

Between every thought and action, there is time for a choice.

SOBRIETY SENTINEL

APRIL 2023 - REPRESENTING DISTRICTS 14, 19 and 20 of AREA 38 - TRICOUNTYAA.ORG

TRADITION 2 AND BEYOND

Like the 12 Steps guide us in recovery, the 12 Traditions guide the AA Groups and our larger AA Fellowship itself. They outline how A.A. maintains its unity and relates itself to the world about it, the way it lives and grows." They are the glue that holds our organization together and the compass that guides us in the right direction. Each month we'll look at our traditions, where possible, associate it with one or more of the Steps and describe how it can be used in our relationships beyond Alcoholics Anonymous, i.e., in all our affairs.

Short Form: 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.

A.A. is both a democracy and, in Bill W.'s words, "a benign anarchy." A group elects its own officers—who have no power to order anybody to do anything. In most groups, most of

the slate rotates out of office at the end some pre-determined period, and new officers are elected. If a group wants to be a part of the whole A.A. service structure, it elects a G.S.R. (general service representative). G.S.R.s elect area committee members and then join them in electing a delegate from their area to the annual General Service Conference.

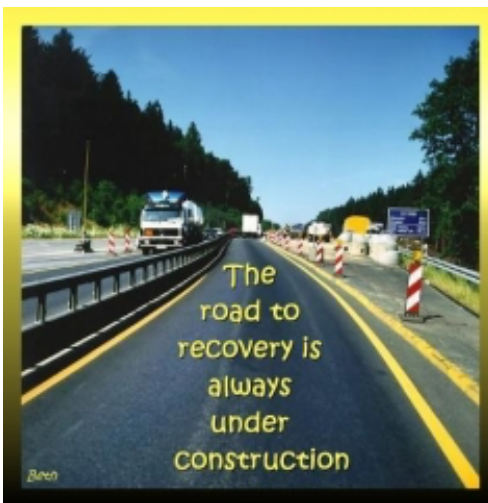
The Conference is about the closest approximation of a government that A.A. has; it produces opinions on important matters of policy; it approves the choice of some trustee nominees for the General Service Board and directly elects others. But neither the Conference nor the board can give orders to any group or member. Then who's in charge around here? A.A. is a spiritual movement, and so the "ultimate authority" is the spiritual concept of the "group conscience." Its voice is heard when a well-informed group gathers to arrive at a decision. The result rests on more than arithmetic, a "yes" and "no" count. Minority ideas get thoughtful attention. What about that annoying character who's always sure she's right. If she's wrong, then

she will—if she remembers the First Tradition as well as the Second—go along with the decision of the group conscience. Does this notion seem too cloudy? Let's think back to our first meetings. The presence we newcomers felt in those rooms was the same as the group conscience. And it was real—welcoming us in, setting up no barriers of rules.... **God is in charge.** He is the one authority and we must learn somehow to subjugate our ego's and allow Him to do what he does best: guide his children.

Principles: Trust-Humility

Tradition - Step Connection: The second step raises the question of how I can come to believe and what is sanity. I came to believe, in part, by trusting the group conscience in A.A., and then I began to trust a Higher Power. The experience of trusting A.A. to keep me sober is the experience that gave me confidence in God. This is how the second tradition helped me to come to believe.

*Written By: Greg K.
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Find Your Tribe

When I came into the rooms of AA I had one real friend left. My best friend of twenty years and she was already in the program. She introduced me to other women but I kept most of them at a distance. I couldn't trust women. I didn't care about becoming friends with new women. I eventually found my way to a sponsor who made me feel safe enough to TRY to trust her. I quickly found that it wasn't hard at all. She was loving and kind and met me where I was at. She held me accountable, led me through the steps, and loved me unconditionally. My sponsor had several other sponsees and

she encouraged relationships with each other. She fostered this by having a daily group text reflection and by having us all meet together at her house or at certain meetings. Over time, I learned how to have friends and how to be a friend. I learned that even though they weren't blood related, they were my sisters. Today, I am surrounded by a healthy group of friends who I consider my family. A family to fill the gap at a time when I have set boundaries and detached from my biological, toxic family. Everyone fits in somewhere. Look for the similarities. When you see someone in a meeting who has what you want.... Go get it! Take a leap of faith, find your tribe!

ANONYMOUS

Using Tradition Two In Our Relationships Beyond A.A

God is our single authority and we must learn somehow to suppress our ego's and allow Him to do what he does best: guide his children. When one individual speaks for the relationship (or group) without consulting the other member(s), they take on responsibilities to which they have no claim. Often, one individual is dominating. Sometimes, the other(s) are content to allow that individual to dominate the relationship (or group). This allows the dominator to feel indispensable and important and without realizing it, he or she then assumes a managing and controlling attitude. This is especially true when the one(s) being dominated are afraid and unsure of themselves and want someone else to be responsible for all the decisions. They may feel that this absolves them of any kind of blame for mistakes or failure. In a situation such as this, love doesn't exist. We must remember that active participation by all members in the relationship is vital to its growth. No individual can assume the position of speaking for the other(s) without first having consulted them. Another word for this, at the very least, is courtesy. Usually, most of us find courtesy easily practiced with strangers or those outside our relationships yet

when we are dealing with the most precious persons in our lives, we sometimes leave simple kindness out of our manner.

There is another tool, but you probably won't like it.. It's called the 8 miracle words for problem solving. Are you ready? **"I'm sorry. I was wrong. Please forgive me."**

One problem we have had is that no one likes confrontation. We will stuff things rather than risk a flare-up. We are too insecure. The risk for doing this however is that resentments can build up. So it is important that we do whatever it takes to communicate with each other.

When this tradition is practiced, a state of humility exists because the authority is a Higher Power.

Checklist for Tradition 2 in Relationships

- Do I insist on being the leader. Do I feel that it is my place to govern? Do we strive for equity?
- Do I try to speak for my partner or group without consulting him/her/them?
- Do I criticize my my partner or group? Or do I trust him/her/them?
- Am I absolutely trustworthy?

Try this little prayer: **"God, treat me tomorrow the way I treat my partner or group today. Or this one: God, help me not to do anything today that I can't tell my partner or group about tonight"**.

- Is my ego so strong that I must have credit for more than I do? Am I so insecure that I must always have praise for my actions and ideas?
- Do I do my share? And is that my opinion or my partner or group's?
- Does the thought of God being in charge of our relationship cause me any discomfort or do I like and rely on that idea?

Written By: Greg K.



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FIRST TIME STEP TAKERS...One Day At A Time

The first time I walked into the doors of AA was because I had a desire to get people off my back about my alcohol solution. I quickly discovered I could hold the people that loved me hostage by just doing a few things that looked good and then just doing what I wanted after some time had passed. I was defiant to the core about my alcoholism! Needless to say, my life got worse.

The last first time I walked into the doors of AA, I had had enough. There were serious consequences. There was a real desire, a little open-mindedness, and a whole lot of willingness. I was so tired of what I had become. I took a suggestion, and procured myself a sponsor. We started working the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous to the best of my ability at that time.

The first time through the steps of AA was a lesson in humility for sure. I say humility and not humiliation for a reason. It all made sense logically but the amount of work it required to actually do the steps was extensive. It seemed overwhelming. My sponsor said the steps are in order for a reason. All the bullet points for living a happy and contented life were there, but my alcoholic mind was still skeptical. I wanted to feel whole again, so I did what was suggested by my sponsor.

After all, nothing else I tried had worked...I am so grateful that I did.



Everything I thought I knew when I started the steps was completely false! I knew I was probably an alcoholic, but I knew I could manage my own life...until I couldn't. Then the whole higher power thing...ughh. Come on, really with this shit again. Admitting to another man my faults...Nope! I wanted everything offered, yet I was still a bit defiant in my mind. I did what was asked hoping on the inside that it would work this time.

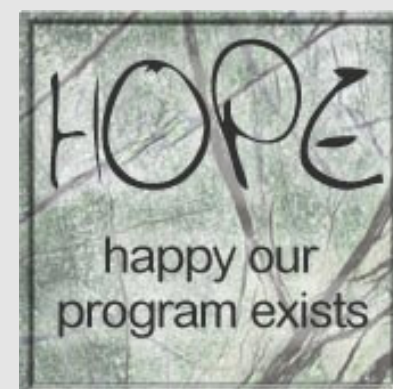
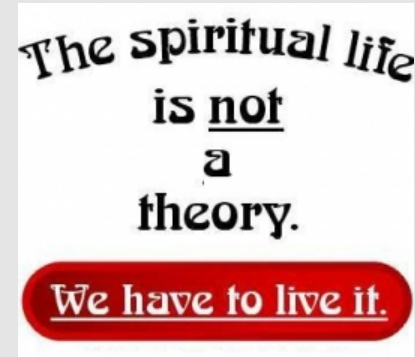
I was on step 3 when a close friend told me, "You are not the same person you were a few months ago. There is something about you that is better and we all like this version of you better. Keep it up." At that time, I was struggling to continue in a relationship, work, dealing with being sober, and trying to find and believe in a higher power. I don't believe I am supposed to know why this person told

me this, but this was the day I began to truly understand the term "faith thru action." This wasn't possible with me managing my life by myself. I was truly ready to continue working the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Looking back on it, I really only got the cliff notes for living a sober and serene life without my old alcohol solution. The remaining steps were a blur. Steps 8 and 9 were completed as thoroughly as I could, given where I was in my journey. Steps 10, 11, and 12 were discussed and the knowledge was given to me. There were really no "bright-light" moments while working the steps but, occasionally in a meeting or talking with another alcoholic I would experience mini-moments of peacefulness. It was always my choice to do what I wanted with the knowledge. To this day, I believe I chose wisely in that respect. I discovered in the steps how to examine my defects of character and how a higher power can help with those. I learned how to stay in the moment, reflect on the day, and admit my faults promptly. I discovered what a resentment was, how to deal with that resentment, and how to learn through humility, not humiliation. Although learning through pain is still an option, it's not always my first option. My life still depends on these

facts every day.

As I continue to work these steps, my understanding of what a step 7 or a step 10 requires continues to evolve. Today, it is my job to work on refining the cliff notes that were freely given to me so I can handle anything that this life throws at me. I rely on a higher power, a sponsor, and many, many people in the program to help me navigate life. It holds true today that I have a daily reprieve from my alcoholism based on maintenance of my spiritual condition. If I ever forget this for any period of time, I believe that my life will be jeopardy once again. This program is truly a program of spiritual progress and not spiritual perfection.



Written By: Mark S.

DECLARATION OF UNITY: This we owe to AA's future: to place our common welfare first; to keep our fellowship united. For on AA unity depends our lives, and the lives of those to come.

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

Sentinel Sarcasm...Rule 62



DELUSION #2 OF ALCOHOLISM

RECAP: It's imperative to understand that this essay is not A.A.-approved literature nor endorsed by anyone in recovery rooms; it's simply one recovered alcoholic sharing their experience, strength, and hope with others who might identify and benefit from the conveyed material. In no way am I suggesting that there are only five delusions manifested from the illness of alcoholism; there are countless layers of delusion/illusion/deception that exist at a subconscious level in every human being, especially alcoholics. I aim to put them into a framework that anyone can comprehend and extract meaning and value for their recovery.

Delusion Number One (NOT ME): "I am not an alcoholic." Denial says, "I know it's over there in the corner staring at me, but I am purposely going to ignore what it represents in my life." On the other hand, *delusion stares me down, eyeball to eyeball, and I cannot see it for what it truly is.* That, my friends, is why most alcoholics burn their life to the ground before

ever achieving sobriety. The Big Book describes it this way, "I can't see myself for what I truly am, and I cannot differentiate the true from the false."

Delusion Number Two (VICTIMIZATION): *I am an alcoholic, but please don't assume that it's my fault, a.k.a. victimization.*

To conclude that others were wrong is about as far as most of us ever got. The delusion of victimization is powerful and can enslave any person for a lifetime, much less an alcoholic. The art of "passing the buck" goes back thousands of years, more likely billions of years, depending on your calculation of the age of humanity. There is a popular bible story where the man blames the woman, and the woman blames the serpent. Humans have blamed each other for their hardships from the beginning of time.

The problem with victimization, especially for the alcoholic, is that *we can drink ourselves to death, and it's not our fault.* We can blow out our veins, nostrils, lungs, and brains and never fully take responsibility for our actions. We can spend the rest of our lives living in a 9x7 or 10x6 prison cell

and never believe it's our fault.

If we are going to recover from alcoholism, we must take ownership of our lives and toss the victim card. If we fail to accomplish this, there is little hope for permanent recovery, and self-harm will continue to rear its ugly head. Hurt people hurt people, and broken people do broken things, including harming themselves in destructive ways. All of us have suffered a lot of drama and trauma, some graver than others, throughout our lives, much of which is self-inflicted because of some of the twisted perceptions we cling to about the world and the people in it, especially ourselves.

The Twelve Steps suggested as a program of recovery, especially Steps 4-9, will aid in ridding victimization from our lives. Unfortunately, even if you find the willingness to toss the victim card, you still must overcome delusion number three; which we will unpack in the May issue of the Sobriety Sentinel.

Written By: Harold L.

Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace!

That where there is hatred, I may bring love.

That where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness.

That where there is discord, I may bring harmony.

That where there is error, I may bring truth.

That where there is doubt, I may bring faith.

That where there is despair, I may bring hope.

That where there are shadows, I may bring light.

That where there is sadness, I may bring joy.

Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort, than to be comforted.

To understand, than to be understood.

To love, than to be loved.

For it is by self-forgetting that one finds.

It is by forgiving that one is forgiven.

It is by dying that one awakens to Eternal Life.

—Saint Francis of Assisi—

THIRD STEP PRAYER

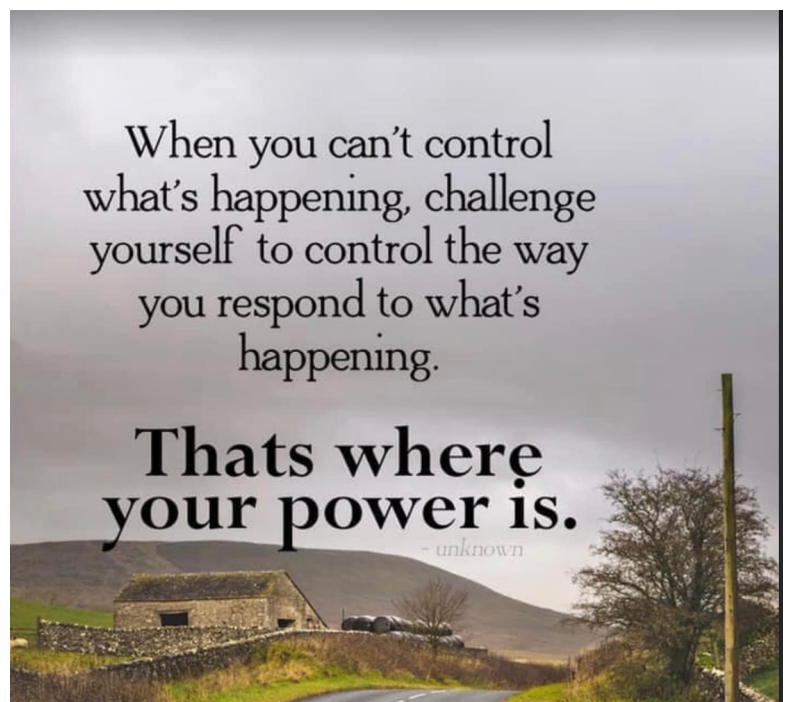
I offer myself to thee. To build with me and do with me as thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, That victory over them may bear witness To those I would help of Thy power, Thy love and Thy way of life, May I do Thy will always!

If you want to feel better, go to meetings

If you want to recover work the steps...

SEVENTH STEP PRAYER

My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding.



Are you

"ON THE BEAM"

| ON THE BEAM | OFF THE BEAM |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| ----- | ----- |
| HONESTY | DISHONEST |
| FAITH | FEAR |
| COURAGE | FRIGHTENED |
| CONSIDERATE | INCONSIDERATE |
| HUMILITY | PRIDE |
| GIVING | GREEDY |
| CALM | ANGER |
| GRATEFUL | ENVY |
| PATIENCE | IMPATIENT |
| TOLERANCE | INTOLERANT |
| FORGIVENESS | RESENTMENT |
| LOVE | HATE |
| SELF-FORGETFULNESS | SELF-PITY |
| HUMILITY | SELF-JUSTIFICATION |
| MODESTY | SELF-IMPORTANCE |
| SELF-FORGIVENESS | SELF-CONDEMNATION |
| TRUST | SUSPICION |
| MODERATION | GLUTTONY |
| ACTION | SLOTH |