

12 x 12 Tradition Workshop Traditions 1 – 2 - 3

Tradition 1:

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

“The unity of Alcoholics Anonymous is the most cherished quality our Society has.” (page 129, 1st paragraph)

Why?

- a. “Our lives, the lives of all to come, depend squarely upon it.”
- b. “We stay whole, or A.A. dies.”
- c. “Without unity, the heart of A.A. would cease to beat;”
- d. “our world arteries would no longer carry the life-giving grace of God”
- e. “His gift to us would be spent aimlessly.”

Unity: the state of being unite or joined as a whole.

Common welfare: what is shared and beneficial for all or most members of a given community. Or what is achieved by collective action and active participation.

Personal recovery: being able to create and live in a meaningful and contributing life in a community of choice with or without the presence of mental health issues.

“Does this mean that is A.A. the individual doesn’t count for much? Is he to be dominated by his group and swallowed up in it?” (2nd paragraph, page 129)

“No!”

- a. “We believe there isn’t a fellowship on earth which lavishes more devoted care upon its individual members.”
- b. “there is none which more jealously guards the individual’s right to think, talk, and act as he wishes.”
- c. “No AA can compel another to do anything”
- d. “nobody can be punished or expelled.”

“They see liberty verging on license, yet they recognize at once that A.A. has an irresistible strength of purpose and action.”

“How can such a crowd of anarchists function at all?” (page 130, 1st paragraph)

Anarchist: is the state of a society being freely constituted without authorities or a governing body; a person who rebels against any authority, established order or ruling power.

The Key to this strange paradox: (page 130, 2nd paragraph), (in “We” form)

- a. “The A.A. member has to conform to the principles of recovery.”
- b. “Our life actually depends upon obedience to spiritual principles.
- c. “If we deviate too far, the penalty is sure and swift; we sicken and die.”
- d. “At first we go along because we must, later we discover a way of life we really want to live.”
- e. “we find we cannot keep this priceless gift unless we give it away.”
- f. “Neither we nor anybody else can survive unless we carry the A.A. message.”
- g. “most individuals cannot recover unless there *is* a group.”
- h. “Realization dawns that we are but a small part of a great whole.”
- i. “no personal sacrifice is too great for preservation of the Fellowship.”

12 x 12 Tradition Workshop Traditions 1 – 2 - 3

- j. “We learn that the clamor of desires and ambitions within us must be silenced whenever these could damage the group.”

“It becomes plain that the group must survive or the individual will not.” (page 130)

“So, at the outset, how best to live and work together as groups became the prime question.”

How? The 12 Traditions.

Note: the following questions were originally published in the AA Grapevine in conjunction with a series on the Twelve Traditions that began in November 1969 and ran through September 1971. They were originally intended for individual use, but many AA groups use as Traditions inventory.

Tradition 1 Checklist:

1. Am I in my group as a healing, mending, integrating person or am I divisive? What about gossip and taking other members' inventory?
2. Am I a peacemaker? Or do I, with pious preludes such as “just for the sake of discussion”, plunge into argument?
3. Am I gentle with those who rub me the wrong way, or am I abrasive?
4. Do I make competitive AA remarks, such as comparing one group with another or contrasting AA in one place to AA in another?
5. Do I put down some AA activities as if I were superior for not participating in this or that aspect of AA?
6. Am I informed about AA as a whole? Do I support, in every way I can, AA as a whole, or just the parts I understand and approve of?
7. Am I as considerate of AA members as I want them to be of me?
8. Do I spout platitudes about love while indulging in and secretly justifying behavior that bristles with hostility?
9. Do I go to enough AA meetings or read enough AA literature to really keep in touch?
10. Do I share with AA all of me, the bad and the good, accepting as well as giving the help of fellowship?

Food for thought: How do/can you use this tradition in relationships, work place and society?

12 x 12 Tradition Workshop Traditions 1 – 2 - 3

Tradition 2:

“For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority-a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.”

“Where does A.A. get its direction?” “Who runs it?” (page 132, 1st paragraph)

What we don't have:

- a. “no president having authority to govern”
- b. “no treasurer who can compel the payment of any dues”
- c. “no board of directors who can cast an erring member into outer darkness”
- d. “no A.A. can give another a directive and enforce obedience”

Who has sole authority in A.A.?

“a loving God as He may express Himself in the group conscience.” (*the many voices of God or collective expression of God*)

Discuss example outlined by Bill with “John Doe” (page 132-134)

John Doe: **“He needs other alcoholics as much as they need him.”** (*We form: We need other alcoholics as much as they need us.*)

- a. Founder of a new group
- b. First boss
- c. Benign dictator
- d. Chairman of committee
- e. Self-appointed

Growing pains...the group conscience is about to take over.

Homegroup, rotating committee,

Elder Statesmen and Bleeding Deacons (page 135)

Elder Statesmen: is the one who sees the wisdom of the group's decision, who holds no resentment over his reduced status, who's judgement, fortified by considerable experience, is sound, and who is willing to sit quietly on the sidelines patiently awaiting developments.

- a. The real and permanent leadership of A.A.
- b. Theirs is the quiet opinion, the sure knowledge and humble example that resolve a crisis.
- c. When sorely perplexed, the group inevitably turns to them for advice.
- d. They become the voice of the group conscience, in fact, true voice of Alcoholics Anonymous.
- e. They do not drive by mandate, they lead by example.

Bleeding Deacon: is one who is just as surely convinced that the group cannot get along without him, who constantly connives for reelection to office, and who continues to be consumed with self-pity.

- a. A few hemorrhage so badly that – drained of all A.A. spirit and principle – they get drunk.

12 x 12 Tradition Workshop Traditions 1 – 2 - 3

Bill's own example (page 136-138)

"Don't you realize that you can never become a professional?"

"Sometimes good is the enemy of the best"

"So spoke the group conscience."

Food for thought: How do/can you use this in relationships, workplace and society?

Tradition 2 Questions:

1. Do I criticize or do I trust and support my group officers, AA committees, and office workers?
Newcomers? Old timers?
2. Am I absolutely trustworthy, even in secret, with AA Twelfth Step jobs or other AA responsibility?
3. Do I look for credit in my AA jobs? Praise for my AA ideas?
4. Do I have to save face in a group discussion, or can I yield in good spirit to the group conscience and work cheerfully along with it?
5. Although I have been sober a few years, am I still willing to serve my turn at AA chores?
6. In group discussions, do I sound off about matters on which I have no experience and little knowledge?

12 x 12 Tradition Workshop Traditions 1 – 2 - 3

Tradition 3:

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

“For A.A. is really saying to every serious drinker.” (page 139)

- a. You are a member if you say so
- b. You can declare yourself in; nobody can keep you out.
- c. No matter who you are, no matter how low you’ve gone, no matter how grave your emotional complications-even your crimes-we still can’t deny you A.A.
- d. We don’t want to keep you out.
- e. We aren’t a bit afraid you’ll harm us
- f. We just want to be sure that you get the same great chance for sobriety that we’ve had.
- g. So you are and A.A. member the minute you declare yourself.

“To establish this principle of membership took years of harrowing experience.”

Members and groups driven by fear:

- a. “every A.A. group had many membership rules.”
- b. “Everybody scared witless that something or somebody would capsize the boat and dump us all back into the drink.”
- c. “Our Foundation office asked each group to send in its list of ‘protective’ regulations.”
- d. “We were resolved to admit nobody to A.A. but...‘pure alcoholics.’”
- e. “Fear of what others thought”
- f. “we felt our lives and homes threatened.”
- g. “our reputation”

Intolerance: the true basis of intolerance is fear (page 140, paragraph 3) as Bill describes.

What ‘types’ did their rules keep out?” (page 140, 2nd paragraph)

- a. Beggars
- b. Tramps
- c. Asylum inmates
- d. Prisoners
- e. Queers
- f. Plain crackpots
- g. Fallen women

How did those fears prove ‘groundless’?

Experience – what did they experience?

- a. How could we know that thousands of these sometimes frightening people were to make astonishing recoveries.
- b. Become our greatest workers and intimate friends

12 x 12 Tradition Workshop Traditions 1 – 2 - 3

- c. Lower divorce rate far lower than average
- d. Those same troublesome people were to become our principle teachers of patience and tolerance
- e. A society which would include every conceivable kind of character, cut across every barrier of race, creed, politics and language with ease.”

What did experience teach them? (page 141, 3rd paragraph)

“At last experience taught us that to take away any alcoholic’s full chance was sometimes to pronounce his death sentence, and often condemn him to endless misery. Who dared to be judge, jury and executioner of his own sick brother?”

“The answer, now seen in Tradition Three, was simplicity itself.”

What happened?

“As group after group say these possibilities, they finally abandoned all membership regulations.” (page 141, 4th paragraph)

Bill provides us two examples: (pages 141-145) (I believe both examples are Jim Burwell, I could be wrong)

Jim Burwell

Reference material: Jim Burwell – A.A.’s Angry Atheist

Tradition 3 questions:

1. In my mind, do I prejudge some new AA members as losers?
2. Is there some kind of alcoholic whom I privately do not want in my group?
3. Do I set myself up as a judge or whether a newcomer is sincere or phony?
4. Do I let language, religion (or lack of it) race, education, age, or other such things interfere with my carrying the message?
5. Am I overimpressed by a celebrity? By doctor, a clergyman, an ex-convict? Or can I just treat this new member simply and naturally as one more sick human, like the rest of us?
6. When someone turns up at AA needing information or help (even if he can’t ask for it aloud), does it really matter to me what he does for a living? Where he lives? What his domestic arrangements are? Whether he had been to AA before? What his problems are?