

**THE TWELVE
TRADITIONS
OF
ALCOHOLICS
ANONYMOUS**

WORKSHOP PACK 2004

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS

Suggested Literature

A.A. Tradition, How it Developed

Traditions Long Form

Traditions Illustrated

12 Steps and 12 Traditions

A.A. Comes of Age

Encourage Groups to Display the Traditions Scrolls

Traditions Checklist

Concepts Checklist

Traditions Scrolls

Traditions Long Form

Perhaps it is Time for a Display of the 12 Concepts for G.B.

AA'S 12 TRADITIONS - A TRADITIONS INVENTORY

Selected Suggestions.

1. Do I try to understand AA as a whole, or just the bits to which I am attracted, or, of which I approve?
2. Do I “babble on” about gratitude but behave, a lot of the time, like a skin-flint or a spiritual “bovver-boy”?
3. Do I really play a part in giving an informed group conscience a chance to operate or does it just seem like too much hassle?
4. Do I usually push my “good” ideas forgetting that the good is often the enemy of the best?
5. Am I careful to avoid giving the impression that there is an “AA Opinion” on pills, alcohol, doctors etc?
6. Where could the AA be (where would I be) without any given tradition?
7. Do I, at times, promote AA so fanatically that it becomes unattractive, or even abhorrent, to newcomers?
8. Am I prepared to go to any length (his/hers, not mine) to help the newcomer?
9. If I do get an opportunity to serve (and they abound at present) do I expect thanks, or praise, or do I simply do my best and accept it with gratitude as a means of enhancing my sobriety?
10. Do I try to understand and comment constructively on the work of our trusted servants?
11. Do I take the view that the 12 Traditions “are for Groups” so I don’t need to bother with them?
12. What is the real significance or importance of me among 30,000 (or 1 million) alcoholics?

SUGGESTED TRADITION TOPICS FOR A GROUP DISCUSSION OR A WORKSHOP

1. Is individualism lost in conformity?

(Tradition 1)

Freedom and Licence

2. The Informed Group Conscience – Foundation stone of A.A?

(Tradition 2)

3. What is an A.A. Group? What is a meeting?

(Traditions 6, 7 and 8)

Pamphlet “The Group” and What is A.A?

4. What Price Sobriety? Money, materialism and spirituality.

(Traditions 6, 7 and 8)

Endorsement and professionalism. The “Two Hat” Problem.

5. A benign anarchy with a light behind a bushel?

(Traditions 9, 10 and 11)

Structure, spirituality, discipline and external relationships.

6. Anonymity – Namelessness or sacrifice?

(Tradition 12)

Love and service – the spiritual foundation of all AA Traditions.

7. The Twelve Traditions – A personal experience.



Reprinted from GRAPEVINE 1971

Practice These Principles...

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

1. Am I in my group a healing, mending, integrating person, or am I divisive? What about gossip and taking other members' inventories?
2. Am I a peacemaker? Or do I, with pious preludes such as "just for the sake of discussion," plunge into arguments?
3. Am I gentle with those who rub me the wrong way, or am I abrasive?
4. Do I make competitive A.A. remarks, such as comparing one group with another or contrasting A.A. in one place with A.A. in another?
5. Do I put down some A.A. activities as if I was superior for not participating in this or that aspect of A.A.?
6. Am I informed about A.A. as a whole? Do I support, in every way I can A.A. as a whole or just the parts I understand and approve of?
7. Am I as considerate of A.A. members as I want them to be of me?
8. Do I spout platitudes about love while indulging in and secretly justifying behaviour that bristles with hostility?
9. Do I go to enough A.A. meetings or read enough A.A. literature to really jeep in touch?
10. Do I share with A.A. all of me, the bad and the good, accepting as well as giving the help of the fellowship?

Traditions Checklist reprinted from the November 1969 Grapevine

Practice These Principles...

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.*

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

Traditions Checklist reprinted from the December 1969 Grapevine

Practice These Principles...

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

1. In my mind, do I prejudge some new A.A. members as losers?
2. Is there some kind of alcoholic whom I privately do not want in my A.A. group?
3. Do I set myself up as a judge of whether a newcomer is sincere or phoney?
4. Do I let language, religion (or lack of it), race, education, age, or other such things interfere with my carrying the message?
5. Am I overimpressed by a celebrity? By a doctor, a clergyman, an ex-convict? Or can I just treat this new member simply and naturally as one more sick human, like the rest of us?
6. When someone turns up at A.A. 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 A.A. before? What his other problems are?

Traditions Checklist reprinted from the January 1970 Grapevine

Practice These Principles...

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

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

Traditions Checklist reprinted from the April 1970 Grapevine

Practice These Principles...

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

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

Traditions Checklist reprinted from the June 1970 Grapevine

Practice These Principles...

Tradition Six: *An A.A. group ought to 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.*

1. Should my fellow group members and I raise money to endow several A.A. beds in our local hospital?
2. Is it good for a group to lease a small building?
3. Are all the officers and members of our local club for A.A’s familiar with “Guidelines on Clubs” (which is available free from G.S.O.)?
4. Should the secretary of our group serve of the mayor’s advisory committee on alcoholism?
5. Some alcoholics will stay around A.A. only if we have a TV and card room. If this what is required to carry the message to them, shouldn’t we have these facilities?

Traditions Checklist reprinted from the August 1970 Grapevine

Practice These Principles...

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

1. Honestly now, how do I do all I can to help A.A. (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 bar-room?
2. 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 colour, at a cheaper price per copy?
3. If G.S.O. runs short of funds some year, wouldn't it be okay to let the government subsidise A.A. groups in hospitals and prisons?
4. Is it more important to get a big A.A. collection from a few people, or a smaller collection in which more members participate?
5. Is a group treasurer's report unimportant A.A. business? How does the treasurer feel about it?
6. How important in my recovery is the feeling of self-respect, rather than the feeling of always being under obligation for charity received?

Traditions Checklist reprinted from the October 1970 Grapevine

Practice These Principles...

Tradition Eight: *Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centres may employ special workers.*

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

Traditions Checklist reprinted from the December 1970 Grapevine

Practice These Principles...

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

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

Traditions Checklist reprinted from the February 1971 Grapevine

Practice These Principles...

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

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

Traditions Checklist reprinted from the May 1971 Grapevine

Practice These Principles...

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.*

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

Traditions Checklist reprinted from the July 1971 Grapevine

Practice These Principles...

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

1. Why is it a good idea for me to place the common welfare of all A.A. members before individual welfare? What would happen to me if A.A. as a whole disappeared?
2. When I do not trust A.A.’s current servants, who do I wish had the authority to straighten them out?
3. In my opinions of and remarks about other A.As, am I implying membership requirements other than a desire to stay sober?
4. Do I ever try to get a certain A.A. group to conform to *my* standards, not its own?
5. Have I a personal responsibility in helping an A.A. group fulfil its primary purpose? What is *my* part?
6. Does my personal behaviour reflect the Sixth Tradition – or belie it?
7. Do I do all I can to support A.A. financially? When is the last time I anonymously gave away a Grapevine subscription?
8. Do I complain about certain A.As behaviour – especially if they are paid to work for A.A.? Who made *me* so smart?
9. Do I fulfil all A.A. responsibilities in such a way as to please privately even my own conscience? Really?
10. Do my utterances always reflect the Tenth Tradition, or do I give A.A. critics real ammunition?
11. Should I keep my A.A. membership a secret, or reveal it in private conversation when that may help another alcoholic (and therefore me)? Is my brand of A.A. so attractive that other drunks want it?
12. What is the real importance on me among 500,000 A.As?

Traditions Checklist reprinted from the September 1971 Grapevine

ABUSED TRADITIONS.

The traditions of A.A. are under attack from inside itself. A.A. members keep trying to “use” the Traditions to serve personal needs. They have lost sight of the fact that the Traditions are 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?”

A.A. is not being threatened so much by those who would ignore the Traditions; rather it is being threatened by those who claim that the Traditions are being violated by almost every attempt to provide needed A.A. services. The situation is becoming like Aesop’s fable of the boy who cried wolf once too often. We may soon reach the point where the charge of breaking of a Tradition will be ignored by everyone.

There are people in A.A. who are sober, but who have no understanding at all of how A.A. works. They are fearful that anything that disturbs the precarious balance of their “program” could throw them into a tailspin. When something threatens to change their A.A. world, they feel that someone is down in the basement tampering with the foundation of their sobriety. Their reaction is strong. It is emotional, and is not reasoned out. The Traditions represent stability to them and they instinctively turn to them when a disturbing new circumstance presents itself.

As a result the Traditions are expected to protect people from their fear of change and to justify their intolerance. They are being invoked by people who attempt to use them to “prove” that they are right in arguments about other issues. They are being distorted and trivialised.

Among the many strange types found in A.A. are the ones nicknamed the “Traditions Lawyers”. The Lawyers practice the belief that the spiritually superior was to interpret a Tradition is with the exercise of excessive scrupulosity. For them the Traditions have become rigid and sacred rules to be followed to the letter of the law, which of course is their own interpretation. They would tie A.A. up in a straight-jacket of mindless ritual. They seek “power” by giving the impression that the Traditions actually have a legal status. It is as though they expected the “Traditions Police” to appear and arrest the offenders and banish them from A.A. forever.

The most interference to the working of our service structure is caused by the persistent confusion about our Traditions affecting money and anonymity. It is very difficult to provide A.A. service with no money and no people. A.A. members seem to be paranoid about money; the suspicion that someone will be dishonest is always just under the surface, and is used to excuse our not being generous. The positive spiritual value of our anonymity is replaced by the negative of fear. Secrecy, which is selfish, shields people from having to make any contact with people outside of A.A. to provide service. This avoids the effort of trying to carry our message to alcoholics who still suffer, or to co-operate with any agency that could help.

Some examples of the misuse of Traditions:

- ❑ A.A. members refuse to volunteer for institutional meetings claiming that the anonymity traditions would be broken.
- ❑ Attempts to set up answering service lists are hampered by false claims of violations. There are many members who are ignorant of the meaning of anonymity, while others are just looking for a cop-out.
- ❑ Attempts to publish information about A.A. meetings in local papers are falsely claimed to be in violation of the anonymity traditions.
- ❑ Many oppose the donation of free literature to institutional groups, prison libraries and jail meetings. It is mistakenly claimed that this is a violation of our Seventh Tradition.
- ❑ The refusal to sign attendance at A.A. meetings, to “help our group follow traditions 6 and 11.”
- ❑ A delegate claims that an Intergroup that was selling non-conference approved literature (in addition to A.A. literature) was in violation of the Fifth Tradition.
- ❑ If you think that these examples are bad. Wait until the furore over “on-line” computer meetings reaches full volume

Those of us in A.A. service need to explain that the Traditions are the result of our experience, and are not “Twelve Commandments” brought down from on high by Bill. They are not intended to stop service, but to show us the proper ways to perform A.A.’s needed services to provide growth and stability for the future.