

Traditions Checklist

These 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. While they were originally intended primarily for individual use, many AA groups have since used them as a basis for wider discussion.

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Practice These Principles . . .

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

- Am I in my group a healing, mending, integrating person, or am I divisive? What about gossip and taking other member's inventories?
- Am I a peacemaker? Or do I, with pious preludes such as "just for the sake of discussion," plunge into argument?
- Am I gentle with those who rub me the wrong way, or am I abrasive?
- Do I make competitive AA remarks, such as comparing one group with another or contrasting AA in one place with AA in another?
- Do I put down some AA activities as if I were superior for not participating in this or that aspect of AA?
- 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?
- Am I as considerate of AA members as I want them to be of me?
- Do I spout platitudes about love while indulging in and secretly justifying behavior that bristles with hostility?
- Do I go to enough AA meetings or read enough AA literature to really keep in touch?
- Do I share with AA all of me, the bad and the good, accepting as well as giving the help of the fellowship?

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.*

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

Tradition Three: *The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.*

- In my mind, do I prejudge some new AA members as losers?
- Is there some kind of alcoholic whom I privately do not want in my AA group?
- Do I set myself up as a judge of whether a newcomer is sincere or phony?
- Do I let language, religion (or lack of it), race, education, age, or other such things interfere with my carrying the message?
- Am I over impressed by a celebrity? By a doctor, a clergyman, and ex-convict? Or can I just treat this new member simply and naturally as one more sick human, like the rest of us?
- 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 other problems are?

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

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

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

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

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

- Should my fellow group members and I go out and raise money to endow several AA beds in our local hospital?
- Is it good for a group to lease a small building?
- Are all the officers and members of our local club for AAs familiar with "Guidelines on Clubs" (which is available free from GSO)?
- Should the secretary of our group serve on the mayor's advisory committee on alcoholism?
- Some alcoholics will stay around AA only if we have a TV and card room. If this is what is required to carry the message to them, should we have these facilities?

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

- Honestly now, do I do all I can to help AA (my group, my central office, my GSO) remain self-supporting? Could I put a little more into the basket on behalf of the new guy who can't afford it yet? How generous was I when tanked in a barroom?
- Should the Grapevine sell advertising space to book publishers and drug companies, so it could make a big profit and become a bigger magazine, in full color, at a cheaper price per copy?
- If GSO runs short of funds some year, wouldn't it be okay to let the government subsidize AA groups in hospitals and prisons?
- Is it more important to get a big AA collection from a few people, or a smaller collection in which more members participate?
- Is a group treasurer's report unimportant AA business? How does the treasurer feel about it?
- How important in my recovery is the feeling of self-respect, rather than the feeling of being always under obligation for charity received?

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

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

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

- Do I still try to boss things in AA?
- Do I resist formal aspects of AA because I fear them as authoritative?
- Am I mature enough to understand and use all elements of the AA program – even if no one makes me do so – with a sense of personal responsibility?
- Do I exercise patience and humility in any AA job I take?
- Am I aware of all those to whom I am responsible in any AA job?
- Why doesn't every AA group need a constitution and bylaws?
- Have I learned to step out of an AA job gracefully – and profit thereby – when the time comes?
- What has rotation to do with anonymity? With humility?

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

- Do I ever give the impression that there really is an "AA opinion" on Antabuse? Tranquilizers? Doctors? Psychiatrists? Churches? Hospitals? Jails? Alcohol? The federal government? Legalizing marijuana? Vitamins? Al-Anon? Alateen?
- Can I honestly share my own personal experience concerning any of those without giving the impression I am stating the "AA opinion"?
- What in AA history gave rise to our Tenth Tradition?
- Have I had a similar experience in my own AA life?
- What would AA be without this Tradition? Where would I be?
- Do I breach this or any of its supporting Traditions in subtle, perhaps unconscious, ways?
- How can I manifest the spirit of this Tradition in my personal life outside AA? Inside AA?

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.*

- Do I sometimes promote AA so fanatically that I make it seem unattractive?
- Am I always careful to keep the confidences reposed in me as an AA member?
- Am I careful about throwing AA names around – even within the Fellowship?
- Am I ashamed of being a recovered, or recovering, alcoholic?
- What would AA be like if we were not guided by the ideas in Tradition Eleven? Where would I be?
- Is my sobriety attractive enough that a sick drunk would want such a quality for himself?

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

- Why is it a good idea for me to place the common welfare of all AA members before individual welfare? What would happen to me if AA as a whole disappeared?
- When I do not trust AA's current servants, who do I wish had the authority to straighten them out?
- In my opinions of and remarks about other AAs, am I implying membership requirements other than a desire to stay sober?
- Do I ever try to get a certain AA group to conform to my standards, not its own?
- Have I a personal responsibility in helping an AA group fulfill its primary purpose? What is my part?
- Does my personal behavior reflect the Sixth Tradition – or belie it?
- Do I do all I can to support AA financially? When is the last time I anonymously gave away a Grapevine subscription?
- Do I complain about certain AAs' behavior – especially if they are paid to work for AA? Who made me so smart?
- Do I fulfill all AA responsibilities in such a way as to please privately even my own conscience? Really?
- Do my utterances always reflect the Tenth Tradition, or do I give AA critics real ammunition?
- Should I keep my AA membership a secret, or reveal it in private conversation when that may help another alcoholic (and therefore me)? Is my brand of AA so attractive that other drunks want it?
- What is the real importance of me among more than a million AAs?

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