

Growing into Service



I am responsible....

**when anyone, anywhere,
reaches out for help,
I want the hand of A.A.
always to be there.**

**And for that: I am
responsible.**



The symbol of A.A. is three-sided: ***Recovery, Unity, and Service.***

With Unity we are given Recovery; as Recovery develops we give ourselves in Service, creating deeper Unity and creating for ourselves deeper Recovery. The corners are forever turned, the road is always before us as we need to be continually furthering our progress into sobriety. Along this route we have all benefited from the love, compassion, and understanding incorporated in this three-sided symbol. Let us all, therefore, give these away in service to others in order that we ourselves may continue to grow, and the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous will remain forever steadfast.

Alcoholics Anonymous is more than a set of principles; it is a Fellowship of alcoholics in action. Service is at the centre of every A.A. concept and activity. It is as fundamental to A.A. as abstinence is to sobriety. Without this giving of oneself to another, there would be no Fellowship. This desire to serve improves recovery.

As newcomers, we see people giving time, energy and love in the service of the Fellowship, and it is suggested that we too should become involved. Those of us who have done this will tell you of the enormous benefits we have received by willingly stepping into service. A great paradox of A.A. is that rewards come when we begin to forget ourselves.

WHAT ARE THESE REWARDS?

Simple service tasks have helped to develop confidence, a belief in one's own value and opinions, self-respect and self-worth. We have all found that participating in service activities has helped our recovery.

Everyone in A.A. has some contribution to make. There are so many ways of practising our Twelfth Step. Some are talented in hospital or prison work, others can write to loners or answer telephones and some have abilities which lie in committee activities or sponsorship. But service is not just for a small number of experienced people. Each one of us has been surprised at the abilities which have emerged with a willingness to grow in service.

HOW DO WE BECOME INVOLVED?

A.A.'s Twelfth Step "Carrying the Message" is the basic service that our Fellowship gives; it is our principal aim, and the main reason for our existence. We must carry A.A.'s message otherwise we ourselves may fall into decay and those who have not been given the truth may die.

Carrying A.A.'s message is therefore the heart of our Third Legacy of Service. Any action which helps A.A. to function as a whole is service. Where better to begin than in our own home Group?

IN THE GROUP.

It is as a result of Twelfth Step work that a Group is formed and we discover that we are a small part of a great whole. Regular attendance at our Group meeting is in itself a form of service. Group meetings are necessary for maintaining sobriety. Love and effort is needed to keep the Group growing and maintained.

For some of us it is not always possible to do individual Twelfth Step work but for all of us regularly attending meetings, it is possible to serve within the Group by helping to set up the meeting rooms; we can arrive early and help to:

- put out ashtrays;
- put up the slogan signs;
- display the A.A. literature;
- arrange the chairs;
- greet members, especially new ones, as they arrive
- help maintain the tradition of self-support;
- make the tea or coffee; and
- after the meeting, help wash up and clear up.

The last two give a great service to everyone yet give us as individuals so much in return, for we all know the shared experiences gained during "washing up therapy" when shyness seems to evaporate. Perhaps here we feel our first sense of purpose and belonging.

SERVICE TO NEWCOMERS AT GROUP MEETINGS.

A warm smile of greeting can make newcomers feel welcome. A cup of coffee or tea also releases tension. Giving your name and sharing your experiences on the spot can make them feel they are in the right place. Giving your telephone number, and taking theirs in order to call them, may not seem like service but where would we all be today if someone had not done this for us?

These little efforts on our part are sure steps into responsibility, reliability, and confidence. They are also steps into loving, the sort of loving that makes no demands, asks for no rewards, and fulfils our sense of purpose.

As we grow in sobriety, we may be asked to become a Group officer, described in our Twelve Traditions as a trusted servant. Each Group needs to have certain jobs done in order to function smoothly and responsibly.

The Secretary ensures the smooth running
The Treasurer takes care of the Group finances
Literature Secretary obtains the books and pamphlets needed by the Group

Guideline No. 2, "Group Officers", sets out very fully the work to be done. Our Traditions remind us to be open-minded and that we are but trusted servants, we do not govern.

We may hear of Public Information and Co-operation with the Professional Community (PICPC). This consists of members who ensure that the public is informed about the work we do, and how and when we are available to give them our message. These members are from a collection of Groups working closely in Intergroups.

Some of us who have tried to serve in these ways will tell you how anxious and nervous we have felt to begin with. Others of us were brimming over with over-confidence, aggression and arrogance.

Service helps us to change, and these feelings are soon dispelled. We develop an even greater feeling of belonging and move still further in to loving and caring. The depth of our sobriety is strengthened with each task we do with willingness. Our sense of purpose is further developed.

A STEP FURTHER.

Another service we may be asked to carry out is that of GSR. The mere name itself, Group Service Representative, describes the activity. It means:

Regular attendance at the Group you are serving

Going to Intergroup assemblies

Having a good knowledge of Group opinions, experiences and decision

Having an ability to share these with neighbouring GSRs at Intergroup assemblies

Being willing to share the experience of others with the Home Group.

This service is also described in a fuller way in Guideline No. 3 "Service Representatives". It brings benefits and an added breadth to a "society of alcoholics in action". You will see a broader spectrum of the A.A. Fellowship, meeting members from many different Groups, thus giving a wider circle of A.A. friendship. Here, too, there will be a further step into responsibility, reliability, confidence and humility. There will be growth into deeper love and understanding, a greater strengthening of sobriety, and more opportunities to carry A.A.'s message to the still suffering alcoholic.

SERVICE WITHIN THE INTERGROUP.

Prison sponsorship

Twelfth stepping in hospitals

Talks to schools, the professions, and outside agencies

Telephone service

Arranging public meetings

Arranging mini-conventions

In most of these activities the responsibility will be shared, creating a deeper bond between groups of members all trying to carry A.A.'s message. Those members who do this work in isolation do not receive the same benefits as those who carry out tasks with one another. Sharing in every activity is the way the Fellowship of A.A. works best. The more we share our experience, strength and hope with each other, the more we will be able to maintain and deepen our sobriety.

STILL MORE WAYS TO SERVE.

By this time we are usually comfortable in our service activities. The growth into responsibility, reliability and confidence is well under way. However, there is still more to be carried out by the willing member. There will be:

Regional representatives;

Regional officers; and

Delegates to Conference.

These are similar services carried out in the same ways as previously talked about regarding the Group and Intergroup. They are discussed in Guideline No. 5.

Benefits

There is an ever-increasing feeling of security within the Fellowship and the sense of belonging is deepened and broadened. We enjoy the fellowship of members from faraway places, whom we might not otherwise meet if we denied ourselves the privilege of service. All of this should improve the quality of our sobriety.

THE LONER.

Here let us not neglect the member who, because of distance and geography, cannot participate in a local Group. These members can give service by writing to other loners, by writing articles for "Share" or "Roundabout", sharing with us their experiences and growth into sobriety.

They can keep the General Service Office informed of their whereabouts so that travelling members may have a contact in that area. They may also provide a Public Information service in their particular location. Through service, loners can deepen their sense of belonging to the Fellowship.

THE HOUSEBOUND MEMBER.

Housebound members can be of valuable service to the Fellowship by telephone contact, and by writing letters and articles to "Roundabout" and "Share". They can maintain contact with the local Group, Intergroup or Region.

THE OLDER MEMBER.

At some stage in sobriety, many members may be labelled "the older member". Let us hope it happens to us all. Here we may find service in A.A. is seemingly being taken over by those much younger in sobriety. This is how it should be; our Traditions have always supported the idea of rotation in our service activities, but we may be feeling passed over or even isolated.

We have all had these feelings from time to time, and the older member, continuing in his or her practice of the Twelve Steps, will surely recognise this. Such a member will take on a measure of quiet solidity by standing aside yet remaining steadfast to his or her Group and sharing experience when asked. Here another role can be assumed, that of Twelfth Stepping and sponsoring newer members in the varying forms of service. This can be of the utmost help in their own, and another's, growth in recovery.



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