

Tradition Twelve

Short Form: *“Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities”*

Long Form: *And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.*

The spiritual substance of anonymity is sacrifice. Because A.A.’s Twelve Traditions repeatedly ask us to give up personal desires for the common good, we realize that the sacrificial spirit, well symbolized by anonymity, is the foundation of all these Traditions. It is A.A.’s provided willingness to make these sacrifices that give people high confidence in our future.

Tradition Twelve, in its mood of humble anonymity, plainly enough comprehends the preceding eleven. The "Twelve Points of Tradition" are little else than a specific application of the spirit of the "Twelve Steps of Recovery" to our group life and to our relations with society in general. The Recovery Steps would make each individual A.A. whole and one with God; the Twelve Points of Tradition would make us one with each other and whole with the world about us. Unity is our aim.

As Tradition Twelve reminds us, we have something stronger than our human personalities to rely on. Our principles come first- and they are not our own invention. They reflect eternal spiritual values. With this Tradition, both as individuals and as a fellowship, we humbly acknowledge our dependence on a power higher than ourselves.

Moved by the spirit of anonymity, we try to give up our natural desires for personal distinction as A.A. members both among fellow alcoholics and before the general public. As we lay aside these very human aspirations, we believe that each of us takes part in the weaving of a protective mantle which covers our whole society and under which we may grow and work in unity.

Our A.A. Traditions are, we trust, securely anchored in those wise precepts: charity, gratitude and humility. Nor have we forgotten *prudence*. May these virtues ever stand clear before us in our meditations; may Alcoholics Anonymous serve God in happy unison for so long as He may need us.

Perhaps the main challenge and barrier in interpreting and applying the Traditions in a spiritual manner, is a propensity of many members to inform themselves with little more than what is printed on the short form window-shade displays of the principles. The spiritual application of the principles is a function of how well members are informed either on their own initiative or by others. Interpretations can vary widely depending on whether a member is acting as an "AA lawyer" or an "AA unifier."

All too often a member will extract a word or two from the short form of the Traditions or Concepts and interpret the principle(s) as their semantic imagination leads them rather than to be constructively informed by AA literature. There is much helpful literature e.g. the books "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" "AA Comes of Age" "Twelve Concepts for World Service" by Bill W, or the pamphlets "The Twelve Traditions Illustrated" and/or "Twelve Concepts Illustrated" and other pamphlets and service pieces.

How anonymous should an AA member be:

Our growth made it plain that we couldn't be a secret society, but it was equally plain that we couldn't be a vaudeville circuit, either. The charting of a safe path between these extremes took a long time. When opportunities to be helpful came along, he (the AA member) found he could talk easily about A.A. to almost anyone. These quiet disclosures helped him to lose his fear of the alcoholic stigma, and spread the news of A.A.'s existence in his community. Many a new man and woman came to A.A. because of such conversations. Though not in the strict letter of anonymity, such communications were well within spirit.

[Dr. Bob] said there were two ways to break the Anonymity Tradition: (1) by giving your name at the public level of press or radio; (2) by being so anonymous that you can't be reached by other drunks. - *Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers*, page 264

Dr. Bob stated that within the group, every member should know the first name, last name, address and phone number of all the members in the group. If these are not known, then we as a group are operating ABOVE the level of anonymity intended..... We are not able to be of Service to One Another in Time of Need.

Important words:

Anonymity: The quality or state of being unknown or unacknowledged.

Spiritual: Of, relating to, consisting of, or having the nature of spirit; not tangible or material. Of, concerned with, or affecting the soul. Relating to or having the nature of spirits or a spirit; supernatural.

Foundation: establishment or basis

Tradition: The transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation, or the fact of being passed on in this way, A long-established custom or belief that has been passed on in this way.

Principle: A fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning. A rule or belief governing one's personal behavior

Personality: The combination of characteristics or qualities that form an individual's distinctive character, Qualities that make someone interesting or popular.

~We are sure that humility, expressed by anonymity, is the greatest safeguard that Alcoholics Anonymous can ever have.~

Tradition Twelve Checklist

1. Why is it good idea for me to place the common welfare of all AA members before individual welfare? What would happen to me if AA as a whole disappeared?
2. When I do not trust AA' s current servants, who do I wish had the authority to straighten them out?
3. In my opinions of and remarks about other AAs, am I implying membership requirements other than a desire to stay sober?
4. Do I ever try to get a certain AA group to conform to my standards, not its own?
5. Have I a personal responsibility in helping an AA group fulfill its primary purpose? What is my part?
6. Does my personal behavior reflect the Sixth Tradition—or belie it?
7. Do I do all I can do to support AA financially? When is the last time I anonymously gave away a Grapevine subscription?
8. Do I complain about certain AAs' behavior—especially if they are paid to work for AA? Who made me so smart?
9. Do I fulfill all AA responsibilities in such a way as to please privately even my own conscience? Really?
10. Do my utterances always reflect the Tenth Tradition, or do I give AA critics real ammunition?
11. Should I keep my AA membership a secret, or reveal it in private conversation when that may help another alcoholic (and therefore me)? Is my brand of AA so attractive that other drunks want it?
12. What is the real importance of me among more than a million AAs?