

TRADITION ONE

Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on Nicotine Anonymous unity.

Does this mean that the individual must conform to all aspects of our program? Certainly not! The sentence in AA's "Big Book" that introduces the Steps reads- "Here are the steps we took, which are *suggested* (italics our emphasis) as a program of recovery." Similarly, the Traditions use the word "ought" and "should" as *guidelines*, offered from experience.

Tradition One reminds us that our common welfare comes first. By putting our common welfare first, individuals put themselves second. Each individual member of Nicotine Anonymous is a part of the whole. Nicotine Anonymous needs to live as an entity so that we, as individual members, may continue to live -- free of nicotine. We come to understand that each of us needs to internalize the principles of recovery because our lives depend on our adherence to spiritual principles. Individually, we are "one for all"; as a group we are "all for one." As a fellowship we remain united on core issues of recovery. If not, we jeopardize personal recovery and risk weakening the bonds of our fellowship.

One of our core issues was addressed by group conscience at the 1988 World Services Conference which established a clear understanding for our definition of *abstinence*. Since 1988, we define abstinence as "a state that begins when all use of nicotine ceases." Although our name was *Smokers Anonymous* at the time, we collectively agreed that abstinence from nicotine was our primary purpose, not any particular method of delivery. In 1990, our name became Nicotine Anonymous, which broadened our awareness and outreach as a program to include nicotine addiction in *all* forms.

In accordance with Tradition Ten, we have "no opinion on outside issues" such as any product used for a withdrawal aid. Each individual determines his or her nicotine free date. The fellowship as a whole and by extension, each group provides a structure and a unity of purpose which allows us to welcome all, without judgment.

The group's sole objective is recovery for the individual. Individual and group survival depends on friendly relationships between group members. In our meetings, members share their

personal experiences about recovery while other members listen. While each member has a right to express his or her views, an individual member may have to accept the group's majority voice graciously. An open mind is helpful when listening to other members' ideas or opinions.

Spiritually healthy groups usually have members who feel some "ownership" of their "home" group through active participation. They willingly volunteer to take on the responsibilities of running the group. They serve as chairperson, secretary, or treasurer. They take a literature or meeting set up commitment. Generally, these members have benefited from our program of recovery and share that experience in a service role clearly visible to the newcomer.

On the other hand, what happens when an individual member refuses to accept a group decision? Each member has to decide for himself or herself how to respond to such a situation. Some may feel the issue is important enough to leave the group, others may decide to simply agree to disagree. A majority vote does not necessarily mean it is "right." Anyone has the option to start a new meeting. It can also occur that a member remains in the group, but becomes resentful, and this may have a negative influence on the group. If other group members become uncomfortable or are scared away, the group may eventually fold. What to do?

No member of Nicotine Anonymous has authority over another. But the group, speaking out of a group conscience does have authority. However, this is an essential reason for members to study the wisdom in all the Traditions in order that they may better fulfill the group's primary purpose (Tradition Five). Being guided by this unified wisdom, the group has a better opportunity to know what the common welfare is and to put it first. Then, by speaking with one voice, this strengthens the unity of Nicotine Anonymous. If we adhere to our name, Nicotine Anonymous, then we can Keep it Simple and make it easier for the newcomer to understand and practice our program of recovery.

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