

How It (An AA Group) Works

Rarely have we seen a group fail that has thoroughly followed AA's Traditions. Those who do not follow them are groups who cannot or will not accept these simple principles, usually groups that are constitutionally incapable of being humble. There are such unfortunate groups. They are not at fault; they seem to have been developed that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of functioning which demands practicing group humility. Their chances of surviving are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from affiliation and guru-itus, but many of them do survive if they are willing to refrain from these activities.

Our group meetings disclose in a general way how we handle our affairs, remain in unity, and seek to carry AA's message. If a group decides it wants recovery, unity, and service to be its experience, and is willing to practice humility to get them - it is then ready to adopt certain principles.

At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, more effective way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold onto money, power, and prestige and the result was chaos until we practiced the Traditions in all of our group life.

Remember that we deal with alcoholics, seeking to direct rather than be guided, affiliate rather than cooperate, to accumulate rather than to pass it on. Without help unity is beyond our reach. But there is One who has all power - that One is God. May you find Him in your group conscience now!

Warping the Traditions availed us nothing. We began to see our coming destruction. We asked His guidance toward unity with honest humility.

Here are the principles we followed, which are suggested as the way towards group unity:

- 1) Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on A.A. unity.
- 2) 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.
- 3) The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
- 4) Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
- 5) Each group has but one primary purpose--to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
- 6) 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.
- 7) Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
- 8) Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
- 9) A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
- 10) Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
- 11) Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain anonymity at the level of press, radio, and film.
- 12) Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Many of us exclaimed, "those don't apply to this situation". Do not be unique. No group has had the misfortune of "curing" all alcoholics or people with other problems. We are not magicians. The Traditions are not as old-fashioned as they seem. The point is they guide us in how to be of service to fellow sufferers. The principles we have set down are guides to group progress. Better to be of great service to some than to be of little use to all. We hope to see our group spiritually progress, that is why we have group inventories.

The Traditions as written, the experience that developed them, and the chaos resulting from their avoidance or misuse make clear three pertinent ideas:

- (a) That a group, unguided, could destroy everyone's chance of recovery.
- (b) That probably no amount of human power could get alcoholics to make MY solution for the group work out right.
- (c) That God would grant us a humble unity when we follow AA Traditions.

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