

# focus



## The Newsletter of Alcoholics Anonymous Area 86

### *Focus: Tradition One*

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**Short form:**

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

**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.*

**What does that mean?**

Without a commitment to unity within each group, members of Alcoholics Anonymous find it extremely difficult to focus on their personal journey toward recovery.

If groups become drawn into controversy, or become dominated by individuals, or for any other reason jeopardize the unity of the group, it will cease to thrive and can very easily fall apart. Individual members may drift away and perhaps even leave the program.

Alcoholics Anonymous make certain that the "minority" opinion on any issue is given the opportunity to be heard. As a group prepares to make a decision, all sides of an issue are given consideration. But all members of a group must be willing to accept the majority opinion and work together to put the decision into action, for the sake of unity. One stubborn or strong-willed member can destroy the group's ability to work together for the common welfare of all. A free exchange of ideas and discussion of the issues is healthy for group growth, as long as all members are sincerely committed to protecting the primary purpose of the group by keeping principles above personalities.

This is AA Declaration of Unity, which was established when AA turned 35 years old at the 1970 International Convention.

*This we owe to A.A.'s future: to place our common welfare first; to keep our fellowship united.  
For on A.A. unity depend our lives, and the lives of those to come.*

If you would like more information on Tradition 1 or any other of the Traditions, you will find information in the book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, in the pamphlet The Twelve Traditions Illustrated, or talk to your sponsor about them.

Yours in Service,  
Mary B.  
DCM, District 14 Sarnia- Lambton

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***Focus: Service Sponsorship***

***YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE GREAT TO GET STARTED,  
BUT YOU HAVE TO GET STARTED TO BE GREAT***

Alcoholics Anonymous's Third Legacy: *SERVICE*

In 1951, our co-founder, Bill W., wrote:

*“our Twelfth Step – carrying the message – is the basic service that the AA Fellowship gives;  
this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence.*

*Therefore, A.A. is more than a set of principles; it is a society of Alcoholics in Action.*

*We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die.*

*Services include meeting places, hospital cooperation, and intergroup offices; they mean pamphlets, books,  
and good publicity of almost every description. They call for committees, delegates, trustees and conferences.*

*And, not to be forgotten, they need voluntary money contributions from within the Fellowship.*

*These services, whether performed by individuals, groups, areas, or AA as a whole, are utterly vital to our existence and growth.*

*Nor can we make AA simpler by abolishing such services. We would only be asking for complications and confusion.*

*Concerning any given service, we therefore pose but one question 'Is this service really needed?'*

*If it is, then maintain it we must, or fail in our mission to those who need and seek AA.”*

Bearing this in mind, I would like to address the matter of Service Sponsorship. Sponsorship in AA is basically the same whether we are guiding someone through recovery or doing service within our group; it is one alcoholic with experience in the workings of the Fellowship sharing his or her experience and knowledge with a person just starting the journey.

It is the responsibility of all of us to encourage newer members to become active, first in their home group, with coffee, setup, literature and business meetings, and then to expose them to other levels of service. No matter what level of service a member becomes involved in, they are all a part of the overall responsibilities of AA.

I had the good fortune to attend the Eastern Canada Regional Forum in Thunder Bay in August, 2009, and was pleased to attend a Workshop on Service Sponsorship moderated by Sandy S., Area 83 Panel 59 Delegate. It was great fun and very informative. Each of us attending had an opportunity to present our viewpoint.

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***Focus:  
Value in the Grapevine***

I was recently reading articles in our magazine and it compelled me to write my thoughts about the Grapevine and the way it carries our message of hope through our experience from one to another.

The very idea that we have used this format to not only stay in touch with each other but that we learn about many topics such as Steps and Traditions for more than 66 years is an amazing thing. Someone half way across the world may write in on a topic of interest and spark some kind of thought that you may agree or disagree with that will subsequently cause you to call your sponsor, pick up another book to find out more about the topic or simply write in yourself to express your thought. To dismiss this format is to dismiss a part of the freedoms that we are given in our Fellowship.

It's encouraging to know that many groups in our Area use the Grapevine for various topics at their meetings as well as reading articles from the magazine or from other Grapevine publications and use the Traditions Checklist at Traditions tables. All of these things help in the development of relating one alcoholic to another and gain more understanding that we are, in fact, not alone. With the addition of the Digital Archive that houses over 3000 articles about pretty much any AA topic you can think of, we have a seemingly endless resource of information, from people like you and me, to draw from.

As I read through the April 2010 issue of the Grapevine I was moved by the words written by our General Service Board Chair in his article entitled "Spirituality and God-Talk" about the differences between religion and spirituality. When I was younger I was very well church-ed, if you will. I had been through my fare share of denominational changes.

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## ***Focus: Service Sponsorship ... (continued)***

I will summarize in point form the qualities we felt were necessary to make a good Service Sponsor:

- being approachable for any questions
- being encouraging in steering a sponsee towards general service
- acting as a guide through the Traditions, Concepts, Warranties and the Service Manual
- being someone who has walked the walk in doing service and is, therefore, an information resource
- demonstrating enthusiasm and gratitude
- being a good sounding board
- being able to consistently place principles before personalities
- having knowledge in AA history and a strong background in the Service Structure

It was also pointed out that AA members in service represent service to other AA members

Tom K., acting Eastern Canada Regional Trustee 2007-2008, said that he feels that one should ask themselves two questions:

1. Am I willing to serve?
2. Do I have the required time? *If not*, can I make the time?

If you can answer 'Yes', then allowing your name to stand is no longer a choice but a responsibility. All we need to do is provide the willingness to be available to serve.

Service IS for everyone.

Personally, I have been blessed with strong service sponsorship throughout my sobriety, and find it difficult to describe the tremendous spiritual satisfaction and rewards that I am experiencing in my journey; through learning and sharing, my life has been enriched beyond my wildest dreams.

Do YOU have a Service Sponsor? No matter where you may think you want to be in our great Fellowship, a Service Sponsor can be of benefit. Interesting things at this level of service are that the rules of men with men and women with women do not necessarily apply, and you don't generally get a service sponsorship call at 3 a.m.

I look forward to sharing this path of happy destiny with each and every one of you.

Yours in love and service,  
Mary K  
Treasurer, Area 86 / Panel 60

### ***Area 86 / Focus***

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## ***Focus: 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.”*

We must always remember that there are no bosses and that we always adhere to the group as a whole.

We should always listen to the minority as well as they, too, have a voice and can sometimes sway the vote for the better.

As we can, from time to time, let our egos get in the way, we must remember that the whole is a lot more important than a single point of view. Our view is important, and should be expressed, but always we must keep the good of the group as a primary concern.

A good example of this, and how it works, was my experience of starting a new group about 16 years ago. A friend of mine and I thought that we needed a discussion meeting in my home town. The two of us found a location, prepared flyers and went to meetings to announce this new meeting. The meeting took about 6 months to get going and both of us would sit and wait for people to show up.

Once it did get going we needed to elect trusted servants. I felt that either I or my friend should be the GSR!!! Well, I had to sit back and accept Tradition 2 and let the group decide who should be GSR, as well as who should fill the other positions. The group conscience, along with our Higher Power, elected the officers (I was not one of them) and the group is still very strong today.

This was a very good lesson for me to really believe in the Traditions at work! My ego had to go to the back burner and I learned a little about humility.

It is always a learning experience in this great program.

Yours in Service,  
Nick T.  
DCM, District 8

### **Short form:**

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

## ***Focus: Tradition Three***

### **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.*

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## ***Focus: Tradition Three ... (continued)***

Many times, I have heard that the Twelve Steps of A.A. are concerned with the individual and the Twelve Traditions are concerned with the groups and the spiritual direction of A.A. as a whole.

Personally, I find that the Traditions are relevant and applicable to the individual in relationship with all others, whether A.A. members or those outside the rooms of A.A. Without personally taking the Traditions to heart and practising them, my dilemma of powerlessness, in living life on life's terms in relationship with others or within myself, takes over. I lose focus and become part of the problem, not the solution.

I have read that these Traditions have been 'honed on the anvil of experience'. In particular, reading the history of the development of the Third Tradition that experience contained not a small measure of tragedy. People suffering from the disease of alcoholism did die. They were excluded from the rooms of A.A. because these individuals did not meet the arbitrary requirements of the early A.A. groups.

In the early years of Alcoholics Anonymous, the Alcoholic Foundation, as it was then known, called for all the groups of the day to share their membership qualifications or rules. Those qualifications were so many and varied, most based on fear, prejudice and ignorance, that the general rule was that of intolerance and exclusion. Individuals were barred from A.A. and actually asked to leave the group. In one case a letter was written to an individual telling her she wasn't good enough to be amongst them. She died of our disease.

From these brutal lessons Tradition Three was born: "Love and Tolerance is our code". Because of these lessons, I am constantly challenged to examine my fears, my intolerance and prejudice and very definitely my ignorance. On the other hand, I am also challenged to share my experience, strength and hope on the even playing field of our disease, alcoholism. "Going into that dark cave" of the still suffering alcoholic with him is a gift. We have suffered too and know whereof we speak.

We can offer our experience, strength and hope to anyone with a desire to stop drinking, with a 'wish to recover'. When I take to heart the Twelve Traditions in light of the Twelve Steps, I may be able to offer my group an informed conscience or discernment as opposed to opinion or judgement, so that our A.A. group is that sanctuary to the still suffering alcoholic, a safe place for that person to learn to become sober and whole through the Steps and Traditions of A.A.

When I came through those doors, those who came before were there for me. As a group and as the individuals who guided me through those Steps, I knew I was home and with a family. I was safe. (But like any family we do have squabbles, and we all have different learning curves...*love and tolerance...love and tolerance.....*)

In the long form of the Third Tradition, the group consists of "*alcoholics gathered together for sobriety, provided that, as group, they have no other affiliation*". I am an alcoholic. I need to hear how you, another alcoholic, maintain your sobriety in the light of the Twelve and Twelve. I need to hear your experience, your strength, your hope. I need to be with others who share this burden called alcoholism. I need to live in the solution of the Steps and Traditions of A.A. As the ones who were excluded in the early years, I will die of this disease if I cannot live in the solution.

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## *Focus: Value in the Grapevine*

Little did I know, at the time, that all these changes and inabilities to get along was the very starting point to my journey to AA. At one point, I ran across a person from one church who had not seen me in quite some time and asked where I had been. I told him that I changed churches as the one I was now going to was a bit closer to home. The look on his face changed and became rather negative. He told me that he would pray for me. I carried that around for a long time, not quite understanding why that happened.

When I got into the Fellowship not once did anyone speak to me about my spiritual practices or where I came from but I was accepted just the way I was. It was quite a different feeling from what I knew. I had to relearn what I thought about people. AA members were willing to help no matter what group they, or I, came from. That is true Spirituality at work. I still have that Higher Power in my life today and, thanks to this Fellowship, that relationship is now more real than it has ever been.

This is my passion for Our Meeting in Print and why I have desire to carry it further. That it can stir up such emotion in me is still as much a miracle in my life today as it was the first time I picked it up.

Thad R.  
Grapevine, Area 86

When I was asked to write a piece on Tradition 4 for the newsletter, I first thought that I could do this myself and use my vast intelligence and copy things out of the "Twelve and Twelve" and off the net. Then I remembered intelligence is only in the eye of the beholder and that I did not fit there. I was always taught that AA works as a team so I decided to go to the Friday Morning Tradition Group here in St. Thomas and ask them to discuss this Tradition.

## *Focus: Tradition Four*

The first thing mentioned was autonomous and was referred to as: "Autonomy is the privilege to rule your group" If you look it up in the dictionary, it is defined as: "having autonomy; not subject to control from outside; independent; *a subsidiary that functioned as an autonomous unit*".

We then discussed things that can affect other groups or AA as a whole. One thing mentioned was about a group on our East Coast that stated at their meeting that it is okay to drink as long as you do not get drunk. That did not enable newcomers to identify what he or she was powerless over alcohol. Other things mentioned were groups having rules and regulations. These two items surely affect the newcomer and his identification of AA. A group in Middleton that built the big 3 story building that had the 61 rules and regulations and the man that organized this whole thing and made himself president is the one who made up a little card which said, "Middleton Group #1, Rule #62. This, in itself, turned many people away from our program. We have to be totally aware that our main purpose is to make sure the newcomer hears the right things about this program or he or she may not return, which affects AA as a whole.

Another thing mentioned was that we have to remember that AA's singleness of purpose is to help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety. This is why only alcoholism should be discussed at an AA meeting. Discussing other addictions can turn a new or older member away from our program.

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Using foul language at a meeting can also not only get a group discharged from the church but can also do this to other groups using this location for their meetings.

Foul language can also turn not only newcomers, but people with a good length of sobriety away from AA as a whole. It should not be used, as a rule, but should be mentioned to a member using it, after the meeting.

Finally, our purpose at each meeting is to follow the 12<sup>th</sup> Step and carry the message and practice the principals in all our affairs. By doing this, each group assists in helping this program to grow and save more lives. It was said that if groups stay within the guidelines of all 12 traditions things will go on as they must and so they have over the past 75 years of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Ken D.  
DCM, District 6

***Focus: Tradition Four ... (continued)***

***Focus: Tradition Three ... (continued)***

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This leads us to our Primary Purpose.

By modifying the purpose even through the most 'innocent-looking' of affiliations, the message to the alcoholic becomes compromised, unfocused and diluted. That precious point of contact will and does get lost. The newcomer, the alcoholic, will find the excuse: "They (A.A.) are not speaking my language."

This alcoholic has nowhere to go. I use the present tense here as it does happen and, in my experience, it has happened.

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

Lesley S.  
DCM, District 17

**AREA OFFICERS**

**Area Delegate:** Dean T.

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**Area Chair:** Anil G.

**Area Treasurer:** Mary K.

**Area Secretary/Registrar** Jim W.

Comments, feedback or articles contact

**[www.area86aa.org](http://www.area86aa.org)**

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Why have a  
**UNITY DAY?**

- *Have an opportunity to meet someone from GSO*
- *Hear a GSO member share about their work at GSO*
- *Meet your Service counterparts in other Districts*
- *Meet Service counterparts in Area 83*
- *Enjoy the fellowship of others in Service*
- *Get new ideas for Service from other Districts*
- *Hear how being in Service can enhance your sobriety*
- *Have a fantastic dinner*
- *Work with other Districts to organize Unity Day*

**Volunteers, Financial Contributions and other Assistance are welcome**

**If you or your District can help in any way**

**Please Contact Pat S. at: [dcmdistrict7@live.com](mailto:dcmdistrict7@live.com)**

**Please note that District 7 has voted not to pursue the idea of having Unity Day unless there is involvement from other Districts**

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