

## Sharing the Steps, Traditions & Concepts Workshop

Years ago, the Wednesday morning Conference members divided into 10 groups of 12 to 14 for workshop discussions. Participants were invited to focus on how the principles embodied in "Sharing the Steps, Traditions and Concepts" are practiced in the categories outlined. Following are questions and a summary of responses from these discussions.

"The chief inheritances of the first twenty years of Alcoholics Anonymous are the Legacies of Recovery, of Unity, and of Service. By the first we recover from alcoholism; by the second we stay together in unity; and by the third our society functions and serves its primary purpose of carrying the A.A. message to all who need it and want it." (Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, page 49)

### 1. Using the Steps in Our Daily Lives

a) How have you used a Step to solve a personal problem? A group problem? An Area problem?

**Personal Problems:** Members stated they work the Steps daily and all are a help with all aspects of their personal lives, such as marriage, family and work. They put their lives in God's hands and use the H.O.W. meditation daily by working with others. The Steps are practiced as outlined in the Big Book, and life could not be imagined without them. Much gratitude was expressed for Bill W. writing the Twelve Steps and for the shared desperation that got everyone into A.A. The Steps saved our lives. The Steps are used to deal with problems, as well as for helping to understand others. Each Step is a part of the process, such as becoming aware of the root of the problem, taking inventory, talking with someone, asking for help, prayer and meditation, etc. We need to trust in the process. The Twelve Steps are a gift.

Individual Steps that members commented on include: Step One - used to admit our powerlessness over alcohol and unmanageability of life on a daily basis, as well as our powerlessness over people and professionals that we work with. We change through surrender. Step Two - useful to come back to after completing Steps Four, Five, Six, and Seven, and along with Step Three, it helped one member to quit smoking. Step Three - is useful for solving personal problems such as going through a divorce, family issues, serving employees and/or co-workers, and informal relationships. Step Three helps to let things go and remove self-will. It is vital to sponsorship and remembering who is in charge. Faith in Step Three is sustaining and useful when laced with situations over which we have no control or are looking for guidance (e.g. the next right thing).

Steps Four and Five help to examine our selves by reviewing resentments, stop fault finding, taking a daily inventory, and to clear the wreckage of the past. Step Six - helps to practice these principles in all our affairs. It is vital to relationships and is applied to other aspects of life. The importance of doing Step Six is getting out of oneself. Step Seven - is used to solve personal problems and is vital to relationships. Using both Steps Six and Seven we ask God to relieve our character defects, such as anger, daily. We must work Step Nine along with Step Ten and Step Eleven. With Step Ten we practice a daily individual inventory by admitting our faults and defects to avoid repeating these actions. We focus on our inventory not yours. If used throughout the day it helps to live more comfortably. Challenges force us to work our program harder. Step Eleven helps us to stay connected with our Higher Power, if we don't get guidance right away we can keep praying, be still when possible and know that all will turn out well. It is used every morning, throughout the day, and as a way to do an evening review so self-sabotage, fear and resentment doesn't accumulate. Step Twelve is practiced by helping others and taking them through the Steps, by doing so, we get out of ourselves. Members show the same courtesy to others as they show a newcomer and they practice these principles in all their affairs through living by example - love, honesty, unselfishness and purity.

**Group Problems:** A group inventory (Steps Four, Ten and Twelve) can help us with problems such as difficult people. Steps Six and Eleven are used to decide issues. Steps Three and Ten are often cited in groups. Big Book Step meetings can be offered for newcomers. When the Steps are practiced in our group we learn how to apply them in our lives and when we apply them in our lives, we are better able to come to informed group inventories. Group business meetings are fun because individual members are working the Steps and groups use them to keep focused. Using the Steps in the group helps keep principles over personalities. The Steps are spiritual principles to apply in our groups.

**Area Problems:** Step Two helps to deal with area officers. Steps Three and Ten are often cited in areas. Step Nine is useful to make amends to other members. Step Ten is practiced at the area level in general and is a wonderful tool for clearing the wreckage of the past, learning to release anger, and examining oneself. The inventory process is used with

difficult members or difficult situations to resolve issues and/or avoid problems. The Steps, Traditions and Concepts teach us how to cooperate with Intergroups and participate in the Area assemblies. The Steps teach us to keep principles over personalities and to "let go" and let the committee system work. The Steps are spiritual principles to apply in the Area.

b) Do we/I practice these principles in all our/my affairs and, if so, how? Or do we only focus on a few of the Steps?

Many members report that they try to practice the principles in all their affairs, and it was a consensus that all the Steps were used. Examples that were given include going back to work despite fears, one day at a time relationships with people in general, family, and work. The Steps are a design for living. Other comments on individual Steps include: Step One is the basic and most important Step. When Steps One, Two, and Three are used in group's inventories, there is a singleness of purpose, and spiritual experience. We use the Steps, including Step Ten, to continue working on character defects. With Step Six we practice these principles in all our affairs. Daily Steps Six and Seven are practiced on a regular basis. The Big Book tells us to "pause when agitated" and this helps bring the Eleventh and Twelfth Steps to us.

## 2. Using the Traditions in our Daily Lives

a) How have you used a Tradition to solve a personal problem? A group problem? An Area problem?

**Personal Problems:** The Traditions are the history of A.A. and we try to remember the "we" in the Traditions. Gratitude was shared for those who taught members about "common welfare" and A.A. membership. For some members the Traditions and Principles were being learned before they knew what they were doing. The Principles have influenced family life in a very positive way. The Traditions are used to rein in the ego and to practice in our daily lives.

Specifically, Tradition Two helps to be a "trusted servant" and reminds us to listen to others, and to see things in ways other than our way. Tradition Three is exactly why one member is here, because they were accepted. Tradition Four is the most complex and it helps in marriage, family, and work, learning that everyone has the right to be wrong and that a spouse's recovery must be allowed its own autonomy. The second part of Tradition Four is to be responsible to those we serve. Families show gratitude when we learn to use Tradition Seven. Tradition Twelve helped one member to practice over a very loud personality and "let it go." Also, the Tradition Checklist has helped to do an inventory on a marriage. The "common good" cited as a Tradition has helped in dealing with family issues by seeking God's will through the group conscience. The Traditions are a practical guide for living.

**Group Problems:** Alcoholics Anonymous is made of many cultures, and without the Traditions, communities would have many different A.A. groups. Members report that they work better when they use all the Traditions. Each Tradition has a spiritual principle. It is helpful to have regular Traditions meetings; they are helpful to newcomers. The Traditions create Unity, group consciousness, and a singleness of purpose by acknowledging the still-suffering alcoholic. The Traditions are available because of our mistakes and we use our experiences to build knowledge of the Traditions. The Traditions were used as a pre-Conference theme. It was suggested that groups use the Tradition Checklist to examine how each group applies the Traditions. The Traditions are important for the survival of the group.

Specifically, Tradition One has helped with disruptive members. Tradition Two and the group conscience are used to maintain group harmony. Group conscience solves problems at all levels and is a part of acceptance. The long form of Tradition Three explains who attends closed meetings and should be remembered in our groups. When group problems arise we ask, "What is my responsibility?" and we deflate our ego. Tradition Five and "singleness of purpose" is the heartbeat of A.A. Tradition Seven reminds us that we are self-supporting and need contributions to help other groups, the District, the Area, and G.S.O. Tradition Seven helped one member get a job when they got sober. It also helps groups to be accountable. Tradition Nine explains that committees are responsible to those they serve. Tradition Ten helps the group by "having no opinion on outside issues." Tradition Twelve helps groups to keep personalities out of principles; Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our groups.

**Area Problems:** There is a responsibility to demonstrate active respect for the Traditions, while experiencing opinions on matters in another group, District or Area. Tradition Three helps in an Area to be tolerant of those with problems other than alcohol. Tradition Twelve helped a member when a trusted servant would not follow Area procedures and was vocal about it. In Canada, Area meetings are now more accepted in English, French and native population languages, in assemblies and round-ups.

b) How vital is Unity? What sacrifices have you made for the sake of Unity in your groups, District and Area?

Unity is our most cherished possession and Tradition Three is an example of Unity. One of the ways Unity is practiced includes: sharing Web sites and having a "Unity Day" once a year. Unity does not mean uniformity and we can listen to and accept differences today. Group, District and Area inventories help identify problems that create disunity. One member reported that without Unity and a home group they would not be able to sustain sobriety. Sacrifice is about willingness to contribute or may mean keeping quiet. It also means giving up something to be part of the whole. However, sacrifices can be viewed as responsibilities, such as giving another member a ride or sitting through a District meeting on a beautiful day.

### 3. Using the Concepts in Our Daily Lives

a) How have you used a Concept to solve a personal problem? A group problem? An Area problem?

Personal Problems: The Concepts may be applied to our daily life by having vision and making compromises. They are used to solve work problems, difficulties in our family, and to practice taking responsibility. A bride and groom incorporated all 36 Principles into their relationship and marriage vows. We need to trust in the process.

The Concepts protect our future. Concept III "Right of Decision" is used as our ultimate authority. Concept IV, the "Right of Participation," is a responsibility that we practice by listening to others. Concept V, "Right to Appeal," is important and helped one member appeal a decision. Concept IX, "Leadership in A.A.," helped another member with their inventory.

Group Problems: The Concepts should be encouraged at meetings and can be a good experience because they are spiritual and help us in the "Right of Participation" to have faith and trust in a Higher Power, ourselves and other people. Concept I explains that the ultimate authority is a Higher Power, sharing through the group conscience; however, individuals are free to make decisions such as what brand of coffee to make. Concept III teaches us about leadership. Concept V helps individual group members to be tolerant of vindictive and financially dishonest members. Disruptive members may appeal a decision and be reinstated in a group. Concept V explains that 'minority opinion' is important and a blessing because it allows the informed group conscience to surface. Unity is more important than individual opinion and it can be used when we chair meetings to allow personal grievances. We facilitate group inventories as a group member. We listen to newcomers. The Concepts suggest authority and responsibility and the importance of doing a task.

District or Area Problems: The Concepts can be used in discussions on District problems. Areas apply the Concepts by inviting Al-Anon members to participate. We learned a lot about decision, participation, authority and responsibility when we applied the Traditions. Groups, Districts and Areas have the right to be wrong. In Concept X we learned about giving equal authority and responsibility, and the "Right of Participation." Concept XII cannot be changed as a legal charter and bylaws for and Area (e.g. not for profit status). The intertwining of Steps, Traditions and Concepts are a common experience. In many areas younger members are now interested in the Concepts as tools.

b) What principles in the Concepts can we incorporate into our daily lives?

Studying the Concepts brings them alive and they become tools for better living. They require practice but not perfection. They also help us to keep an open mind and to express ourselves. The Concepts suggest that we are not to take punitive action toward another. In addition, we may practice responsibilities today. Allowing others to participate in our lives makes life smoother.

Specifically, Concept IV "Principle of Participation" is a spiritual principle and tells us to pay attention to and listen to others. Concept IX talks about good service leadership and how it can be very effective and Concept X explains that we are all leaders.

-from Archie M.