

”Implicit throughout A.A. ’s Traditions is the confession that our fellowship has its sins. We confess that we have character defects as a society and that these defects threaten us continually” [Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age - Bill W (1), 96]

But the Twelve Traditions also point straight at many of our individual defects. By implication they ask each of us to lay aside pride and resentment. They ask for personal as well as group sacrifice.

Therefore each of our Twelve Traditions is really an expression of the deflation that each of us has to take, of the sacrifice that we shall all have to make in order to live and work together

AA’s Twelve Traditions are the measuring rods that we use. “How well are we sticking to the Twelve Traditions?” is the prime question of each Thanksgiving week.
Language of the heart “Respecting Money”

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

- **Defect:** Self-centeredness, prioritizing personal desires over the group’s welfare.
- **Sacrifice:** Placing the common welfare first. [The Language Of The Heart - Bill W.’s Grapevin.pdf: 163]

- **Life Applications (Self-Searching Questions):**

- **Presentation Focus: Family.**
 - **Family:** How can I prioritize the well-being of my family unit even when my individual desires differ? Do I consistently prioritize my recovery program attendance *and* my family’s needs, or do I sometimes use my recovery as an excuse to avoid family responsibilities?

 - **Work:** Am I truly willing to put in extra effort to help a colleague, even if it inconveniences me, or do I prioritize my own comfort and schedule?

 - **AA Service:** Do I contribute to my A.A. group beyond simply showing up, or do I hold back from service, rationalizing that I’m “too busy”? Am I willing to take on service positions that might be challenging or unglamorous, or do I only seek out roles that offer recognition or personal satisfaction?

 - **Spouse/Partner:** In our relationship, how can we ensure that our shared needs take precedence over individual wants?

 - **Community:** In what ways can I contribute to the betterment of my local AA group, recognizing that its strength supports my sobriety?

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

- **Defect:** Ego-driven leadership. Desire for personal authority.
- **Sacrifice:** Relinquishing the desire to control, accepting guidance and serving rather than governing. Submitting to a loving God as expressed in the group conscience.

- **Life Applications (Self-Searching Questions):**

- **Presentation Focus: AA Service.** Concept of service leadership within A.A.
 - **AA Service:** When serving in A.A., do I see myself as a leader who directs others, or as a servant who carries out the group's will?

 - **Family:** Do I insist on having the final say in family decisions, or am I truly open to hearing and valuing the perspectives of others?
 - **Work:** When working in a team, do I readily dismiss others' ideas, or do I recognize the potential for collective wisdom that surpasses my own?
 - **Spouse/Partner:** In making important life choices, do I prioritize my own desires, or do I genuinely seek a consensus that reflects our shared values and aspirations?
 - **Community:** Do I respect the decisions of community groups, even when they clash with my personal preferences, or do I stubbornly cling to my own opinions?

Tradition Three The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking

- **Defect:** Intolerance and judgment
- **Sacrifice:** Unconditional acceptance.
- **Life Applications (Self-Searching Questions):**
- **Presentation Focus: Community.** Encourages broader acceptance.
 - **Community:** How do I react internally to individuals whose beliefs, lifestyles, or appearances are different from my own - with judgment or with open-minded curiosity?
 - **Family:** Am I judging family members based on their struggles, or am I offering unconditional support for anyone seeking positive change?
 - **Work:** Do I harbor prejudices against colleagues based on their backgrounds or behaviors, or do I maintain a respectful and inclusive attitude?
 - **Spouse/Partner:** Do I focus on my partner's perceived flaws and shortcomings, or do I choose to embrace them fully, recognizing that nobody is perfect? Do I accept my partner fully, or do I focus on what I want them to change?
 - **AA Service:** Do I welcome newcomers with genuine warmth and acceptance, regardless of their background, appearance, or how "together" they seem, or do I harbor subtle biases?

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

- **Defect:** Rigidity and Lack of consideration for the broader fellowship.
- **Sacrifice:** Balancing individual group freedom with responsibility to the unity of AA

- **Life Applications (Self-Searching Questions):**
 - Presentation Highlight:
 - **Family:** While respecting individual family member's choices, how do we ensure decisions don't negatively impact the whole family?

 - **Work:**How does my team's autonomy align with the broader goals and ethical standards of the organization?
 - **Spouse/Partner:** Do I respect my partner's need for individual space and personal pursuits, or do I feel threatened by their independence?
 - **Community:** Do I recognize that different organizations may have valid, yet different, approaches to addressing shared concerns, or do I insist that my way is the only right way?
 - **AA Service:** Do I respect the autonomy of other A.A. groups, even if their practices differ from my home group's, or do I believe my group has the "correct" way of doing things?

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

- **Defect:** Rationalization and Dishonesty
- **Sacrifice: Committing to Twelfth Step Work: Relinquishing Personal Desires**
- **Presentation Focus: AA Service.** We sacrificed time, energy, and our own money to do this. We couldn't keep what we had unless we gave it away. Did we demand that our new prospects give us anything? Were we asking them for power over their lives, for fame for our good work, or for a cent of their money? No, we were not. We found that if we demanded any of these things our Twelfth Step work went flat..[The Language Of The Heart - Why Alcoholics Anonymous Is Anonymous January 1955
- **Life Applications (Self-Searching Questions):**
 - **Family:** Do I allow external pressures and distractions to prevent me from being fully present and supportive to my family, or do I prioritize quality time and connection?
 - **Work:** Am I easily sidetracked by unimportant tasks or gossip, or do I maintain a clear focus on my core responsibilities and goals?
 - **Spouse/Partner:** Do we allow the demands of daily life to overshadow our commitment to nurturing our relationship, or do we make a conscious effort to prioritize our connection?
 - **Community:** Are my community involvements truly aligned with my values and purpose, or am I spreading myself too thin, diluting my impact?
 - **AA Service:** Are our group activities primarily focused on carrying the message to the suffering alcoholic, or are we getting sidetracked by other, less essential matters?

Tradition Six 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

- **Defect:** Pride, Greed and self-centeredness
- **Sacrifice:** Dependencies and the appearances of fame or status. Endorsements, good or bad flow both ways.
- **Life Applications (Self-Searching Questions):**
- **Presentation Focus: Work:** Am I cautious about endorsing ventures external to my employer in ways that could detract from their reputation or create conflicts or future dependencies, or do I prioritize potential personal gain?
 - **Family:** Am I tempted to use family connections for personal financial gain in ways that could compromise our integrity, or do I prioritize ethical conduct above all else?
 - **Spouse/Partner:** Do we maintain a clear separation between our personal finances and external business ventures, or do we risk blurring the lines in a way that could create undue influence?
 - **Community:** Am I careful not to imply A.A.'s endorsement of community initiatives without explicit group consensus, or am I lax in maintaining appropriate boundaries?
 - **AA Service:** Does our group diligently avoid any actions that could be perceived as endorsing outside organizations or businesses, or are we sometimes careless in this regard?

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

- **Defect:** Self Pity, dependence and sloth. Dependence, an unwillingness to stand on one's own two feet.
- **Sacrifice:** Selfishness, Self-Pity, dishonesty and a reliance on things human.
- **Life Applications (Self-Searching Questions):**
- **Presentation Focus: AA Service.** Does our group consistently ensure its financial stability through member contributions, and meet all our obligations four-square or do we sometimes rely on just one person?

Family: Do I take full responsibility for my financial contributions to the household, or do I rely excessively on others?

Work: Does my team rely solely on its own resources and efforts, or does it seek external funding that might come with strings attached, compromising our autonomy?

Spouse/Partner: Do we maintain financial independence as a couple, or do we rely on outside financial assistance in a way that creates an imbalance of power or obligation?

Community: Does my volunteer organization rely primarily on the contributions of its members, or does it depend heavily on external funding, potentially influencing its direction?

Tradition Eight “Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.”

- **Defect:** Pride, Greed, Desire for Prestige, Self-importance, Control, Self-will, Materialism,
- **Sacrifice:** accepting A.A. needs paid staff for essential services. If choosing to work for AA it is not for direct face to face 12th step work.
- **Life Applications (Self-Searching Questions):**
- **Presentation Focus: Spouse/Partner:** Unpaid support and avoiding transactional dynamics Is our support for each other rooted in genuine love and partnership, or does it sometimes feel transactional, like a service being provided?
 - **Family:** Do I offer support and guidance to family members out of love and shared experience, or do I sometimes slip into a “professional” role, creating distance or expectation?
 - **Work:** While utilizing my professional skills, do I avoid exploiting personal connections for undue advantage, or am I tempted to blur the lines for personal gain?
 - **Community:** In my volunteer work, do I focus on serving others selflessly, or am I motivated by a desire for professional recognition or future opportunities?
 - **AA Service:** Is my Twelfth Step work driven purely by a desire to help others, without any expectation of personal reward or recognition, or do I secretly hope for some form of appreciation?

Tradition Nine A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

- **Defect:** ambition for status and control.
- **Sacrifice:** building a wall to protect the ego, distrust in spiritual principles, misunderstanding our primary purpose, fear of chaos or failure.
- **Life Applications (Self-Searching Questions)**
- **Presentation Focus: Work.** Do I lead by dictating orders and micromanaging? Do I empower my team members, trusting them to take ownership and contribute their unique talents?
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 - **Family:** How can we make decisions as a family in a way that respects individual input without creating a rigid hierarchy?
 - **Spouse/Partner:** How do we ensure our relationship is based on mutual service and respect, not one partner dominating the other?
 - **Community:** Does our group's structure empower the membership, or is it overly controlled by a few individuals?
 - **AA Service:** Are service committees I'm on truly responsive to the needs and guidance of the groups they serve? or do I sometimes slip into a mindset of authority?

Tradition Ten Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

- **Defect:** unreasoning prejudice, Self-Righteousness, Intolerance, Willfulness, Impatience, Opinionatedness and engagement in controversy.
- **Sacrifice:** Impulsivity and Compulsion, Willfulness, a Broader purpose, false external validation
Urge to Advocate: Harmful Disregard
- **Life Applications (Self-Searching Questions):**
- **Presentation Focus: Community.** Does our group stay on point and avoid taking stances on political or social issues in our meetings or communications?
 - **Family:** Do I avoid bringing divisive external issues into family discussions, knowing they could create unnecessary conflict, or do I feel compelled to express my opinions regardless of the consequences?
 - **Work:** Do I refrain from expressing strong personal opinions on controversial topics in the workplace, or do I risk alienating colleagues or being perceived as representing the company's views?
 - **Spouse/Partner:** Do we respect each other's differing views on external matters, even when we strongly disagree, or do we allow these differences to create division and resentment?
 - **AA Service:** Does our group consistently maintain neutrality on political, religious, and other outside issues, or do we sometimes stray into expressing opinions that could alienate potential members?

Tradition Eleven Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films

- **Defect:** Pride, Self-Seeking, Personal Ambition, attention seeking,
- **Sacrifice:** The Urge for Personal Recognition and Fame, assumption of Personal anonymity external identity.

- **Life Applications (Self-Searching Questions):**
- **Presentation Focus: Spouse/Partner:** Do we celebrate each other's achievements with genuine joy and support, or is there an undercurrent of competition or a need to outshine one another
How do we support each other's anonymity in recovery, especially in public settings?
 - **Family:** Do I perform acts of kindness and support for my family out of genuine love, or do I secretly crave praise and recognition for my efforts?
 - **Work:** Do I focus on the quality and impact of my work, or am I primarily driven by a desire for personal accolades and promotion?
 - **Community:** Do I volunteer my time and talents for the sake of the cause itself, or am I motivated by a desire for personal recognition or social status?
 - **AA Service:** Do I prioritize the message of A.A. over my own personal story or identity when speaking publicly about the program, or am I tempted to make it about myself?

Tradition Twelve Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities

- **Defect:** Pride and self-importance. self-centeredness, a need for external validation, personal power or
- **Sacrifice:** Conceit , Personal power, Grandiosity, Authority, Attention Embracing anonymity. Individual ambition,recognition
- **Life Applications (Self-Searching Questions):**
- **Presentation Focus: Work:** Do I focus on the collective success of the team, or am I primarily concerned with my own individual contributions and advancement?
 - **Family:** Do I prioritize the overall well-being and unity of the family, or do I allow my individual ego and desires to take precedence?
 - **Spouse/Partner:** In our relationship, are we placing our shared values and the health of our bond above individual pride or desires?
 - **Community:** Does our group operate based on principles of service and humility, rather than the influence of specific personalities?
 - **AA Service:** Subordinating personal aims to the common good and A.A. principles.?