

11th Tradition

November 6, 2010

11th Tradition Short Form: *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.*

11th Tradition 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 principal of attraction rather than promotion. There is never a 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 alcoholic who still does not know us. For years to come, our growth is sure to depend upon the strength and numbers of these lifelines. One serious public relations calamity could always turn thousands away from us to perish – a matter of life and death indeed. (Language of the Heart p. 91)

But these are not the allures they once were. Vividly, we are becoming aware that no member ought to describe himself in full view of the general public as an A.A., even for the most worthy purpose, lest a perilous precedent be set which would tempt others to do likewise for purposes not so worthy. We see that on breaking anonymity by press, radio, or pictures, any one of us could easily transfer the valuable name of alcoholics anonymous over onto any enterprise or into the midst of any controversy. So it is becoming our code that there are things that no A.A. ever does, lest he divert A.A. from its sole purpose and injure our public relations. And thereby the chances of those sick ones yet to come. To the million alcoholics who have not yet heard our A.A. story, we should ever say, “greetings and welcome. Be assured that we shall never weaken the lifelines which we float out to you. In our public relations, we shall, God willing, keep the faith.” (Language of the Heart p. 92)

MySpace, Facebook and other social networking Web sites are public in nature. Though users create accounts and utilize usernames and passwords, once on the site, it is a public medium where A.A. members and non-A.A.s mingle. As long as individuals do not identify themselves as A.A. members, there is no conflict of interest. However, someone using their full name and/or a likeness, such as a full-face photograph, would be contrary to the spirit of the Eleventh Tradition, which states in the Long Form that, “...our [last] names and pictures as A.A. members ought not be broadcast, filmed or publicly printed.”

Experience suggests that it is in keeping with the Eleventh Tradition not to disclose A.A. membership on social networking sites as well as on any other Web site, blog, electronic bulletin board, etc., that is not composed solely of A.A. members, is not password protected or is accessible to the public. (A.A. Guidelines for the Internet)

Veteran newsmen, trained doubters that they are, have gone all out to carry A.A.’s message. To them, we are something more than the source of good stories. On almost every news front, the men and women of the press have attached themselves to us as friends.

In the beginning, the press could not understand our refusal of all personal publicity. They were generally baffled by our insistence upon anonymity. Then they got the point. Here was something rare in the world – a society that said it wished to publicize its principle and its work, but not its individual

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members. The press was delighted with this attitude. Ever since, these friends have reported A.A. with an enthusiasm which the most ardent members would find hard to match.

At one point, about a hundred of our society were breaking anonymity at the public level. With perfectly good intent, these folks declared that the principle of anonymity was horse – and – buggy stuff, something appropriate to A.A.'s pioneering days. They were sure that A.A. could go faster and farther if it availed itself of modern publicity methods. A.A. then pointed out, included many persons of local, national or international fame. Provided they were willing – and many were – why shouldn't their membership be publicized, thereby encouraging others to join us? These were plausible arguments, but happily our friends of the writing profession disagreed with them. (Twelve and Twelve pg. 182)

This, in brief, is the process by which A.A.'s Tradition Eleven was constructed. To us, however, it represents far more than a sound public relations policy. It is more than a denial of self-seeking. This tradition is a constant and practical reminder that personal ambition has no place in A.A. In it, each member becomes an active guardian of our fellowship. (Twelve and Twelve pg.183)

Questions for Discussion:

- 1) As individuals in A.A., why shouldn't we break our anonymity at the public level?
- 2) How could breaking anonymity at the public level hurt you?
- 3) Is it against tradition eleven to break anonymity on a social networking site?
- 4) What are some people's experience keeping within the 11th tradition while doing A.A. on the internet?
- 5) What is A.A. method for public relations?
- 6) Where can we break our anonymity as members of Alcoholics Anonymous?
- 7) Where is the spirit of sacrifice evident in the 11th Tradition?

Definitions of Words:

Sensational: Arousing or intended to arouse strong curiosity, interest, or reaction, especially by exaggerated or lurid details

Public Relations: The actions of a corporation, store, government, individual, etc. in promoting good will between itself and the public, the community, employees, customers, etc....

Policy: A definite course of action adopted for the sake of expediency

Attraction: A person or thing that draws, attracts, allures or entices

Anonymity: Lacking individuality, unique character or distinction

Promotion: Something devised to publicize or advertise a product, cause, institution, etc...brochure, free sample, poster, television or radio commercial or personal appearance