples)

Tradition 4 Checklist:

1. Do I insist that there are only a few right ways of doing things in A.A.?
2. Does my Group always consider the welfare of the rest of A.A.? Of nearby groups? Of loners in Alaska? Of Internationalists miles from port? Of a group in Rome or El Salvador?
3. Do I put down other members' behavior when it is different from mine, or do I learn from it?
4. Do I always bear in mind that, to those outsiders who know I am in A.A., I may to some extent represent our entire beloved fellowship?
5. Am I willing to help a newcomer go to any lengths- his lengths, not mine-to stay sober?
6. Do I share my knowledge of AA tools with other members who may not have heard of them?

Tradition 5: “Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.”

**What is the central theme of this tradition?** (page 150, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph)

- a. “...better do one thing supremely well than many badly.”
- b. “Around it our Society gathers in unity.” (Tradition 1)

**What does our life as a Society depend on?**

- a. “The very life of our Fellowship requires *the preservation of this principle.*”

**What is our Gift from God?**

**What unique ability does each A.A have?”** (page 150-151)

- a. “the ability to identify with, and bring recovery to the newcomer”
- b. “the legacy of suffering and recovery are easily passed among alcoholics, one to the other”

**Other qualifications? NO.**

“...no way dependent upon his learning, eloquence or on any special individual skills.”

**What is the only thing that matters?**

“that he(you) have found the key to sobriety”

**Reasons for “this singleness of purpose”?** (page 150-151)

- a. “firmly bound by obligation are the members of Alcoholics Anonymous, who have demonstrated that they can help problem drinkers as others seldom can.”
- b. “It is the great paradox of A.A. that we know we can seldom keep the precious gift of sobriety unless we give it away.”
- c. “For us, if we neglect those who are still sick, there is unremitting danger to our own lives and sanity.”

**Compulsions?**

- a. Self-preservation
- b. Duty
- c. Love

**Our one high mission?**

- a. “to carry the A.A. message to those who don’t know there’s a way out.”

**Discuss example given by Bill.**

“My sponsor sold me one idea, and that was Sobriety.”

How do you apply this personally? Relationships, work? Do you ask yourself what your primary purpose is in any given situation, moment?

Priorities in A.A? your priorities for being in group? What am I doing here? And Why?

## Reference materials:

What A.A. does not do. "The AA group...where it all began." Pamphlet Page 39

1. Recruit members or furnish initial motivation for alcoholics to recover.
2. Keep membership records or case histories.
3. Follow up or try to control members.
4. Make medical or psychological diagnosis or prognoses.
5. Provide hospitalization, drugs, or medical or psychiatric treatment.
6. Provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money or other such services.
7. Provide domestic or vocational counseling.
8. Engage in or sponsor research.
9. Affiliate with social agencies (though many members and service offices do cooperate with them).
10. Offer religious services.
11. Engage in any controversy about alcohol or other matters.
12. Accept money for its services or contributions from non-AA sources.
13. Provide letters of reference to parole boards, attorneys, court officials, schools, businesses, social agencies or any other organization or institution.

## Tradition 5 Checklist:

1. Do I ever cop out by saying, "I'm not a group, so this or that Tradition doesn't apply to me"?
2. Am I willing to explain firmly to a newcomer the limitations of A.A. help, even if he gets mad at me for not giving him a loan?
3. Have I today imposed on any A.A. member for a special favor or consideration simply because I am a fellow alcoholic?
4. Am I willing to twelfth-step the next newcomer without regard to who or what is in it for me?
5. Do I help my group in every way I can to fulfill our primary purpose?
6. Do I remember that A.A. old-timers, too, can be alcoholics who still suffer? Do I try both to help them and to learn from them?

## Tradition 5 Long Form:

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

Tradition 6: “An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.”

**What did the founding A.A.'s see?** (Bill's vision?) (page 155, 1<sup>st</sup> sentence)

- a. “The moment we saw that we had an answer for alcoholism, it was reasonable (or so it seemed at the time) for us to feel that we might have the answer to a lot of other things.”

**What did they feel duty-bound to do?**

- a. “to throw the whole weight of the A.A. name behind any meritorious cause.”

**What did the founding A.A.'s dream of?** (page 155, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph)

- a. “we’d build a hospital chain of our own”
- b. “we’d educate the public”
- c. “rewrite school and medical text books”
- d. “quarantined confinement for derelicts from skid row”
- e. “rewrite the laws of the land”
- f. “have Judges parole alcoholics into our custody”
- g. “We’d spill A.A. into the dark regions of dope addiction and criminality”
- h. “We’d form groups of depressive and paranoid folks”
- i. “take what we had into factories and cause laborers and capitalists to love each other”
- j. “Having learned to live so happily, we’d show everybody else how.”
- k. “our Society of Alcoholics Anonymous might prove to be the spearhead of a new spiritual advance!”
- l. “We might transform the world.”

**“People became confused.”** (page 156, last paragraph)

- a. “Did AA fix drunks or was it an educational project?”
- b. “Was AA spiritual or medical?”
- c. “Was it a reform movement?” (Legal, Political, Educational?)

**What did these early adventures of AA do?**

- a. “implanted a deep-rooted conviction that in no circumstances could we endorse and related enterprise, no matter how good.”
- b. “We of Alcoholics Anonymous could not be all things to all men, nor should we try.”

Discuss examples: Book

AA Clubs

Local treatment centers

Charities

AA Conventions

Traditions 4 -8

### Tradition 6 Checklist:

1. Should my fellow group members and I go out and raise money to endow several AA beds in our local hospital?
2. Is it good for a group to lease a small building? Would it be acceptable to make a special donation to the owners of the building we meet in to express our gratitude?
3. Are all the officers and members of our local club for AA's familiar with "Guidelines on Clubs" (available at GSO; free)
4. Should the secretary of our group serve on the mayor's advisory committee on alcoholism?
5. Some alcoholics will stay around AA only if we have a TV and card room. If this is what is required to carry the message to them, should we have these facilities?

### Tradition 6: Long Form (separated into list of points)

- "Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our **Spiritual aim**."
- "We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to AA should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the Spiritual."
- An AA group, as such, should never go into business.
- Secondary aids to AA, such as clubs or hospitals which require much property or administration, ought to be incorporated and so set apart that, if necessary, they can be freely discarded by the groups.
- Hence such facilities ought not to use the AA name.
- Their management should be the sole responsibility of those people who financially support them.
  - For clubs, AA managers are usually preferred.
  - But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside AA – and medically supervised.
- While an AA group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never to go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied.
- An AA group can bind itself to no one.

Tradition 7: "Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

**Self-Supporting Alcoholics?** (page 160, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph)

- a. "we find that's what we have to be."
- b. "This principle is telling evidence of the profound change that AA has wrought in all of us."

**What does everyone know about the active alcoholic?** (page 160, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph)

- a. "screams that they have no troubles money can't cure"
- b. "Always, we've had our hands out."
- c. "Time out of mind we've been dependent upon somebody, usually money-wise."

**Reasons for our collective poverty or corporate poverty?**

- a. "They (people with money) figured that it was high time we now – sober – paid our own way."
- b. "It was soon apparent that while alcoholics would spend lavishly on Twelfth Step cases, they had a terrific aversion to dropping money into a meeting place hat for group purposes."
- c. "We were astounded to find that we were as tight as the bark on a tree."

**Result?**

"So AA, the movement, started and stayed broke, while the individual members waxed prosperous."

**What happened when AA emerged from infancy to adolescence?** (page 161, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph)

- a. "we swung from the idea that we needed vast sums of money to the notion that AA shouldn't have any."
- b. "On every lip were the words, "You can't mix AA and money."
- c. "We shall have to separate the spiritual from the material."

**Why did AA go from one extreme to the other?**

- a. "because here and there members had tried to make money out of their AA connections."
- b. "we feared we'd be exploited."
- c. "great benefactors had endowed clubhouses and as a result there was sometimes outside interference in our affairs."
- d. "We had been presented with a hospital, and almost immediately the donor's son became its principal patient and would be manager."
- e. "A group was given five thousand dollars and the hassle over that chunk of money played havoc for years."
- f. "Frightened by these complications, some groups refused to have a cent in their treasuries."
- g. "AA would be diverted from its primary purpose."

**What happened?** (page 161, last paragraph)

- a. "We recognized the fact that AA had to function."
- b. "The need for meeting places"
- c. "Small offices had to be set up"
- d. "A few full- time secretaries hired."
- e. "Telephones installed"

**Why?** (page 161, last paragraph)

- a. “We saw that if they weren’t, the man coming in the door couldn’t get a break.” (Tradition 5)

“There **was** a place in AA where spirituality and money would mix, ***and that was in the hat!***”

**Financial gifts?** (strings attached)

**End Result? Foundation’s financial policy?**

- a. “Our Trustees wrote a bright page of AA history.”
- b. “They declared for the principle that AA must always stay poor.”
- c. “Bare running expenses plus a prudent reserve.”
- d. “The principle of corporate poverty was firmly and finally embedded in AA tradition.”

**Public response to these printed facts?**

- a. “To people familiar with endless drives for charitable funds, AA presented a strange and refreshing spectacle.”
- b. “Approving editorials here **and abroad** generated a wave of confidence in **the integrity of Alcoholics Anonymous.**”
- c. “They pointed out that the irresponsible had become responsible.”

**Discuss Bill’s examples.** Tradition 7 as applied to individual’s relationships, work, etc.

**Tradition 7 Checklist:**

1. Honestly now, do I do all I can to help AA (my group, central office, GSO) remain self-supporting?
2. Should the Grapevine sell advertising space to book publishers and drug companies, so it could make a big profit and become a bigger magazine, in full color, at a cheaper price per copy?
3. If GSO runs short of funds some year, wouldn’t it be okay to let the government subsidize AA groups in hospitals and prisons?
4. Is it more important to get a big AA collection from a few people, or a smaller collection in which more members participate?
5. Is a group treasurer’s report unimportant AA business? How does the treasurer feel about it?
6. How important in my recovery is the feeling of self-respect, rather than the feeling of being always under obligation for charity received?



## Tradition 7 Checklist Revised/Alternate form (aachilternthames.org.uk)

1. Are we supporting our group through our own contributions?
2. What is a prudent reserve and do we send surplus promptly to intergroup?
3. What is our group money spent on? Could we spend more wisely?
4. Should we accept money from newcomers or visitors or favors from landlords and suppliers?
5. Does our Treasurer report regularly enough? Does our treasurer feel sufficiently supported and are they accountable?
6. How much is the right amount to give for Tradition 7?
7. Is my giving anonymous or do I make my paper money obvious and stigmatize those on lower income?
8. Do we understand the “power of the purse”?

### Tradition 7 Long Form

- The AA groups themselves out to be fully self-supporting by voluntary contributions or their own members.
- We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal;
- That any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous, whether by groups, clubs, hospitals, or other outside agencies.
- That acceptance of large gifts from any source, or of contributions carry any obligation whatever, is unwise.
- We view with much concern those AA treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no state AA purpose
- Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy **our spiritual heritage** as futile disputes over property, money and authority. (nod to Tradition 6)

Tradition 8: "Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers."

**"Alcoholics Anonymous** will never have a professional class."

Why?

- a. "We have gained some understanding of the ancient words "Freely ye have received, freely give."
- b. "We have discovered that at the point of professionalism, money and spirituality do not mix."
- c. "Almost no recovery from alcoholism has ever been brought by the world's best professionals, whether medical or religious."
- d. "Every time we have tried to professionalize our Twelfth Step, the result has been exactly the same: "Our single purpose has been defeated."
- e. "Alcoholics simply will not listen to a paid twelfth-stepper."

**What happens to an AA who talks for money?**

- a. "The money motive compromises him and everything he says and does for his prospect."

**Who was being attacked by AA's as "Professionals", with the claim that AA knowledge was being sold for money?**

- a. Caretakers who swept the floor (of AA offices, Clubs)
- b. Cooks
- c. Secretaries in the AA offices
- d. Authors writing books
- e. AA members who ran rest homes and farms for alcoholics
- f. AA's hired out to corporation as personnel men in charge of the Alcoholic problem in industry
- g. AA's who became nurses on alcoholic wards
- h. AA's who entered the field of alcohol education

**What is the "plain line of cleavage that could be seen between professionalism and non-professionalism"?**

- a. "When we agreed that the Twelfth Step couldn't be sold for money, that was wise."
- b. "But when we had declared that our fellowship couldn't hire service workers nor could any AA member carry our knowledge into other fields, we were taking the counsel of FEAR..."

Example given by Bill. (page 167-168)

**AA Clubs Janitor and Cook: Why needed?**

- a. Keep club functioning, habitable and hospitable
- b. Answer phones
- c. Coffee
- d. Look after facility full time, etc.

**What is the “plain line”?** “The job was not to do Twelfth Step work; it was to make Twelfth Step work possible.

**What happened to these members who took these “thankless jobs”?**

- a. They were labeled “Professionals”.
- b. They were shunned by other AA’s
- c. They were not asked to speak at meetings
- d. Accused of “making money out of AA”.
- e. Described as “a necessary evil”
- f. Committees depressed their salaries

**Volunteers?**

- a. “Volunteer committeemen and assistants could be of great help, but they could not be expected to carry this load day in and day out.”
- b. “We tried volunteers (club, offices), who were quickly disenchanted with sweeping floors and brewing coffee seven days a week. They just didn’t show up.

**What’s the question?** (page 170)

“The question was – and sometimes still is – are such activities to be branded as professionalism under AA tradition?

**Answer? NO**

- a. “Members who select such full-time careers do not professionalize AA’s Twelfth Step.”
- b. “Not a single one of them had been hired to do AA’s Twelfth Step Work.”

**What is the real issue?**

- a. “The violation in these instances was not “professionalism” at all; it was breaking anonymity.”
- b. “AA’s sole purpose was being compromised, and the name of Alcoholics Anonymous was being misused.”

“Our Twelfth Step is never to be paid for, but those who labor in service for us are worthy of their hire.”

**Tradition 8 Long form:**

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

## Tradition 8 Checklist:

1. Is my own behavior accurately described by the Traditions? If not, what needs changing?
2. When I chafe about any particular Tradition, do I realize how it affects others?
3. Do I sometimes try to get some reward – even if not money – for my personal AA efforts?
4. Do I try to sound in AA like an expert on alcoholism? On recovery? On medicine? On sociology? On AA itself? On psychology? On spiritual matters? Or, heaven help me, even on humility?
5. Do I make an effort to understand what AA employees do? What workers in other alcoholism agencies do? Can I clearly distinguish them?
6. In my own AA life, have I any experience which illustrates the wisdom of this Tradition?
7. Have I paid enough attention to the book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions? To the pamphlet AA Tradition – How it Developed?