

Our A.A. experience has taught us that:

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 is our common welfare? I have noted a few passages from our literature that help to describe our common welfare.

<u>Common-</u>	Belonging equally to or shared equally by two or more
<u>Welfare-</u>	Prosperity, and general well being
<u>Solution-</u>	The answer to a problem. The ending of a disease.
<u>Peril</u>	A condition of imminent danger, exposure to the risk of harm or loss
<u>Unity-</u>	The state of being one, singleness

All these, and many others, have one **symptom in common**: they cannot start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving. This phenomenon, as we have suggested, may be the manifestation of an allergy which differentiates these people, and sets them apart in a distinct entity. It has never been, by any treatment with which we are familiar, permanently eradicated. The only relief we have to suggest is entire abstinence. *Alcoholics Anonymous pg. XXVIII*

The feeling of having shared in the **common peril** is one element in the powerful cement which binds us. But that in itself would never have held us together as we are now joined. *Alcoholics Anonymous pg. 17*

The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a **common solution**. We have a way out which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. This is the great news this book carries to those who suffer from alcoholism. *Alcoholics Anonymous pg. 17*

The unity of Alcoholics Anonymous is the most cherished quality our society has. Our lives, the lives of all to come, depend squarely upon it. We stay whole or A.A. surely dies. Without Unity, the heart of A.A. would cease to beat; our world arteries would no longer carry the life-giving grace of God; his gift to us would be spent aimlessly. Back again in their caves, alcoholics would reproach us and say, "What a great thing A.A. might have been!" *Twelve steps and Twelve Traditions pg 129*

When A.A. was very young, the first members clearly saw the preservation of its unity as a life-or-death matter for themselves and for the alcoholics still un-recovered. The First Tradition states this aim, and it is the common aim of all Twelve Traditions. Our society then entered a fearsome and exciting adolescent period. The test that it faced was this: Could these large numbers of erstwhile erratic alcoholics successfully meet and work together? Would there be quarrels over membership, leadership, and money? Would there be strivings for power and prestige? Would there be schisms which would split A.A. apart? Soon A.A. was beset by these very problems on every side and in every group. But out of this frightening and at first disrupting experience the conviction grew that A.A.'s had to hang together or die separately. We had to **unify** our fellowship or pass off the scene. *Alcoholics Anonymous pg's. XVIII-XIX*

Countless times, in as many cites and hamlets, we reenacted the story of Eddie Rickenbacker and his courageous company when their plane crashed in the Pacific. Like us, they had suddenly found themselves saved from death, but still floating upon a perilous sea. How well they saw that their common welfare came first. None might become selfish of water or bread. Each needed to consider the others, and in abiding faith they knew they must find their real strength. And this they did find, in measure to transcend all the defects of their frail craft, every test of uncertainty, pain, fear, and despair, and even the death of one. *Twelve steps and Twelve Traditions pg 131*

When A.A. reached the age of 35, the aim was restated in the theme of 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.**

To many minds all this liberty for the individual spells sheer anarchy. Every newcomer, every friend who looks at A.A. for the first time is greatly puzzled. They see liberty verging on license, yet they recognize at once that A.A. has an irresistible strength of purpose and action. "How," they ask, "can such a crowd of anarchists function at all?" How can they possibly place their common welfare first? What in Heaven's name holds them together?" *Twelve steps and Twelve Traditions pg 130*

Those who look closely soon have the key to this strange paradox. The A.A. member has to conform to the principles of recovery; His life actually depends upon obedience to spiritual principles. If he deviates too far, the penalty is sure and swift; he sickens and dies. At first he goes along because he must, but later he discovers a way of life he really wants to live. Moreover, he finds he cannot keep this priceless gift unless he gives it away. Neither he nor anybody else can survive unless he carries the A.A. message. The moment this Twelfth step work forms a group, another discovery is made -- that most individuals cannot recover unless there is a group. Realization dawns that he is but a small part of a great whole; that no personal sacrifice is too great for preservation of the Fellowship. He learns that the clamor of desires and ambitions within him must be silenced whenever these could damage the group. It becomes plain that the group must survive or the individual will not. *Twelve steps and Twelve Traditions pg 130*

Thus has it been with A.A. By faith and by works we have been able to build upon the lessons of an incredible experience, they live today in the twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, which – God willing – shall sustain us in unity for so long as He may need us.