

TAKETHETHE 12

Resources for All Three-LegAAcies

take12.org



12 Traditions Study

HOW THIS STUDY & WEBSITE CAME TO BE

I created this step study and website originally for my sponsees to use as I was teaching them how to take the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous (*so they could teach others to take them – effectively to “make new sponsors”*). Being a web designer, I thought it might be a quick and easy way for them to access the work we were doing. After several years of having the site up, I started paying attention to the site’s analytics and noticed it was being used by a whole bunch more people than that. After realizing that people all over the world were using it (*as far away as China*),

This study is only one drunk’s experience with A.A.’s Three Legacies (Steps, Traditions and Concepts). It is by no means the definitive answer to them, just one man’s experience that has kept him sober (*happy, joyous and free*) since 11/17/87. If you are reading this, you likely are looking for a deeper, richer, experience of our Three Legacies and I hope you find it here.

DISCLAIMER

This study contains references from various sources (*primarily A.A. conference approved literature*) but is NOT affiliated with Alcoholics Anonymous in any way. The information shared in this study was compiled through one A.A. member’s experience from all of the sources they’ve used to learn how to practice the 12 Traditions of A.A. Many thanks to every source that helped this member recover from a “seemingly hopeless state of mind and body.”

To contact the author/creator, email takingthe12@gmail.com

Rick W.

“When We Break Any Tradition 2-12, We Automatically Break Tradition 1 At The Same Time“



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

Overriding Idea of This Tradition:
“We Before Me”

Tradition 1

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Spiritual Principle of the Tradition:
UNITY

Reading Assignment:
12&12: Pgs. 129-131

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.”

TRADITION SUMMARY: Unity begins with an individual. Having unity within oneself and with one’s Higher Power is vital to expressing unity in any other relationship. When one is following the guidance and will of a Higher Power, inner balance is achieved and then the ability to participate in a healthy relationship is greatly improved. Thus the relationship’s unity is best serviced by each individual’s unity with a Higher Power.

The Twelve Steps produce recovery and enable us to match calamity with serenity without taking the first drink. Recovery is the restoration of our relationship with God through sobriety. Our happiness, though, is incomplete unless we expand our loving relationship with God to our relationships with each other.

The Traditions show us how to love each other. The principles of the group apply to the individual. Through working the principles of the traditions we carry out the steps in the world. We live in the solution, not the problem. We are united with each other in love. When we love, we want to serve. The concepts of service then show us how to love each other through being of service to the world. Hence, A.A. has the three-word motto, “Recovery-Unity-Service”, based on the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of Service.

Since the bottom has risen in A.A. there has been a need to go beyond recovery into learning how to get and maintain relationships. We must apply the First Tradition in all areas our life (A.A., Work, Home, etc.) so our sobriety isn’t threatened. If we do not place our common welfare first, we could easily stay a loner and eventually drink out of loneliness.

STEP-TRADITION PARALLEL: Each tradition answers the question raised by the parallel step. The connection between the First Step and the First Tradition is that I am powerless over alcohol and have an unmanageable life, so I am dependent upon uniting myself with A.A. for my personal recovery. The Step states the problem and the Tradition states the solution. What do I do about my powerlessness and unmanageability? I join A.A. and place our common welfare first, since my personal recovery depends upon doing this.

(Excerpts from the text above come from the Traditions Study developed by the Unity Insures Recovery Through Service A.A. Group, Los Angeles, CA.)

INVENTORY: Below is a snapshot inventory you can take to see how well you are honoring the spiritual principle found in this Tradition (in and out of the rooms of A.A.). *(The foundation of this inventory is from the A.A. Tradition’s Checklist first published in the A.A. Grapevine)*

1. In my life, am I a healing, mending, integrating person, or am I divisive?
2. Do I gossip under the guise of “helping”?
3. Am I a peacemaker? Or do I, with pious preludes such as “just for the sake of discussion,” plunge into argument?
4. Am I gentle with those who rub me the wrong way, or am I abrasive?
5. Am I as considerate of those around me as I want them to be of me?
6. Do I spout platitudes about love while indulging in and secretly justifying behavior that bristles with hostility?
7. Do I share all of me, the bad and the good, accepting the help of those who care about me?
8. How important is open-mindedness in a relationship?
9. Are you more of a “giver” or a “taker” in your relationships?
10. Do you have a balance in your relationships avoiding extremes?
11. Do you use silence as a refuge or punishment while expecting others to read your mind?
12. Can you be flexible in matters of what you want in a situation?
13. Can you accept others as they are?
14. How healthy are your current relationships?
15. What action can you take to change your feelings about something or someone?
16. In your current relationships what can you do personally to promote more unity?



“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.”

Overriding Idea of This Tradition:
“God Speaks Through His Kids”

Tradition 2

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Spiritual Principle of the Tradition:
IDENTIFICATION

Reading Assignment:
12&12: Pgs. 132-138

Long Form: “For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.”

TRADITION SUMMARY: In a relationship based upon the Traditions there is no such thing as individual authority. All decisions are arrived at by a majority agreement, reached after all elements of the problem or situation have been considered and a Higher Power has been contacted for guidance in the making of the decisions (an informed group conscience). Unfortunately, however, many times our relationships are unhealthy due to the dominance of one person or the other. The uninformed often times feels he/she has the ability to “know best” for its individual participants and tries to impose this attitude of “playing God” in the relationship.

All my life I feared authority. I had a very strange idea about it. I didn't like anybody else's authority. I only liked my own authority. Maybe it is not so strange if you're a sick alcoholic like me. But I certainly did not have any respectful attitude for authority. My first successful experience in not being fearful of authority was in A.A.. I did not fear my sponsor but relied on him. I saw my sponsor as the expression of a loving God. My second experience in not being fearful was when I started listening to the group conscience. The more I followed what I heard in A.A. through the group conscience, the better my life became. Gradually I have extended this trust in the group in A.A. to that of the world. Tradition 2 encourages me to listen in order to have good relationships with you and to trust you as part of the group conscience. God may, just may, be speaking through you.

Life forces me to become an elder statesman or a bleeding deacon. The group conscience will correct me if I am out of line and I have a choice to complain like a bleeding deacon or lead by humble example like an elder statesman. THANK GOD A.A. is SELF-CLEANING (with God's help of course).

STEP-TRADITION PARALLEL: Each tradition answers the question raised by the parallel step. The second step raises the question of how I can come to believe and what is sanity. I came to believe by trusting the group conscience in A.A., and then I began to trust God and eventually the world. The experience of trusting A.A. to keep me sober is the experience that gave me confidence in God and in you. This is how the second tradition helped me to come to believe.

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INVENTORY: Below is a snapshot inventory you can take to see how well you are honoring the spiritual principle found in this Tradition (in and out of the rooms of A.A.). *(The foundation of this inventory is from the A.A. Tradition's Checklist first published in the A.A. Grapevine)*

1. Do I criticize or do I trust and support my group officers, AA committees, and office workers? Newcomers? Long-timers?
2. Am I absolutely trustworthy, even in secret, with AA Twelfth Step jobs or other AA responsibility?
3. Do I look for credit in my AA jobs? Praise for my AA ideas?
4. 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?
5. Although I have been sober a few years, am I still willing to serve my turn at AA chores?
6. In group discussions, do I sound off about matters on which I have no experience and little knowledge?
7. Why is it necessary that a healthy relationship be one in which the members are equals?
8. How do you feel and react when someone tries to or dominates in your relationships?
9. Do you have an inherent tendency to dominate people around you? How can you correct his defect of character?
10. Are you someone who is always willing to allow someone else to take control and then complains because you don't like what was done, yet were unable to make a decision yourself?
11. What is the difference between suggestions, advice, and guidance?
12. Is God or a Higher Power the only authority in your relationships? How does this Higher Power express Himself to you when making any decisions?
13. Why is it necessary to give the minority opinion an open-minded evaluation in a group conscience?
14. Why is humility a necessary ingredient in applying Tradition II to your relationships?



“The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.”

Overriding Idea of This Tradition:
“Desire Is All You Need”

Tradition 3

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Spiritual Principle of the Tradition:
MEMBERSHIP

Reading Assignment:
12&12: Pgs. 139-145

Long Form: “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.”

TRADITION SUMMARY: Simplicity and perspective are the words that describe the third tradition. I work the third tradition in a personal way by eliminating all my desires in life other than pursuing sobriety.

There is nothing wrong in wanting emotional and financial security. However, when I make obsessions of these goals rather than seeing them as the by-products of giving service in working a program whose goal is to pursue sobriety – I’m screwed.

Whenever I complicate my life by having any goal other than pursuing sobriety, I notice that I become ungrateful and take it for granted. Thus, the beauty of the third tradition is that it restores perspective through an attitude of gratefulness for the miracle of my sobriety. The third tradition suggests to me that that I surrender all of the requirements and expectations I have in life beyond sobriety. Emotional and financial successes are the result of being of service. But when these are things that I demand in my relationships with God and others, then I have lost the simplicity and perspective envisioned in the third tradition.

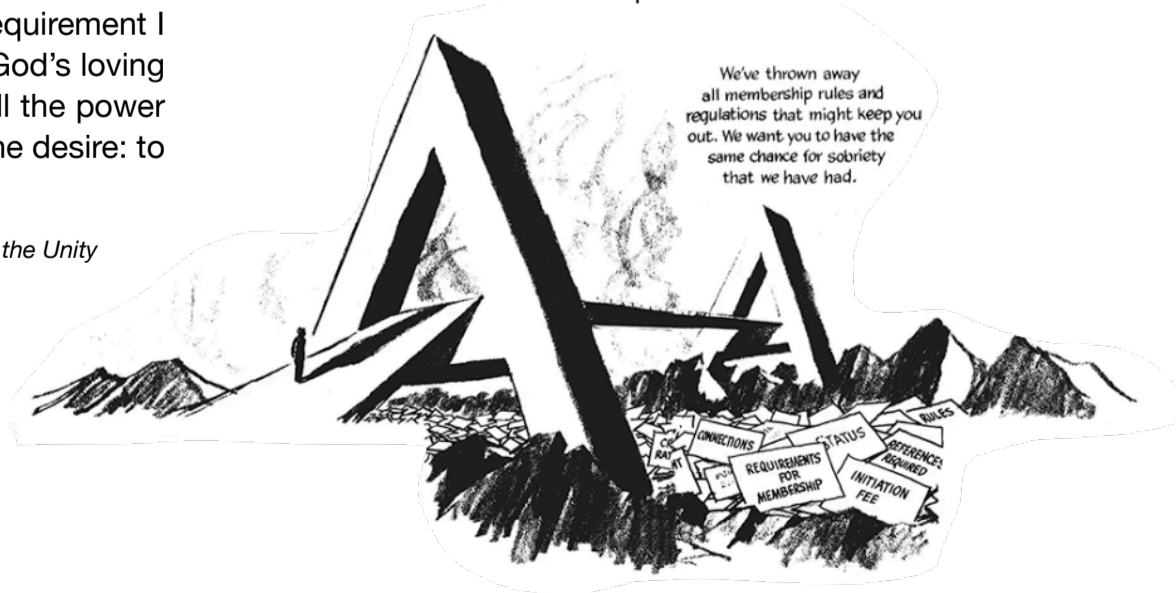
STEP-TRADITION PARALLEL: The relationship of the third tradition to the third step is a profound one. The third step poses the question: What do I need to do in order to turn my will and my life over to the loving care of God as we understand him? The tradition answers the problem posed in the third step. The only requirement I need to fulfill in order to turn my will and my life over to God’s loving care is a desire to stop drinking. It is unbelievable that all the power of the universe is available to care for me if I only have one desire: to stay sober.

(Excerpts from the text above come from the Traditions Study developed by the Unity Insures Recovery Through Service A.A. Group, Los Angeles, CA.)



INVENTORY: Below is a snapshot inventory you can take to see how well you are honoring the spiritual principle found in this Tradition (in and out of the rooms of A.A.). *(The foundation of this inventory is from the A.A. Tradition’s Checklist first published in the A.A. Grapevine)*

1. In my mind, do I prejudge some new AA members as losers?
2. Is there some kind of alcoholic whom I privately do not want in my AA group?
3. Do I set myself up as a judge of whether a newcomer is sincere or phony?
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 over impressed 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 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?





“Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.”

Overriding Idea of This Tradition:
“Our Decisions Affect Others”

Tradition 4

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Spiritual Principle of the Tradition:
AUTONOMY

Reading Assignment:
12&12: Pgs. 146-149

Long Form: “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.”

TRADITION SUMMARY: For too long, I thought I was autonomous in my own right; this is also called being self-centered or selfish, with “self-will run riot.” This Tradition helps me understand that I cannot take any actions harmful to others without dire consequences to myself. I learned that nothing was really good unless other people also were considered. If I don’t seek the advice and help of others in matters affecting them, then I again become God in my own life, the exact nature of my wrongs.

The one word that characterizes the fourth tradition is the word “decisions.” This tradition teaches me how to make decisions and maintain good relationships with God and you at the same time. The traditions show us how to get along with each other. The second half of the fourth tradition teaches me to consult others when I make decisions that affect them.

I am not to be a dictator in making decisions that affect other people’s lives (or the community) as I did when I was drinking. I need help from others, especially in matters affecting them. My goal is unanimity. <I repeat> If I don’t seek the advice and help of others in matters affecting them, then I again become God in my own life, the exact nature of my wrongs.

STEP-TRADITION PARALLEL: If I don’t seek the advice and help of others in matters affecting them, then I again become God in my own life, the exact nature of my wrongs. The steps help to restore my relationship with God (through inventory among other things) and the traditions show me how to get along with God (and others). I was God in my own life. I was a dictator. With others, I was just the opposite. I sought their approval. The fourth tradition solves this dilemma: I seek to be one with God and to be one with others about matters affecting them. There are certain things that must be done alone with God, such as writing inventory. Writing inventory is an autonomous function. Interesting parallel.

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INVENTORY: Below is a snapshot inventory you can take to see how well you are honoring the spiritual principle found in this Tradition (in and out of the rooms of A.A.). *(The foundation of this inventory is from the A.A. Tradition’s Checklist first published in the A.A. Grapevine)*

1. Do I insist that there are only a few right ways of doing things in AA?
2. 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?
3. Do I put down other members’ behavior when it is different from mine, or do I learn from it?
4. 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?
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 AA tools with other members who may not have heard of them?
7. What “questions” could we ask ourselves before we make a decision to use our autonomy?
8. Does autonomy excuse or justify improper behavior?





**“Each group has but one primary purpose
—to carry its message to the alcoholic
who still suffers.”**

Overriding Idea of This Tradition:
“We Only Have One Purpose”

Tradition 5

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Spiritual Principle of the Tradition:
PURPOSE

Reading Assignment:
12&12: Pgs. 150-154

Long Form: “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.”

TRADITION SUMMARY: It is the great paradox of A.A. that we know we can seldom keep the precious gift of sobriety unless we give it away. This Tradition delineates pretty clearly our individual primary purpose, as well as the group’s. Each of us is but a small part of the whole, but by joining AA’s primary purpose to our own, we become something bigger than our individual selves.

INVENTORY: Below is a snapshot inventory you can take to see how well you are honoring the spiritual principle found in this Tradition (in and out of the rooms of A.A.). (*The foundation of this inventory is from the A.A. Tradition’s Checklist first published in the A.A. Grapevine*)

Am I willing to surrender my old primary purposes?

To work this tradition means that I am willing to say “yes” to this question and rearrange the rest of my priorities. Devoting myself to a new primary purpose means that I am willing to let go of many old ideas. I have many thinking patterns that are automatic that I need to change in order to consecrate myself to a new primary purpose.

STEP-TRADITION PARALLEL: The relationship of the fifth step to the fifth tradition is that the fifth step taught me the exact nature of my wrongs, “I’m not in charge.” In the fifth tradition I learned just the opposite, I learned what my exact nature should be: my talent to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, my primary purpose.

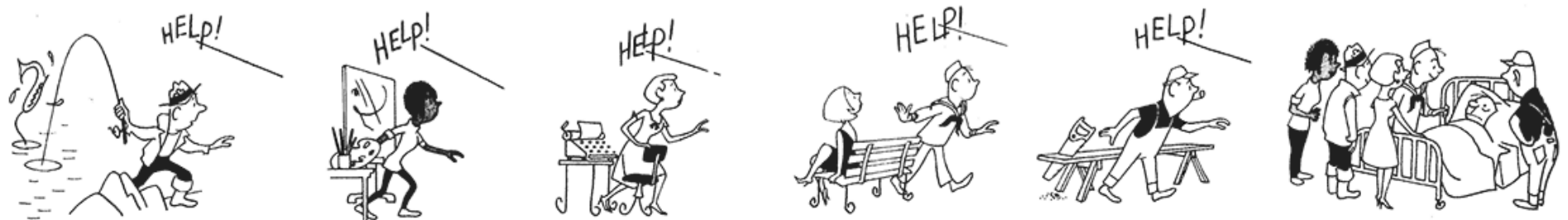
In the fifth step I learned what’s wrong about me and in the fifth tradition I learned what’s right about me. What’s right about me is my ability to carry the message when no one else can because of the experiences that I have had which were transformed into a message of hope in the fifth step. My alcoholism is my greatest talent, not my talents as a husband, father, son, or my job. I can fulfill my primary purpose for being born by carrying the 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 AA help, even if he gets mad at me for not giving him a loan?
3. Have I today imposed on any AA member for a special favor 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 let fear get in my way by not addressing issues in my home group when members are disrupting meetings and getting in the way of our group carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic?
6. Do I help my group in every way I can to fulfill our primary purpose?
7. 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?



I am responsible.
When anyone, anywhere,
reaches out for help, I want
the hand of AA always to be there.
And for that: **I am responsible.**

(Excerpts from the text above come from the Traditions Study developed by the Unity Insures Recovery Through Service A.A. Group, Los Angeles, CA.)





“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.”

Overriding Idea of This Tradition:
“We Keep It In-House and Remember T5”

Tradition 6

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Spiritual Principle of the Tradition:
NON-AFFILIATION

Reading Assignment:
12&12: Pgs. 155-159

Long Form: “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 to go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied. An A.A. group can bind itself to no one.”

TRADITION SUMMARY: Would you be surprised if I told you that I found the solution to my worries about financial problems by working the sixth tradition in my life? When I was drinking my primary purpose was pursuing sex and finances. In my early sobriety I did the same thing by devoting my energy to acquiring “money, property, and prestige.”

I was a bankrupt idealist. “We are all perfectionists who failing perfection, have gone to the other extreme and settled for the bottle and the blackout.” (“12 & 12”, Sixth Tradition, p. 156). The areas that affected my “money, property and prestige” and sex were the areas I gave all my perfectionist energy.

Without realizing it, I was losing my dedication to sobriety from my primary purpose: carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

It never occurred to me that God would take care of financial and relationship concerns a day at a time if I would let go of them and trust his plan with the same patience he had waited for me to come to him for sobriety. By devoting time and efforts to pursuing relationships and finances I was endorsing these things as my primary purpose by lending my name to their pursuit.

The first half of Tradition Six will likely never occur if I stay focused on Tradition Five. The more I stick to carrying the message, the less worries I have – a wonderful paradox. Bill Wilson comments in “A.A., Comes of Age”, (p. 109) on a similar paradox concerning the fellowship, “The more A.A. sticks to its primary purpose, the greater will be its helpful influence everywhere.”

STEP-TRADITION PARALLEL: The sixth step poses the question, how can I become entirely ready to have my defects of character removed?

The answer is in the sixth tradition. In fact the sixth tradition describes my main character defects: the problems involved from seeking money, property, and prestige. The sixth tradition contains the solution to my problems of money, property and prestige: the more primary in my life carrying the message becomes, the less problems of any kind I have! Therefore, observing the sixth tradition in my life by placing my primary purpose of carrying the message first, and not problems of my property, prestige or worthy outside interests, keeps me sober.

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1. Should my fellow group members and I go out and raise money to endow several AA 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 AAs familiar with “Guidelines on Clubs” (which is available free from GSO)?
4. Should the secretary of our group serve on the mayor’s advisory committee on alcoholism?
5. Should my home group align itself with a treatment center for alcoholics?
6. Should my home group support any other type of treatment plan other than the one found in our basic text?



“Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”

Overriding Idea of This Tradition:
“**Spirituality and Money DO Mix**”

Tradition 7

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Spiritual Principle of the Tradition:
RESPONSIBILITY

Reading Assignment:
12&12: Pgs. 160-165

Long Form: “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 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.”

TRADITION SUMMARY: Twelfth Step work is the lifeblood of Alcoholics Anonymous — carrying the message to the next suffering alcoholic. Without it, the Fellowship would wither and die. Yet, even at its simplest level this vital contact between one alcoholic and another involves an investment of time and money.

The paradox of A.A. is that financial independence and the support of our Fellowship by alcoholics and alcoholics alone not only enhances A.A.’s importance to each of us, but stimulates our engagement in our own recovery.

While the Fellowship has always faced problems of money, property, and prestige in one form or another, through the wisdom of the Seventh Tradition we have never been diverted from our primary purpose of carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. This is our fundamental work, and to ensure that the hand of A.A. will always remain outstretched, money and spirituality must continue to mix. And for that, we are all responsible.

Download A.A. pamphlet, “Where Money & Spirituality Mix”

STEP-TRADITION PARALLEL: The seventh tradition is linked to the sixth tradition just as the seventh step is the natural outcome of working the sixth step. What do I do when I become entirely ready to give up my defects of character? I humbly ask God to remove my shortcomings. What do I do when I become entirely ready to give up pursuing outside contributions to my spirituality by not lending my name to related approaches or outside relationships? I avoid the problems of money, property, and prestige – carrying a message that will be believed because it is carried with a spirit of poverty and not greed.

I seek to be financially self—supporting, not wealthy. The seventh tradition, completed the seventh step this way: Father I humbly ask you to remove my major shortcomings, not placing you first in my life, but placing false Gods first, including money. Please teach me to be self-supporting in my relationship with you! “Fear” automatically results when I think I should handle any situation in life by myself. As soon as I place God first in my thinking and try to hear his voice through prayer and meditation, “fear” is removed.

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1. 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?
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 color, at a cheaper price per copy?
3. If GSO runs short of funds some year, wouldn’t it be okay to let the government subsidize AA groups in hospitals and prisons?
4. Is it more important to get a big AA collection from a few people, or a smaller collection in which more members participate?
5. Is a group treasurer’s report unimportant AA 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 being always under obligation for charity received?



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

Tradition 8

takethe12.org

Overriding Idea of This Tradition:
“Paid Staff Help Make 12 Step Work Possible”

Spiritual Principle of the Tradition:
NON-PROFESSIONAL

Reading Assignment:
12&12: Pgs. 166-171

Long Form: “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. Twelfth Step work is never to be paid for.”

TRADITION SUMMARY: The eighth tradition makes it clear that A.A. may employ professional secretaries and other professional staff members. Their job is not to DO Twelve Step work; but to make Twelve Step work possible. “Our Twelfth Step is never paid for, but those who labor in service for us are worthy of their hire.” (12x12, Page 171)

There is a difference between doing twelve step work for pay and working for a master’s degree as a counselor in the field of alcoholism and being of service in a hospital where more and more newcomers first find sobriety. Professional counselors do their counseling job and THEN go to A.A. meetings and carry the message “for free and for fun” just like the rest of us. Their job is not a substitute for working an A.A. program.

We must always remember that we cannot do the work of carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic if we don’t have people in our various service centers assisting us in the logistics of US carrying out our primary purpose. We see that our few paid workers are performing only those service tasks that our volunteers cannot consistently handle. Primarily these folks are not doing Twelfth Step work. They are just making more and better Twelfth Step work possible.

STEP-TRADITION PARALLEL: The spiritual principle behind the eighth step is “willingness and love” to work the steps. The eighth tradition takes that idea one step further and teaches me that to have good relationships with other people, I must be “zealous” in carrying the message. Otherwise my message is suspect. In our meditation, let us examine the state of our “zeal” in our relationships with God, A.A., mates and work. Let us begin with the state of our “zeal” in carrying the message to the sick and suffering alcoholic.

INVENTORY: Below is a snapshot inventory you can take to see how well you are honoring the spiritual principle found in this Tradition (in and out of the rooms of A.A.). (*The foundation of this inventory is from the A.A. Tradition’s Checklist first published in the A.A. Grapevine*)

1. Is my own behavior accurately described by the Traditions? If not, what needs changing?
2. When I chafe about any particular Tradition, do I realize how it affects others?
3. Do I sometimes try to get some reward—even if not money—for my personal AA efforts?
4. 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?
5. Do I make an effort to understand what AA employees do? What workers in other alcoholism agencies do? Can I distinguish clearly among them?
6. In my own AA life, have I any experiences, which illustrate the wisdom of this Tradition?



(Excerpts from the text above come from the Traditions Study developed by the Unity Insures Recovery Through Service A.A. Group, Los Angeles, CA.)



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

Tradition 9

take.the12.org

Overriding Idea of This Tradition:

“Organization and Service Aren’t Mutually Exclusive”

Spiritual Principle of the Tradition:
SPIRIT OF SERVICE

Reading Assignment:
12&12: Pgs. 172-175

Long Form: “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 overall 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.”

TRADITION SUMMARY: In the beginning, our founders really felt like we didn’t need much organization and structure in the Fellowship, and then they went and created a bunch of it. “It is clear 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.” (12×12, Page 174)

One of the best examples of this is if you should ever find yourself needing to reach out to GSO for their ideas on a specific issue that your group, District or Area may be having; you can be relatively sure regardless of what you are asking about will garner a response that generally starts off with something like, “That’s a great question. Our shared experience in A.A. is....” and they will offer suggestions of solutions from those that have gone before us to help you with your concern. They cannot tell us what to do, but they can help us.

The organization of our Fellowship is crucial to our being able to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic, but that structure is not there to govern, but to serve.

STEP-TRADITION PARALLEL: The first nine steps delivered us from the bondage of our past experiences with alcohol. We finally arrived at the place where we could say to ourselves, “I have totally faced my past. And there is nothing left in my past that I’m ashamed of. There’s nothing left that hurts anymore. There’s nothing left in my past that’s painful. There’s nothing left in my past I need to forgive or need to be forgiven for. I’m at total oneness and peace with my past.” Well, that’s a tremendous statement to be able to say. That’s an enormous statement for any person to be able to say about their life. And that’s what the first nine steps give us. And the ninth tradition assures me that once my ninth step amends have been made,

I will be led to that profound place of peace I have always sought in my life: divine order. The ninth tradition not only contains the secret of divine order but also contains the personal principle that will keep an alcoholic like me in divine order. It is so simple. I give up control. I stop organizing myself. I stop trying to organize God into my limited ideas of order.

How does this ninth tradition relate to the ninth step? My life gets unimpeded flow of divine love in a triangle consisting of you, myself and God. Whenever the divine order of that relationship is disturbed, I can restore order by making the unmade amend that put my life out of order. The ninth step poses the question, “After making amends, how do I stay reconciled with you today?” The ninth tradition answers that question by implying that I remain in the divine order by not organizing you, myself or God and spontaneously being of service to you and God.

(Excerpts from the text above come from the Traditions Study developed by the Unity Insures Recovery Through Service A.A. Group, Los Angeles, CA.)

INVENTORY: Below is a snapshot inventory you can take to see how well you are honoring the spiritual principle found in this Tradition (in and out of the rooms of A.A.). *(The foundation of this inventory is from the A.A. Tradition’s Checklist first published in the A.A. Grapevine)*

1. Do I still try to boss things in AA?
2. Do I resist formal aspects of AA because I fear them as authoritative?
3. 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?
4. Do I exercise patience and humility in any AA job I take?
5. Am I aware of all those to whom I am responsible in any AA job?
6. Why doesn’t every AA group need a constitution and bylaws?
7. Have I learned to step out of an AA job gracefully—and profit thereby—when the time comes?
8. What has rotation to do with anonymity? With humility?



“Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.”

Overriding Idea of This Tradition:
“Outside Issues Can Tear Us Apart”

Tradition 10

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Spiritual Principle of the Tradition:
 OUTSIDE ISSUES

Reading Assignment:
 12&12: Pgs. 176-179

Long Form: “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.”

TRADITION SUMMARY: What is an outside issue? An outside issue is anything outside of my relationship with God through sobriety.

The tenth tradition is rather clear as it applies to A.A. We have prospered by having no opinion on outside matters and not being drawn into controversy. For instance, A.A. has avoided the outside issues that tore apart the Washingtonians. A.A. has never become crusaders or taken stands on important but outside issues, “particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion”. (See the long form of this tradition)

Bill Wilson differentiates the responsibilities of the A.A. member and the A.A. group in this tradition by saying on p. 177 of the “12 & 12” that the tenth tradition does not “mean that the members of Alcoholics Anonymous, now restored as citizens of the world, are going to back away from their individual responsibilities to act as they see the right upon issues of our time. But when it comes to A.A. as a whole, that’s quite a different matter. In this respect, we do not enter into public controversy because we know that our society will perish if it does.”

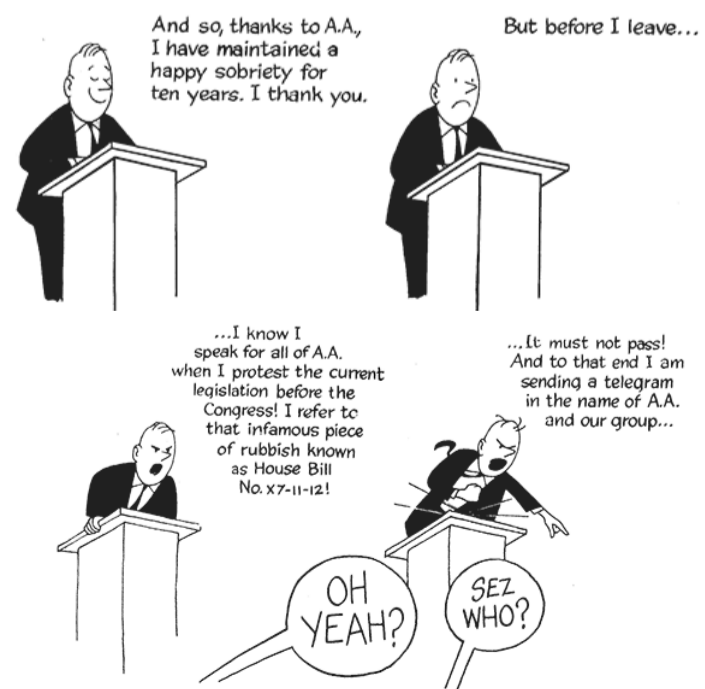
STEP-TRADITION PARALLEL: The relationship of the tenth tradition to the tenth step is this: I can be at peace and avoid outside issues by taking my inventory and not yours. I avoid controversy by taking stands with the attitude of a peacemaker. The tenth concept of service takes the process one step further and specifies what kind of inventory I should be writing about: The responsibilities for which God has given me authority.

The tenth step poses the question, “How can I survive successfully in the world by taking my own inventory and promptly admitting it when I am wrong?” The tenth tradition supplies the answer; “I survive by being a peacemaker with you because I am at peace with myself through my own inventories.”

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INVENTORY: Below is a snapshot inventory you can take to see how well you are honoring the spiritual principle found in this Tradition (in and out of the rooms of A.A.). *(The foundation of this inventory is from the A.A. Tradition’s Checklist first published in the A.A. Grapevine)*

1. Do I ever give the impression that there really is an “AA opinion” on Antabuse? Tranquilizers? Doctors? Psychiatrists? Churches? Hospitals? Jails? Alcohol? The federal or state government? Legalizing 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 “AA opinion”?
3. What in AA history gave rise to our Tenth Tradition?
4. Have I had a similar experience in my own AA life?
5. What would AA 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 AA? Inside AA?





“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.”

Overriding Idea of This Tradition:
“Attraction Rather Than Promotion”

Tradition 11

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Spiritual Principle of the Tradition:
 ATTRACTION

Reading Assignment:
 12&12: Pgs. 180-183

Long Form: “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 need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.”

TRADITION SUMMARY: *Bill W. once said, “We had no public relations policy except for a fear of public relations. Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.”*

Good public relations are A.A. lifelines reaching out to the fellow alcoholic who still does not know us. For years to come, our growth is sure to depend upon the strength and number of these lifelines.

Conversely, think about this. Should we identify ourselves by our first and last name when we speak at closed meetings of A.A.? Does this violate the eleventh tradition? Of course not. We are only anonymous at the level of press, radio, and films. The press has not attended any closed meetings I have spoken at, so I am free to use my whole name. The final paragraph on page 37 of the pamphlet “Frequently Asked Questions About A.A.” states: “It should also be noted that within A.A., at A.A. meetings and amongst themselves, A.A. members are not anonymous.”

STEP-TRADITION PARALLEL: The eleventh step is related to the eleventh tradition: by praying only for knowledge of his will for me and the power to carry that out, I become a source of attraction to God and give Him all credit for my wonderful life. The eleventh step poses the question, “How can we improve our conscious contact?” The eleventh tradition answers that question by pointing out that when we do not take credit for the good we do, we become closer to God in our prayer.

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INVENTORY: Below is a snapshot inventory you can take to see how well you are honoring the spiritual principle found in this Tradition (in and out of the rooms of A.A.). *(The foundation of this inventory is from the A.A. Tradition’s Checklist first published in the A.A. Grapevine)*

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

Ours is not a secret society...
 we carry the message
 anywhere we can—



But we must ever be aware
 that self-appointed messiahs
 speaking for A.A. through public
 media can do us great damage!





“Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.”

Overriding Idea of This Tradition:
“Principles First – People Second”

Tradition 12

take12.org

Spiritual Principle of the Tradition:
PRINCIPLES B4 PERSONALITIES

Reading Assignment:
12&12: Pgs. 184-187

Long Form: “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.”

TRADITION SUMMARY: Why are we repeatedly asked in the Traditions to give up ourselves for the greater good? The answer is because any relationship we have that does not involve sacrifice is a relationship that likely will not endure. Each tradition straightens out a disastrous attitude we had about relationships. The twelfth tradition teaches us that a spirit of sacrifice (often times through anonymity) is vital to good relationships.

Giving up the expectation of rewards for doing good is difficult for most of us. It's easy for us to give and then think, “Well, I'll get a reward, even if I don't get public recognition for what I did.” To remove that reward symbol from the back of our minds for whatever good we do is part of practicing anonymity. The next time you hear a speaker in A.A. whose personality is exciting from the platform, see if you can hear the principles behind their words? To which step, tradition, or concept can you relate their pitch? Setting ourselves aside and focusing on the principles of our program is a crucial component in the foundation we need for studying the Traditions and learning how to be in healthier relationships with our fellow A.A.'s and with those in the world around us.

STEP-TRADITION PARALLEL: The twelfth step poses the question, “What is a spiritual awakening?” I believe that the evidences of a spiritual awakening are found in a person who practices the twelfth tradition in all their affairs. Such a person sacrifices self in order to practice principles. Their motive in practicing all of the traditions is anonymity: they sacrifice to help others.

The twelfth tradition completes the twelfth step in the following way: I become spiritually awake when I carry the message by anonymously practicing sober principles.

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INVENTORY: Below is a snapshot inventory you can take to see how well you are honoring the spiritual principle found in this Tradition (in and out of the rooms of A.A.). *(The foundation of this inventory is from the A.A. Tradition's Checklist first published in the A.A. Grapevine)*

1. Why is it 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?
2. When I do not trust AA's current servants, who do I wish had the authority to straighten them out?
3. In my opinions of and remarks about other AAs, am I implying membership requirements other than a desire to stay sober?
4. Do I ever try to get a certain AA group to conform to my standards, not its own?
5. Have I a personal responsibility in helping an AA group fulfill its primary purpose? What is my part?
6. Does my personal behavior reflect the Sixth Tradition—or belie it?
7. Do I do all I can do to support AA financially? When is the last time I anonymously gave away a Grapevine subscription?
8. Do I complain about certain AAs' behavior—especially if they are paid to work for AA? Who made me so smart?
9. Do I fulfill all AA 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 AA critics real ammunition?
11. 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?
12. What is the real importance of me among more than a million AAs?

