

TRADITION TWELVE

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Anonymity is so fundamental to our program that our name is based on it. The focus on nicotine and the spiritual commitment to anonymity are essential elements in what distinguishes our program of recovery from other group programs. By honoring Tradition Twelve, members come to realize spiritual benefits that help maintain our fellowship and support the recovery process.

Anonymity levels all of us evenly. This equality fosters a sense of unity, a power greater than lone individuals. Our common welfare depends upon unity and self-sacrifice, as affirmed in Tradition One. By humbly accepting anonymity, numbers develop spiritual strength. Anonymity and humility are spiritual partners, each enhancing the other.

In our Third Step Prayer, we asked to be relieved of the bondage of self and self-seeking motives. Our addiction had us behaving in self-centered ways. The mental obsession made us believe that having nicotine was more important than anyone else's well-being, even our loved ones. Neither our recovery nor our fellowship can survive self-seeking motives.

Anonymity guides us to serve, rather than govern, moving us to do good in this world and show kindness. Avoiding self-promotion, we are less likely to pontificate opinions about outside issues. Our intentions will be more attractive as we carry the message of Nicotine Anonymous. For our groups to be self-supporting, individual members cannot act in self-interest alone.

Placing principles before personalities, we can better accept *anyone* with a desire to stop using nicotine and stay focused on our primary purpose. Newcomers can feel more welcomed where personality is not the standard by which one is measured. Acceptance furthers us along the path to a spiritual awakening.

The principle of confidentiality is more likely to be honored where anonymity is practiced. This enhances the chances that newcomers will *keep showing up* and begin letting go. Nicotine has no less effect on those with notoriety, wealth, intellect, or any other such "social advantage." We all start at Step One. Similarly,

anonymity is there to provide even those of fame with the opportunity to start at Step one and have their confidentiality respected by all members. Confidentiality engenders trust. Where there is trust, the courage to change can receive the support of fellow members. Trust can deepen one's faith in the care and guidance of a higher power.

Mindful of Tradition Twelve, members attend to the message rather than the messenger. Humans may slip, whereas principles endure. Humility lets us listen for the truth, whereas pride permits us to believe our own excuses and rationalizations.

Knowing humans may slip, we also realize that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed at meetings, what with newcomers present who are still unfamiliar with this Tradition. Every group's format ought to clearly remind members that confidentiality is imperative to our fellowship's survival. Trust is precious and all members need to treat it with care.

However, following the practice of using first names only, does not mean a person cannot use a last name within the confines of a group or at fellowship functions. There may be times that using first and last names facilitates organizational responsibilities or to receive mailings. It is the benefits referred in this text that make anonymity an essential practice.

Exercising anonymity and humility does not mean we cannot celebrate. Groups may celebrate a member's abstinence or anniversary with applause and tokens. This is not intended to elevate any one member's status, but simply to celebrate the recovery brought about by honest effort and the grace of a higher power.

Both our personal recovery and the continued growth of our fellowship require humble anonymity in order to maintain our spiritual path. Self-confidence is healthy when balanced with gratitude for the grace we receive and principles we follow. Our program, being open to a higher power defined by each member's own understanding, places principle before personality even at that spiritual level. In a diverse world, the principle of anonymity enables us to come together in a common pursuit and to fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose.

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