

A Workshop Guide to The Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous

"As the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous are our recipe for individual recovery, the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous are our recipe for group unity."

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Table of Contents

Introduction..... 3

The A.A. Tradition..... 4

Tradition 1.....5

Tradition 2.....6

Tradition 3.....8

Tradition 4.....9

Tradition 5..... 10

Tradition 6..... 11

Tradition 7..... 12

Tradition 8..... 13

Tradition 9..... 14

Tradition 10..... 16

Tradition 11..... 17

Tradition 12..... 18

Appendix I - The Structure of AlcoholicsAnonymous..... 19

Appendix II - Group Service Representative (GSR)..... 20

Appendix III - A Facilitators Guide for Grievance Resolutions.....22

Appendix IV - Case Studies.....24

Appendix V - The Twelve Concepts of A.A.....29

Cited Literature.....30

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Introduction:**Alcoholics Anonymous (The Big Book, 4th Edition) p. xviii - xix**

The test that it faced was this: Could these large numbers of erstwhile erratic alcoholics successfully meet and work together? Would there be quarrels over membership, leadership, and money? Would there be strivings for power and prestige? Would there be schisms which would split A.A. apart? Soon A.A. was beset by these very problems on every side and in every group. But out of this frightening and at first disrupting experience the conviction grew that A.A. 's had to hang together or die separately. We had to unify our Fellowship or pass off the scene.

As we discovered the principles by which the individual alcoholic could live, so we had to evolve principles by which the A.A. groups and A.A. as a whole could survive and function effectively. It was thought that no alcoholic man or woman could be excluded from our Society; that our leaders might serve but never govern; that each group was to be autonomous and there was to be no professional class of therapy. There were to be no fees or dues; our expenses were to be met by our own voluntary contributions. There was to be the least possible organization, even in our service centers. Our public relations were to be based upon attraction rather than promotion. It was decided that all members ought to be anonymous at the level of press, radio, TV and films. And in no circumstances should we give endorsements, make alliances, or enter public controversies.

This was the substance of A.A. 's Twelve Traditions, which are stated in full on page 561 of this book. Though none of these principles had the force of rules or laws, they had become so widely accepted by 1950 that they were confirmed by our (AA) first International Conference held at Cleveland. Today the remarkable unity of A.A. is one of the greatest assets that our Society has.

Clarifying Questions and Answers:

Q: What test did we face? **A:** Could erstwhile erratic alcoholics (alcoholics) successfully meet and work together?

Q: What was the second question? **A:** Quarrels over membership, leadership, and money.

Q: What was the third question? **A:** Strivings for power and prestige.

Q: What was the fourth question? **A:** Schisms which would split A.A. apart.

Q: Were these concerns valid? **A:** Yes.

Q: What conviction came from this period? **A:** A.A. 's had to hang together or die separately.

Q: What did they realize they must do? **A:** Hang together or die separately.

Q: What did the principles, for which they were searching, produce? **A:** Unify our Fellowship.

Q: Where in this book do we find these lifesaving principles? **A:** p. 561 - 4th Ed. A.A.

Q: Did these prove to be laws? **A:** No.

Q: Did the Fellowship approve of them? **A:** Yes, in 1950 at the First International Conference.

Q: What is one of our greatest assets? **A:** Unity.

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THE A.A. TRADITION**Alcoholics Anonymous (The Big Book, 4th Edition) p. 561**

To those now in its fold, Alcoholics Anonymous has made the difference between misery and sobriety, and often the difference between life and death. A.A. can, of course, mean just as much to uncounted alcoholics not yet reached. Therefore, no society of men and women ever had a more urgent need for continuous effectiveness and permanent unity. We alcoholics see that we must work together and hang together; else most of us will finally die alone.

The "12 Traditions" of Alcoholics Anonymous are, we A.A. 's believe, the best answers that our experience has yet given to those ever-urgent questions, "How can A.A. best function?" and, "How can A.A. best stay whole and so survive?" On the next page, A.A. 's "12 Traditions" are seen in their so-called "short form," the form in general use today. This is a condensed version of the original "long form" A.A. Traditions as first printed in 1946. Because the "long form" is more explicit and of possible historic value, it is also reproduced.

Our A.A. experience has taught us that...(A.A. 2001:563)

Suggested Readings:**Twelve Steps Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous p. 129**

No A.A. can compel another to do anything; nobody can be punished or expelled. Our Twelve Steps to recovery are suggestions; the Twelve Traditions which guarantee A.A.'s unity contain not a single "Don't." They repeatedly say, "We ought.." but never "You must!"

Clarifying Questions and Answers:

Q: What does the Program of Alcoholics Anonymous mean to members of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous? **A:** The difference between misery and sobriety - between life and death.

Q: A.A. can, of course, mean what to whom? **A:** Much to uncounted alcoholics.

Q: Therefore, no society of men and women ever had a more urgent need for what? **A:** Continuous effectiveness and permanent unity.

Q: What do we recovered alcoholics see we must do and Why is that so? **A:** Work together and hang together; else most of us will finally die alone.

Q: The "12 Traditions" of Alcoholics Anonymous are what? **A:** Best answers that our experience has yet given to those ever-urgent questions,

Q: What are those two urgent questions? **A:** How can A.A. best function? How can A.A. best stay whole and so survive?

Q: What is the "short form" considered to be? **A:** The form in general use today.

Q: Why is the "long form" reproduced in the book, Alcoholics Anonymous? **A:** More explicit and of possible historic value.

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

Tradition One (Long Version): Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward. (A.A.12&12:189)

Suggested Readings:

AA, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 130

"...he finds he cannot keep this priceless gift unless he carries the A.A. message...the moment this Twelfth Step work forms a group, another discovery is made—that most individuals cannot recover unless there is a group. Realization dawns that he is but a small part of a great whole; that no personal sacrifice is too great for preservation of the Fellowship. He learns that the clamour of desires and ambitions within him must be silenced whenever these could damage the group. It becomes plain that the group survive or the individual will not."

Clarifying Questions and Answers:

Q: What is each member of Alcoholics Anonymous? **A:** A small part of a great whole.

Q: What must A.A. continue to do? **A:** Live or most of us will surely die.

Q: What must come first? **A:** Common welfare comes first.

Q: What follows? **A:** Individual welfare follows close afterward.

Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:

1. Do I refrain from talking about people behind their backs? Do I walk away when others begin to gossip?
2. Do I focus on my own program of recovery?
3. Am I patient and tolerant of those who offend me?
4. Do I encourage and support harmony within the group?
5. Do I withhold negative remarks about other groups or fellowships? Do I show others the same respect I want for myself?
6. When I attend meetings, do I participate by reading, sharing, and helping others?
7. Am I willing to share all aspects of my experience, strength, and hope at AA meetings?
8. Do I attempt to change my behavior when I notice it conflicts with the traditions?
9. Do I maintain a feeling of gratitude for being a recovering alcoholic?

Tradition Two (Short): 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.

Tradition Two (Long): For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. (A.A. 12&12:189)

Suggested Readings:

AA, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 135

Does AA have any real leadership?" Most emphatically the answer is "Yes, notwithstanding the apparent lack of it." Let's turn again to the deposed founder and his friends. What becomes of them? As their grief and anxiety wear away, a subtle change begins. Ultimately they divide into two classes known in AA slang as "elder statesmen" and "bleeding deacons." The elder statesman is the one who sees the wisdom of the group's decision, who holds no resentment over his reduced status, whose judgment, fortified by considerable experience, is sound, and who is willing to sit quietly on the sidelines patiently waiting developments. The bleeding deacon is one 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. Some hemorrhage so badly that—drained of all AA spirit and principle—they get drunk. At times the AA landscape seems to be littered with bleeding forms. Nearly every old-timer in our society has gone through this process in some degree. Happily, most of them survive and live to become elder statesmen. They become the real and permanent leadership of AA. Theirs is the quiet opinion, the sure knowledge and humble example that resolves a crisis. When sorely perplexed, the group inevitably turns to them for advice. They become the voice of the group conscience; in fact, these are the sure voice of Alcoholics Anonymous. They do not drive by mandate, they lead by example. Such is the experience which has led us to the conclusion that our group conscience, well-advised by its elders, will be in the long run wiser than any single leader.

AA, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 134

"...the group now has a so called rotating committee, very sharply limited in its authority. In no sense whatever can its members govern or direct the group. They are servants. Theirs is the sometimes thankless privilege of doing the group's chores...The committee gives no spiritual advice, judges no one's conduct, issues no orders. Every one of them may be promptly eliminated at the next election if they try this. And so they make the belated discovery that they are really servants, not senators. These are universal experiences. Thus throughout AA does the group conscience decree the terms upon which its leaders shall serve."

Clarifying Questions and Answers:

Q: For each group there is only one what? **A:** One ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.

Q: How may this ultimate authority express itself? **A:** In our group conscience.

Q: What are our leaders to be? **A:** Trusted Servants.

Q: What must our leaders not do? **A:** Govern.

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Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:

1. Do I trust the group process, including group conscience, sharing, decisions, voting, elections, etc.?
2. Do we practice rotating leadership, stepping out of office regardless if we believe others are not available, not willing and not qualified or do we remain frozen in office?
3. Am I willing to do AA service work?
4. Do I accept responsibility for my 12-step work and my AA commitments?
5. Do I ever perform service work anonymously?
6. Am I able to support a majority decision opposed to my own?
7. Do I feel the group conscience is informed?
8. Do I refrain from sounding off on subjects about which I know nothing?
9. Am I able to perform AA service work without seeking personal reward?

Tradition Three (Short): The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking Alcohol.

Tradition Three (Long): Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation. (A.A. 12&12:189)

Suggested Readings:

AA, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 141

"...that we would neither punish nor deprive any A.A. of membership, that we must never compel anyone to pay anything, believe anything, or conform to anything...The answer, now seen in Tradition Three, was simplicity itself. At last experience taught us that to take away any alcoholic's full chance was sometimes to pronounce his death sentence, and often to condemn him to endless misery. Who dared to be judge, jury, and executioner of his own sick brother?"

Clarifying Questions and Answers:

Q: Who should our membership include? **A:** All who suffer from alcoholism.

Q: Who may we refuse membership? **A:** None who wish to recover.

Q: What ought we not depend on? **A:** Money or conformity.

Q: How many members are required before there can be an A.A. group? **A:** Two or more who gather for sobriety.

Q: Provided they do not do what? **A:** No other affiliation.

Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:

1. Do I accept newcomers to Alcoholics Anonymous unconditionally?
2. Am I tolerant of a newcomer's inexperience at sharing?
3. Am I able to carry a AA message to any alcoholic despite race, religion, education, age, gender, sexual orientation, or social standing?
4. Am I able to welcome all newcomers alike, no matter their status or profession?
5. Do I understand that a newcomer's desire to be sober need not be sincere or honest?
6. Do I help make newcomers feel welcome by doing such things as
 - ... remembering their names and saying hello?
 - ... starting a conversation with them after the meeting?
 - ... giving them my telephone number?
 - ... offering them a ride to a meeting?
 - ... introducing them to other alcoholics?
 - ... inviting them out for coffee, etc., after the meeting?

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

Tradition Four (Long): With respect to its own affairs, each A.A. group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect A.A. as a whole without conferring with the Trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.

Suggested Readings:

The A.A. Group: Where It All Begins Pamphlet p.12

Each A.A. group to conduct its internal affairs as it wishes—it being merely requested to abstain from acts that might injure A.A. as a whole; and finally.

That any group of alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group provided that, as a group, they have no other purpose or affiliation.

Clarifying Questions and Answers:

Q: Who is each group responsible to so far as its business and practices are concerned? **A:** each A.A. group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience.

Q: If other groups might be affected, what should be done? **A:** when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted.

Q: No group nor any A.A. service entity should ever do what? **A:** Take any action that might greatly affect A.A. as a whole.

Q: Without first doing what? **A:** Conferring with the Trustees of the General Service Board

Q: What is paramount? **A:** Our common welfare.

Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:

1. When making autonomous decisions, does my group consider other AA groups and AA as a whole?
2. Do I make an effort to familiarize myself with other AA groups and open the lines of communication?
3. Do I understand that there are many ways to look at an issue? Do I understand that there are many ways of doing things?
4. Do I realize that to some non-members who know I am in the fellowship, my actions and behavior may represent Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole?

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Tradition Five (Short): Each Group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Tradition Five (Long): 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.

Suggested Readings:

AA, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 150

"Shoemaker, stick thy last!" ...better do one thing supremely well than many badly. That is the central theme of this tradition. Around it our Society gathers in unity. The very life our Fellowship requires the preservation of this principle.

Clarifying Questions and Answers:

Q: What should each group be? **A:** A spiritual entity.

Q: Having how many purposes? **A:** One primary purpose.

Q: What is that purpose? **A:** To carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:

1. Do I believe I have something to offer another alcoholic?
2. Am I willing to explain firmly to a newcomer the limitations of AA help? Do I help my group in every way possible to fulfill its primary purpose?
3. Am I mindful that AA old-timers can also be alcoholics who still suffer? Do I try to help them as well as learn from them? Am I willing to do 12-step work regardless of what is in it for me?
4. Do I share my knowledge of AA tools with others?
5. Do I make certain to carry the AA message and not just my own opinion?

Tradition Six (Short): 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.

Tradition Six (Long): Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to A.A. should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. An A.A. group, as such, should never go into business. Secondary aids to A.A., 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 A.A. name. Their management should be the sole responsibility of those people who financially support them. For clubs, A.A. managers are usually preferred. But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside A.A. —and medically supervised. While an A.A. group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied. An A.A. group can bind itself to no one.

Clarifying Questions and Answers:

Q: What will divert us from our primary spiritual aim? **A:** Problems of money, property and prestige.

Q: What do we think should be done with property of considerable value? **A:** Separately incorporated and managed.

Q: What is being divided by doing so? **A:** The material from the spiritual.

Q: What should a A.A. group never do? **A:** Go into business.

Q: What would be secondary aids? **A:** Clubs and hospitals.

Q: How should secondary aids be organized? **A:** Incorporated and so set apart.

Q: What distinct advantage does this offer? **A:** Can be freely discarded by the groups.

Q: What should such facilities not do? **A:** Use the A.A. name.

Q: Who should manage such facilities? **A:** Management should be the sole responsibility of those people who financially support them.

Q: Who will make a good manager for a A.A. club? **A:** A.A. managers are usually preferred.

Q: What about various health facilities? **A:** Be well outside A.A. —and medically supervised.

Q: While a A.A. group may do what? **A:** Cooperate with anyone.

Q: Such cooperation ought never go so far as what? **A:** Affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied.

Q: Who can a A.A. group bind itself to? **A:** No one.

Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:

1. Do I understand that doing anything that does not fulfill our primary purpose may harm the group?
2. Am I aware that non-AA fundraising functions/activities divert us from our primary purpose?
3. Am I aware that endorsing or financing a clubhouse or related facility may imply affiliation and can harm AA as a whole?
4. Am I aware that lending the AA name to any outside business or enterprise can take the focus off Alcoholics Anonymous?

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Tradition Seven (Short): Every A.A. group ought to be self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

Tradition Seven (Long): The A.A. groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members. We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics (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 carrying any obligation whatever, is unwise. Then too, we view with much concern those A.A. treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated A.A. purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.

Clarifying Questions and Answers:

Q: Who should fully support a A.A. group? **A:** The Group's own members.

Q: By what kinds of contributions? **A:** Voluntary.

Q: Do we think this should take a long time? **A:** Soon not later.

Q: How about asking the general public for contributions? **A:** Highly dangerous.

Q: How about large gifts or obligatory contributions? **A:** Unwise.

Q: What about keeping funds in excess of the prudent reserve? Comment: An informed Group conscience (Tradition Two) determines what the prudent reserve should be. **A:** Much concern.

Q: Of what has experience forewarned us? **A:** Can destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.

Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:

1. Do I contribute all I can to help maintain the group's ability to support itself?
2. Have I ever put extra money into the basket because I knew a newcomer could not contribute?
3. Do I take an interest in the treasurer's report?
4. Do I realize that service work for the group helps AA remain self-supporting?

Tradition Eight (Short): A.A. as such, should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centres may employ special workers.

Tradition Eight (Long): Alcoholics (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 have to engage nonalcoholics. Such special services may be well recompensed. But our usual A.A. "12 Step" work is never to be paid for.

Suggested Readings:

AA, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 166

Alcoholics Anonymous will never have a professional class. We have gained some understanding of the ancient words "Freely ye have received, freely give." We have discovered that at the point of professionalism, money and spirituality do not mix. Almost no recovery from alcoholism has ever been brought about by the world's best professionals, whether medical or religious. We do not decry professionalism in other fields, but we accept the sober fact that it does not work for us. Every time we have tried to professionalize our Twelfth Step, the result has been exactly the same: Our single purpose has been defeated (Tradition Five). Alcoholics simply will not listen to a paid twelfth-stepper...The money motive compromises him and everything he says and does for this prospect.

Clarifying Questions and Answers:

Q: How should Alcoholics Anonymous forever remain? **A:** Non-professional.

Q: How do we define professionalism? **A:** The occupation of counseling alcoholics for fees or hire.

Q: Where may we employ alcoholics? **A:** Those services for which we might otherwise have to engage nonalcoholics.

Q: How should such services be compensated? **A:** Well recompensed.

Q: What is never to be paid for? **A:** Twelve Step work.

Q: What does not mix? **A:** Money and spirituality.

Q: What happens when we try to professionalize our Twelve Step Work? **A:** Our single purpose has been defeated (Tradition Five).

Q: What will alcoholics not listen to? **A:** A paid twelfth-stepper.

Q: What does the money motive do? **A:** Compromises everything we say and do for this prospect.

Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:

1. Do I remember when I share that I am not an expert on recovery, alcoholism, medicine, sociology, psychology, relationships, or God?
2. Am I aware of the differences between AA step work and that which is done by professional counsellors, doctors, and clergy?

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

Tradition Nine (Long): Each A.A. group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best. The small group may elect its secretary, the large group its rotating committee, and the groups of a large metropolitan area their central or intergroup committee, which often employs a full-time secretary. The trustees of the General Service Board are, in effect, our A.A. General Service Committee. They are the custodians of our A.A. Tradition and the receivers of voluntary A.A. contributions by which we maintain our A.A. General Service Office at New York. They are authorized by the groups to handle our over-all public relations and they guarantee the integrity of our principal newspaper, the A.A. Grapevine. All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of service, for true leaders in A.A. are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority from their titles; they do not govern. Universal respect is the key to their usefulness.

Suggested Readings:

AA, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 173

You might think A.A.'s headquarters in New York would be an exception. Surely, the people there would have to have some authority. But long ago, trustees and staff members alike found they could do no more than make suggestions, and very mild ones at that. They even had to coin a couple of sentences which still go into half the letters they write: "Of course, you are at perfect liberty to handle this matter any way you please.

AA, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 174

It is clear now that we ought never to name boards to govern us, but it is equally clear that we shall always need to authorize workers to serve us. It is the difference between the spirit of vested authority and the spirit of service, two concepts which are sometimes poles apart. It is in the spirit of service that we elect the A.A. group's informal rotating committee, the intergroup association for the area, and the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous for A.A. as a whole.

Clarifying Questions and Answers:

Q: What is it A.A. needs very little of? **A:** Least possible organization.

Q: What kind of leadership is best? **A:** Rotating leadership.

Q: A small group may elect a what? **A:** Secretary.

Q: A large group may need what? **A:** A rotating committee.

Q: Large cities may find it desirable to have what? **A:** A District or Area Service Committee.

Q: What would be required for the central committee? **A:** Suggested 10 or more groups.

Q: The trustees of the A.A. are what? **A:** AA General Service Committee.

Q: Of what are they custodians? **A:** Our 12 Traditions.

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Q: What do they receive? **A:** Voluntary contributions from Groups, Districts, and Areas.

Q: What do our contributions maintain? **A:** General Service Office at New York

Q: What have the groups authorized them to do? **A:** Handle our over-all public relations.

Q: They guarantee the integrity of what? **A:** The integrity of our newsletter, the AA Grapevine.

Q: All representatives are to be guided by what? **A:** The spirit of service.

Q: Our true leaders are what? **A:** Trusted and experienced servants.

Q: They derive no what? **A:** Real authority.

Q: What do they not do? **A:** Govern.

Q: Universal respect is what? **A:** The key to their usefulness.

Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:

1. Am I willing to give up control of my AA group and those around me?
2. Do I exercise patience and humility when performing service work in AA?
3. When performing service work, do I view the people I serve as individual members of AA?
4. Am I aware of the importance of the spirit of rotation?
5. Am I able to end my term of service and exit gracefully?

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

Tradition Ten (Long): No A.A. group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate A.A., express any opinion on outside controversial issues—particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever.

Suggested Readings:

AA, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 178

"The Washingtonian Society, a movement among alcoholics which started in Baltimore a century ago, almost discovered the answer to alcoholism. At first, the society was composed entirely of alcoholics trying to help one another. The early members foresaw that they should dedicate themselves to this sole aim...Their membership passed the hundred thousand mark... Instead, the Washingtonians permitted politicians and reformers, both alcoholic and nonalcoholic, to use the society for their own purposes...Soon, Washingtonian speakers violently and publicly took sides on this question...it didn't have a chance from the moment it determined to reform America's drinking habits. When the Washingtonians became temperance crusaders, within a very few years they had completely lost their effectiveness in helping alcoholics. The lesson to be learned from the Washingtonians was not overlooked by Alcoholics Anonymous. As we surveyed the wreck of that movement, early A.A. members resolved to keep our Society out of public controversy."

Clarifying Questions and Answers:

Q: What should no A.A. Group or individual member do? **A:** No opinion on outside issues.

Q: This applies particularly to what? **A:** Controversial issues—particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion.

Q: Who does A.A. oppose? **A:** No one.

Q: Aside from our Program of Recovery, our Traditions and our Concepts, on what may we express our views? **A:** None.

Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:

1. Am I ever mindful that Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues, especially when I share my personal experiences concerning treatment centers, churches, hospitals, jails, and my opinions about such topics as alcohol, drugs, politics, religion, etc.?
2. Do I understand that if Alcoholics Anonymous expressed any opinions on outside issues, it could create exclusion and controversy?
3. Do I make every effort not to breach this tradition, even in the slightest way?
4. Do I continually remind myself that I cannot control anyone's thinking or beliefs, especially other alcoholics, spouses, etc.?
5. At the group level, do I refrain from expressing my opinions on outside issues?

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Tradition Eleven (Short): Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, television and films. (What about the Internet?)

Tradition Eleven (Long): Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. We think A.A. ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as A.A. members ought not be broadcast, filmed, or publicly printed. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never a need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.

Suggested Readings:

AA, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 183

This, in brief, is the process by which A.A.'s Tradition Eleven was constructed. To us, however, it represents far more than a sound public relations policy. It is more than a denial of self-seeking. This Tradition is a constant and practical reminder that personal ambition has no place in A.A. In it, each member becomes an active guardian of our Fellowship.

Clarifying Questions:

Q: How should our relations with the general public be characterized? **A:** Personal anonymity.

Q: What should A.A. avoid? **A:** Sensational advertising.

Q: As A.A. members, how should our names and pictures be treated? **A:** Not broadcasted, filmed or publicly printed.

Q: What principle should guide our public relations? **A:** Attraction rather than promotion.

Q: What do we never need to do? **A:** Praise ourselves.

Q: If we don't, who will? **A:** We let our friends recommend us.

Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:

1. Are the qualities of my sobriety and recovery program attractive to other alcoholics?
2. Do I understand the importance of personal anonymity when dealing with the media? social media?

Tradition Twelve (Short): Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Tradition Twelve (Long): And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.

Suggested Readings:

AA, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 184

THE spiritual substance of anonymity is sacrifice. Because A.A.'s Twelve Traditions repeatedly ask us to give up personal desires for the common good, we realize that the sacrificial spirit—well symbolized by anonymity—is the foundation of them all. It is A.A.'s proved willingness to make these sacrifices that gives people their high confidence in our future.

AA, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 187

The promoter instinct in us might be our undoing. If even one publicly got drunk, or was lured into using A.A.'s name for his own purposes, the damage might be irreparable. At this altitude (press, radio, films, and television), anonymity—100 percent anonymity—was the only possible answer. Here, principles would have to come before personalities, without exception. These experiences taught us that anonymity is real humility at work. It is an all-pervading spiritual quality which today keynotes A.A. life everywhere. Moved by the spirit of anonymity, we try to give up our natural desires for personal distinction as A.A. members both among fellow alcoholics and before the general public. As we lay aside these very human aspirations, we believe that each of us takes part in the weaving of a protective mantle which covers our whole Society and under which we may grow and work in unity. We are sure that humility, expressed by anonymity, is the greatest safeguard that Alcoholics Anonymous can ever have.

Clarifying Questions:

Q: Members of A.A. believe what? **A:** Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions.

Q: It reminds us to do what? **A:** Place principles before personalities.

Q: What are we to practice? **A:** Genuine humility.

Q: That what may never spoil us? **A:** Our great blessings.

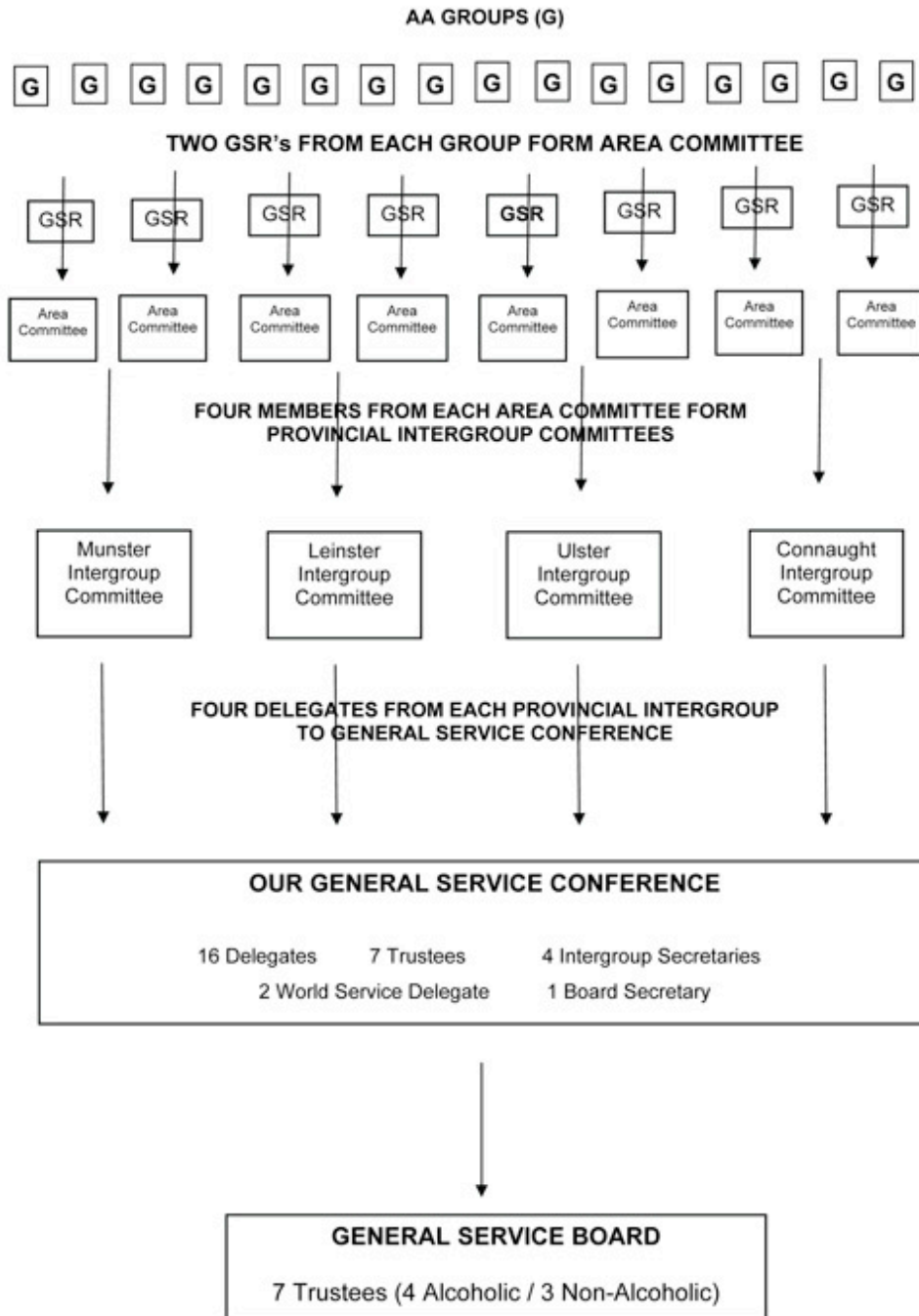
Q: That we shall forever do what? **A:** Live in thankful contemplation.

Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:

1. Do I anonymously help others and perform service work seeking no recognition?
2. Do I respect the anonymity of an alcoholic who shares a confidence with me?
3. Do I refrain from complaining about other members' negative behavior?
4. When it will help another alcoholic, am I willing to share that I am a member of Alcoholics Anonymous?
5. Do I refrain from fanatically promoting AA?

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**Appendix I - The Structure of Alcoholics Anonymous
STRUCTURE OF THE FELLOWSHIP**



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Appendix II - Group Service Representative (GSR)

General services

At district meetings, you join with G.S.R.s from other groups. Perhaps you've already worked with an intergroup or central office, where groups band together to help alcoholics just in your locality. But your general service district is the second link in an entirely different chain, which extends much farther. Your district is one part of a general service area. With your fellow G.S.R.s, you elect a district committee member, and all the D.C.M.s make up the area committee. Now, do you just sit back and let your D.C.M. take it from there? No! G.S.R.s stay very much in action in each of the 93 areas in the U.S. and Canada.

You attend area assemblies four times a year (in most areas). At the electoral assembly (held every two years), along with the other G.S.R.s and the D.C.M.s from the whole area, you elect committee officers—and your area's Conference delegate.

Just as you rely on your group for help in your personal recovery, so the A.A. groups of Canada and the U.S. rely on the General Service Conference in maintaining the unity and strength of our Fellowship—our obligation to all the alcoholics of today and tomorrow. It's up to you to keep two-way communication going between your group and the Conference. Via your D.C.M. and your delegate, you can see to it that your group's conscience on matters of importance to all A.A. becomes a part of the consensus when these matters are discussed at the annual Conference meeting in April. In return, you can enable your group to benefit from the meeting's sharing of experience among area delegates and the other Conference members. Your D.C.M. may want to present your delegate's report at a special group meeting. The D.C.M. receives a copy of the Final Conference Report, a full account of proceedings. Copies of the Report are available to groups upon request.

As G.S.R., you are "group contact" in the original sense, too. Upon your election, your name and address are sent (by you or your group secretary) to the secretary of your area committee, or your district or area registrar and to G.S.O. (Be sure to include, as well, the name of the G.S.R. you are replacing, so the records won't be confused.) You will be listed as contact for your group in the next printing of the appropriate A.A. Directory.

In return, G.S.O. sends you the G.S.R. Kit (see the section below for some of its contents), and the bimonthly bulletin Box 4-5-9. You use these—and share them with the other members of your group. Are some pamphlets marked "new" on the Literature Order Form? You check the literature rack to make sure your group is offering all the sobriety tools available. Does Box 4-5-9 carry news of a future International Convention? You spread the happy word.

Because you've made a special point of studying the information listed below, you can help when your group faces a problem involving one of the Traditions. You don't have to know all the answers—no one member possibly could—but you learn where to look for good suggestions, drawn from broad A.A. experience.

Thinking of Tradition Seven particularly, you work with the group treasurer to remind your group of its part in keeping all of A.A. self-supporting. You explain the importance of financial support of your intergroup/central office, G.S.O., district and area committee, and the Birthday Plan for individual contributions.

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Since you're in touch with A.A. throughout your area, you can bring to your group the news of upcoming local conventions. As G.S.R., you share with your fellow members the joy of widening A.A. horizons.

The makings of a good G.S.R.

Two or three years' sobriety is generally the required minimum. Active membership in a home group—yours—is also important, and your G.S.R. should hold no other offices in any group.

Prior A.A. service experience provides a long head start for a G.S.R.'s success. Consider former group officers and members who have shouldered responsibility at your intergroup or central office or on special committees.

Does your group include people who already have a keen interest in the Twelve Traditions and the service structure? If so, you're in luck!

Look for the same character qualities that mark a good trusted servant of any sort (and a good A.A.): patience, understanding, and a firm determination "to place principles before personalities."

Most future Conference delegates will come from the ranks of today's G.S.R.s. So your choice now can help to insure good representation for your whole area in years to come and continuing vitality for our General Service Conference—the heart of our co-founders' Third Legacy to all of A.A.

Appendix III A Facilitators Guide for Grievance Resolutions Suggested Group Business Meeting Format

Open with a prayer (Serenity Prayer).

Read the 12 Traditions, followed by: “Traditions are to the group what the steps are to the individual”.

Read: "Therefore, no society of men and women ever had a more urgent need for continuous effectiveness and permanent unity. We alcoholics see that we must work together and hang together, else most of us will finally die alone. The '12 Traditions' of Alcoholics Anonymous are, we A.A.'s believe, the best answers that our experience has yet given to those ever-urgent questions, 'How can A.A. best function?' and, 'How can A.A. best stay whole and so survive?'"

Read Tradition One: (Short Form) Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity. (Long Form) Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.

Set Parameters for Initial Discussion:

Read Tradition Twelve: (Long Version) "We of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.

- State the problem or conflict that has arisen
- Ask what steps have been taken so far to solve the problem on a group level. If this is a continuation of a previously tabled discussion, then the minutes of the last meeting ought to be read.
- Open the discussion by allowing members to voice their perspective on the matter.

Remember the Facilitator's role is to:

- Ask clarifying questions
- Reiterate the Twelve Traditions
- Facilitate resolutions from the group — Not to dictate answers
- Listen for finger-pointing, blame, accusations
- Listen for answers and resolutions

After the initial discussion, ask the group:

- To what length are the group members willing to cooperate and come to a consensus on a solution?
- Implement the solution OR table discussion until the next business meeting.

Close with a prayer (Serenity Prayer).

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Appendix IV Case Studies

Case Study One:

An agnostic group, based on group conscience, rewrites Steps 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 11 of A.A. into their own version?

2. Came to accept and to understand that we needed strengths beyond our awareness and resources to restore us to sanity. [Was: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.]

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of the A.A. program. [Was: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.]

5. Admitted to ourselves without reservation, and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs. [Was: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.]

6. Were ready to accept help in letting go of all our defects of character. [Was: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.]

7. Humbly sought to have our shortcomings removed. [Was: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.]

11. Sought through mindful inquiry and meditation to improve our spiritual awareness, seeking only for knowledge of our rightful path in life and the power to carry that out. [Was: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.]

Clarifying Questions:

1. Can this group still be identified as part of A.A.? If Yes: Explain Why?

2. Does this group's action affect other groups? If Yes: Should the group be expelled — no longer endorsed by A.A. at the Area Level and removed from the A.A. meeting list?

2. How might the Traditions be used to resolve this schism — both within the group and at the Area Level?

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Case Study Two:

A Group is using non-conference approved literature in their meeting.

Clarifying Questions:

1. *Is it OK for a group to use non-conference approved literature in meetings?*
2. *Does non-conference approved literature imply Conference disapproval? If yes? Would that imply that A.A. has an opinion on outside issues?*
3. *Does the group's use of Non-Conference approved literature at their meetings affect A.A. as a whole? If Yes, How is our common welfare impacted by the use of these materials at A.A. meetings and events?*

Case Study Three:

A member continuously disrupts group meetings with loud abusive and bullying behaviour towards fellow members and newcomers. Membership in the group continues to decline. New people coming to the meeting for the first time often do not return.

Suggested Readings:**AA, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 143-144**

The elders led Ed aside. They said firmly, “You can’t talk like this around here. You’ll have to quit it or get out.” With great sarcasm Ed came back at them. “Now do tell! Is that so?” He reached over to a bookshelf and took up a sheaf of papers. On top of them lay the foreword to the book “Alcoholics Anonymous,” then under preparation. He read aloud, “The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.” Relentlessly, Ed went on, “When you guys wrote that sentence, did you mean it, or didn’t you?” Dismayed, the elders looked at one another, for they knew he had them cold. So Ed stayed.

The Twelve Traditions Illustrated

Our brother the noisy drunk affords the simplest illustration of this Tradition (One). If he insists on disrupting the meeting, we "invite" him to leave, and we bring him back when he's in better shape to hear the message. We are putting the "common welfare" first. But it is his welfare, too; if he's ever going to get sober, the group must go on functioning, ready for him.

Clarifying Questions:

1. *Can a member be thrown out of a group for disrupted, abusive behaviour?*
2. *How might the group deal with a member whose conduct is threatening the common welfare of the group?*

Case Study Four:

Does the Activity of Fundraising Conflicts with Tradition Seven?

Discussion Points:

Fundraising conflicts with the expressed and adopted definition of the phrase "fully self-supporting" from Tradition Seven, which states, "all expenses are to be liquidated by individual contributions". Our founders wished to be very clear. Fundraising activity interferes with our faith that a God of our understanding will direct and provide for our fellowship if we follow traditions. Practicing tradition is our path to a higher power and true unity.

Fundraising activities divert time, resources, intention and focus of individuals and groups from our primary purpose as stated in Tradition Five. Extraordinary time and energy are put into making events "successful" rather than purposeful.

When fundraising generates monies, controversy results concerning "money, property or prestige". The traditions are unequivocal about the danger to unity of these subjects. Prudent reserves may become inflated and committees dependent upon fundraising events are pressured to raise more funds for bigger and better events. This further leads us away from the spiritual focus of our fellowship and our primary purpose as stated in Tradition Five.

Fundraising activities in meetings changes the atmosphere in meetings so necessary to our primary purpose of carrying the message to the newcomer. Intimidating, enthusiastic or manipulative sales behaviors are not supportive of our relationship to the newcomer. Inaccurate impressions of our program and purpose are made to newcomers and non-alcoholic visitors. Some members of our fellowship will only attend some meetings if they can promote fundraising events, a significant diversion from our primary purpose.

Fundraising diminishes individual member's and group's abilities to effect change or voice discontent with any committee by the practice of withholding funds from the "basket" or donations from the group. Committees are often substantially financed by fundraising allowing them to ignore any diminished funding from the "basket". This principle created by our tradition's founders is inherent in the 7th Tradition and is a right granted to individual members.

Fundraising promotes governance rather than service, a clear contradiction expressed in the Tradition Two. Committees may decide on activities supported by fundraising which may have no relation to the collective group conscience. Majority democratic votes are used by committees often to rationalize this behavior. Democratic votes while useful are not to be confused with, nor are they the equivalent of, the spiritual concept of conscience of the fellowship. Governance of this sort is also justified by the notion that what we are doing is "good" or "necessary", are euphemisms for "the ends justify the means", hardly the most spiritual concept. Governance is organizational self will and blocks the effect of "a loving God as he may express himself in or group conscience", central to the 2nd Tradition.

Fundraising permits the receipt of outside contributions to the funding of our fellowship, precisely prohibited by our 7th Tradition. There is no way to establish membership at the time of sale of goods or services and some activities such as raffles, lotteries, auctions of donated merchandise and resale of outside event tickets skirt legalities and does associate our fellowship with outside enterprises.

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Fundraising encourages our membership to miss the underlying spiritual experiences inherent in the phrase "fully self-supporting". Simplicity, faith, generosity and responsibility are for many, necessary experiences required to have changed lives, becoming fully contributing members to our fellowship and to society as a whole.

Various fundraising activities encourage our membership to continue the self-centered behavior of "giving only if there is something in it for me". This does not contain the underlying spiritual principles of generosity, faith, selflessness and "giving freely of what we have found," inherent in the principle of self-support of Tradition Seven.

Social events once designed to promote recovery, fellowship and a sense of belonging, all worthy contributions of fellowship to the goal of unity, have changed from activities designed to celebrate the freedom of recovery to events with the primary purpose of fundraising. This often excludes members from fellowship activities who see fundraising activity contrary to many of the traditions.

For obvious practical requirements and to ensure fullest participation in fellowship events, entire fellowship support is required. This support is simply measured by the willingness of individual member contributions to fund a particular service. No financial support for a particular event or service is one indication of the expression of our collective group conscience. Funding from the fellowship donations helps to avoid the creation of committee events that a particular local area may not be large enough to support or indeed even desire. Funding of events by fundraising thought to be "good" are not a substitute for informed group conscience, the spiritual essence of Tradition Two and our collective path to a higher power.

Fundraising activities conducted in the group setting change our group to a "business" activity rather than a "spiritual entity". Our founders of the traditions cautioned in the creation of Tradition Five that business and spirituality should not be mixed, that discussions of money should be kept to a minimum, that we embrace the notion of corporate poverty and that we be ever vigilante in matters of money. Beware. They are seldom as emphatic as when discussing the subject of money and the 12 step fellowship.

Does your Group's Fundraising efforts taking your fellowship in a different direction? Tell us about your experiences with Fundraising.

Appendix V THE TWELVE CONCEPTS of A.A.

1. The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.
2. The A.A. Groups delegate to the World Service Conference the complete authority for the active maintenance of our world services and thereby make the Conference — excepting for any change in the Twelve Traditions — the actual voice and the effective conscience for our whole Fellowship.
3. As a traditional means of creating and maintaining a clearly defined working relation between the Groups, the Conference, the World Service Board of Trustees and its service corporation, staffs, and committees, and of thus insuring their effective leadership, it is here suggested that we endow each of these elements of World Service with a traditional "Right of Decision."
4. Throughout our Conference structure, we ought to maintain at all responsible levels a traditional "Right of Participation", taking care that each classification or group of our world servants shall be allowed a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.
5. Throughout our World Service structure, a traditional "Right of Appeal" ought to prevail, thus assuring us that minority opinion will be heard and that petitions for the redress of personal grievances will be carefully considered.
6. On behalf of A.A. as a whole, our World Service Conference has the principal responsibility for the maintenance of our world services, and it traditionally has the final decision respecting large matters of general policy and finance. But the Conference also recognizes that the chief initiative and the active responsibility in most of these matters should be exercised primarily by the Trustee members of the Conference when they act among themselves as the World Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.
7. The Conference recognizes that the Charter and the Bylaws of the World Service Board are legal instruments; that the Trustees are thereby fully empowered to manage and conduct all of the world service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is further understood that the Conference Charter itself is not a legal document; that it relies instead upon the force of tradition and the power of the A.A. purse for its final effectiveness.
8. The Trustees of the World Service Board act in two primary capacities: (a) With respect to the larger matters of overall policy and finance, they are the principal planners and administrators. They and their primary committees directly manage these affairs. (b) But with respect to our separately incorporated and constantly active services, the relation of the Trustees is mainly that of custodial oversight which they exercise through their ability to elect all Directors of these entities.
9. Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them are at all levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety.

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10. Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority — the scope of such authority to be always well defined whether by tradition, by resolution, by specific job description or by appropriate charters and bylaws.
11. While the Trustees hold final responsibility for A.A.'s world service administration, they should always have the assistance of the best possible standing committees and service boards, staffs and consultants. Therefore the composition of these underlying committees and service boards, the personal qualifications of their members, the manner of their induction into service, the system of their rotation, the way in which they are related to each other, the special rights and duties of our staffs and consultants, together with a proper basis for the financial compensation of these special workers will always be matters for serious care and concern.
12. General Warranties of the Conference: In all its proceedings, the World Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the A.A. Tradition, taking great care that the Conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that the sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.

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