

San Diego-Imperial Area 08
Delegate's Report
January 19, 2017

Alcoholics Anonymous has problems and it always will because problems are the nature of life. We are fortunate to have principles to apply in taking action on our problems.

Each of us should be familiar with this as solving a problem with alcohol is the primary reason to engage in the Steps. As I stayed sober, I learned that my problems, rather than completely disappearing, simply changed. As I grew in my personal ability to live in the world, I encountered new and different problems. Today, we are most fortunate in that our founders have done the heavy lifting for us in creating the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts. All we have to do is practice them in all our affairs.

So, it goes with our Fellowship. Life changes. The world changes. In its beginning AA was the cutting edge in welcome news that alcoholics could recover. This new adventure in salvaging those afflicted with alcoholism presented itself along side of the age-old efforts made by religion and medicine of that day. In the now over 80 years since AA began, both religion and medicine moved on and expanded the breadth and depth of their work.

The influence of the religion and medicine as well as a continuously changing and evolving world (the internet and social media for example) cannot be ignored by our membership. We must be conscious of what is going on in the world outside of us because our newcomers are from that world. The newcomers will bring their generation's way of living to us. They will also bring with them whatever they have learned from religion, medicine, and psychology. They are not wrong for that; they are just members of modern society.

Here's an example. I viewed several YouTube videos of a 20-something age newcomer who was making a day-by-day video diary of her progress to achieve sobriety. She posted her videos to the internet showing her full face. She talked about her history of trying other recovery methods; while she said she was hopeful for success in AA, she did talk about safety concerns she experienced inside the group she attended. She displayed her desire chip and the subsequent milestone chips at 30, 60 days. Initially, I was shocked at her full face and complete honesty about the difficulty in getting sober. After a while, I saw she clearly was serious about staying sober. I also realized the video recording and posting of her day-to-day life is usual for her age group, alcoholic or not. The chronology ended. Did she achieve sobriety? Did she die? Did she remain in AA?

This series of videos is a great example of a newcomer arriving in meetings without any knowledge of AA Tradition. She just continued practicing her life in her usual manner. Did she get informed that while she can break her own anonymity, she may want to think seriously about the internet as a form press, radio, TV and film? Was anyone rude to her in informing her about AA Tradition? At this point, the Fellowship has not asked the Conference to change our Tradition of anonymity to explicitly include — the internet. We can see thousands of examples in what is an enormous number of internet postings. Some of them are actually done very well in seeking to share a spiritual experience. Some postings reflect rather negative images of our Fellowship. According to Tradition, we make no comment on them.

But here's an example of the unmanageability of our outside world. I recently received a research paper recommending the treatment industry send their drug-addicted clients to AA because NA meetings are fewer in number and locations. The paper's title is: "Do Drug Dependent Patients Attending Alcoholics Anonymous Rather than Narcotics Anonymous Do As Well?" Here's the context of the study:

"Thus, while on the surface, the primary drug emphases and experiences may be different between AA and NA, there may be enough similarities in the addiction and recovery experiences among young adults with primary drug or primary alcohol problems for them to identify with other AA

members and to find a pathway that can work for them too. This finding that young adults with primary drug problems may benefit from attending AA as much as NA, could be key for individuals where NA meetings are less available than AA meetings.”

You can use this link to view the original study and document:

<https://insidethealcoholicbrain.com/2016/02/05/do-drug-dependent-patients-attending-alcoholics-anonymous-rather-than-narcotics-anonymous-do-as-well/>

Law enforcement, legislation, religion, probation, psychology, medicine, the treatment industry, pharmaceutical and research are all autonomous from Alcoholics Anonymous. What we do know is they will send people to our meetings. We must consider the fact that it would be very rare for those who visit us to know anything about how our meetings work or our Traditions. They may not even be listening when the meeting format is read. Their very life may depend upon how warmly and politely we welcome our visitors. After all, we do ask for newcomers at most every meeting.

A good source of our visitors to consider are those with Driving Under the Influence (DUI) convictions. I have received any complaints from our members that believe many of those who are mandated to attend meetings are not alcoholics. This decision does not belong to any one of us. Alcoholics Anonymous, by our Traditions, does not require anyone to reveal their history to us. We should not make a comment on the work and ideas of any of the institutions who have either mandated or recommended us.

What we can expect is more people to be brought to AA who have no idea of specific Traditions and, especially, the difference between an open and a closed meeting. They will be highly conscious of our claim of being a spiritual program; therefore, any rude or judgmental treatment of our guests will open us to criticism. In all cases, let's focus on what Tradition Three says: It's the member who does or does not make the decision on his/her membership. By this same Tradition, WE have no right to say who our members shall be or not be.

In hearing a high number of complaints about visitors from treatment centers and court-mandated attendees, I have become concerned we aren't giving each visitor a fair chance to learn enough about alcoholism to know whether or not s/he needs AA. At the same time, I am concerned we are not focused on taking the right actions to address some problems that are causing meetings to be evicted. This emphasizes the need and responsibility for the area, as custodians of AA Tradition, to take action in educating professionals who recommend us as well as our membership, especially meeting secretaries.

The area's job under Tradition Nine is to be custodians of AA Tradition. We are self-supporting through our own contributions and self-sustaining through the leadership of our members. It is our responsibility to develop responses to the problems that are presented to us, not ignore them. Our work, as a service committee, is to learn our Traditions through the experience of their application to our changing conditions. We need to actively work in service to our groups to increase their consciousness of the need for each of our individual members to develop knowledge and a practice of our Traditions in extending the hand of AA. The very life of our Fellowship depends on our content thought of others.

How does anyone learn AA Tradition? How long does it take? How did you become conscious of them? Here's a few thoughts that came to my mind about the situations I discuss above.

In "Alcoholics Anonymous", read:

p xix - The paragraph starting with: As we discovered the principles by which the individual alcoholic could live, so we had to evolve principles by which the AA groups and AA as a whole could survive and function effectively. It was thought that....

p 567, the long form of Tradition Nine - **They are the custodians of our AA Tradition and the receivers of voluntary AA contributions by which we maintain....**

In "Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age," p. 288

In our Twelve Traditions we have set our faces against nearly every trend in the outside world. We have denied ourselves personal government, professionalism, and the right to say who our members shall be. We will cooperate with practically everybody,.."

In "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions", p. 151. Tradition Five. What is singleness of purpose really about?