

You're Sober - Now What? Living the Traditions in Relationships

QUESTIONS I ASK MYSELF ABOUT TRADITION ONE

Rena K., Punta Gorda, FL

Tradition One: *Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.*

For our purposes, Tradition One could read: *"In any relationship, whether it's for a reason, a season, or a lifetime, our **common welfare** must come first. Every healthy relationship depends on unity.*

In Tradition One I learned that it was my *attitude* which determined the *quality of my relationships*. I also learned that my attitude about life and relationships was formed as I grew up watching my parents and other important people in my life and incorporating what I perceived as "the truth". By the time I was 7 my beliefs and their concomitant character defects were set in stone.

Coming into A.A. my attitude was one of self-centered fear. I operated from a position of hostile defensiveness which influenced negatively every relationship I ever had.

Through the actions I took on a daily basis my attitude changed from ego-driven self-centeredness to one of *unity, love and tolerance*. The "we" became more important than the "you" or the "I". The first tradition became the *cornerstone* of the way I perceived life and relationships.

The solution was simple. The solution was spiritual.

Questions I Ask Myself

1. How do I define unity in a relationship?
2. Have I come to believe that sometimes I don't know how to have healthy relationships? Do I believe that I can learn this skill?
3. How's my tolerance? Am I willing to listen to the ideas, feelings, and opinions of others with an open mind?
4. Am I flexible? What does that mean?

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5. How healthy are my communication skills? Who taught me those skills?
Are they valid today?
6. How are my listening skills? Do I formulate my response while the other person is talking, or do i listen?
7. Am I able to express my thoughts and feelings in a non-confrontational, loving way?
8. Am I able to listen to another's thoughts and feelings without becoming defensive and argumentative?
9. Am I outgrowing my sensitivity? (Remember, our literature says it takes some of us a long time to overcome this aspect of our emotional immaturity!)
Or is it always about me, me, me? How can I change this thinking?
10. Am I outgrowing my need to be right? Or do I always need to win? How can I change this thinking?
11. Have I come to believe that I must act my way into good thinking; I can't think my way into good acting?
12. Do I promote harmony and unity in all my relationships, no matter how fleeting?
13. Do I pause when agitated or doubtful? Do I *recognize* agitation or doubt, or am I just uncomfortable because I want my way and am willing to go to any lengths to get it? How can I change this thinking?
14. Do I keep the spotlight on me when I'm upset, or do I focus on the faults of others and demand they change so I'll feel better? How can I change this thinking?
15. Am I still viewing myself as a "victim" of life? Do I blame others? Why?
What can I do to change this thinking?

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16. Am I still holding onto my "old ideas" of right and wrong in relationships (and everything else) based on the beliefs I was taught as a child? (Remember "*The Domestication of Children*" from The Four Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz? How can I change this thinking?
17. How can I bring the element of unity into my relationships?
18. Do I discuss *all* these issues with my sponsor or another trusted spiritual advisor? Two heads are always better than one!

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OTHER RESOURCES

There are lots of resources available out there. Our favorite turned out to be fair fighting

First, we made a copy of the fair fighting rules so each person would have that list and refer to it when "discussing" a problem. (Soon, we no longer needed the paper, we had internally incorporated the ground rules!)

Then, we discussed what each of the ground rules means to each of us so we're both on the same page in the discussion.

These are just some of the questions we ask ourselves about fair fighting.

Are we learning the ground rules for "fair fighting" and incorporating them into our relationships?

Do we:

- Remain calm throughout any discussion.
- Describe exactly what is bothering us - are we specific?
- Avoid clamming up; avoid the silent treatment. The #1 relationship killer - it destroys all possibilities of communicating.
- Deal with only one issue at a time?
- Leave the past in the past. Avoid bringing up past "issues"?
- Avoid accusations?
- Avoid generalizations.

These are just some of the ways we can change our old, ineffective patterns of interacting into new, goal-oriented, win-win relationships.

They are all based on the principle of the first tradition in relationships: the principle of unity.