

I love Alcoholics Anonymous and want to embrace the entire A.A. program. **If I am only applying the Twelve Steps, I am using just one-third of the program** because the program of AA is built in a triangle, made up of three parts:

- **Recovery**
the foundation of the triangle
the Twelve Steps
enables me to live with myself
- **Unity**
one side of the triangle
the Twelve Traditions
enables me to live with you
- **Service**
the other side of the triangle
the Twelve Concepts
enables me to serve you



I am writing this because I want to learn more about all the principles of the A.A. program - and because my sponsor "suggested" that I write about the Twelve Traditions for the Conscious Contact ("suggestion from sponsor" = "suggestion to pull ripcord when parachuting"). She has been teaching me that **the Traditions are to be "worked" in my everyday living just like the Steps.**

I have been guided to read about the Traditions in our A.A. literature, to learn how they came about. Also, as I read about the Traditions in *Language of the Heart* or *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, for example, I underline the principles described in them. Another piece of Service Material from the General Service Office that helps me A LOT is the "Traditions Checklist" from the A.A. Grapevine. These questions are intended primarily for individual use (although many A.A. groups use them as a basis for wider discussion).

I read Bill Wilson's words, "...that the Twelve Traditions were going to be just as necessary to the life of our society as the Twelve Steps were to the life of each member. We saw that the **A.A. Traditions were the key to unity, the functioning, and even the survival of Alcoholics Anonymous.**" (*A.A. Comes of Age*, p 204) and know that I want to learn all I can about the Traditions because I want A.A. always to be alive and well.

"Our Traditions are a guide to better ways of working and living, and they are also an antidote for our various maladies." (*A.A. Comes of Age*, p 96) I can live by this set of traditional principles! I am relationship-challenged and need all the help I can get to live and work harmoniously with others.

How do I "work" the Traditions personally? I practice the 12 Steps at the "I" level even though they are written as "we". It is the same with the 12 Traditions - they are practiced at the "I" level.

How do I live the Twelve Traditions in my everyday living? Well, I apply the principles of the Traditions to all groups of which I am a part.

What groups? My A.A. groups, my family group, my love relationship, with my co-workers, neighbors - every arena in which I am involved with other people.

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A Glance at Traditions One & Two

Tradition One: Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.

When reading "Tradition One" in Language of the Heart, several principles came to light:

- Acceptance ("'judge not' we observe most literally")
- Disciplining our selves, and, most of all,
- Humility.

Here are the Tradition One questions from the Checklist I can ask myself, in regards to any group:

Am I in my group a healing, mending, integrating person, or am I divisive? What about gossip and taking other members' inventories?

Am I a peacemaker? Or do I, with pious preludes such as "just for the sake of discussion," plunge into argument?

Am I gentle with those who rub me the wrong way, or am I abrasive?

Do I make competitive AA remarks, such as comparing one group with another or contrasting AA in one place with AA in another?

Do I put down some AA activities as if I were superior for not participating in this or that aspect of AA?

Am I informed about AA as a whole? Do I support, in every way I can, AA as a whole, or just the parts I understand and approve of?

Am I as considerate of AA members as I want them to be of me?

Do I spout platitudes about love while indulging in and secretly justifying behavior that bristles with hostility?

Do I go to enough AA meetings or read enough AA literature to really keep in touch?

Do I share with AA all of me, the bad and the good, accepting as well as giving the help of fellowship?

When taking my inventory using these questions, I was happy with what I found in certain areas of Tradition One. This was because I was already practicing the principles of the Twelve Steps in my daily affairs. Other things were brought to light as well. A couple of examples:

1. I must be gentle with people who rub me the wrong way. I must be tolerant, loving, and kind to people who:
 - Have mistreated/lie to/snubbed/judged me
 - Are inconsiderate
 - Seem stupid
 - Act needy or helpless
 - Whine and complain (As you can see, like other inventories, I am looking at **my** behavior and attitudes.)
2. I see that, although I don't think I do this in the A.A. arena, I must alter my attitude and what I communicate in "other groups" about:
 - Watching television or listening to the news
 - Smoking
 - Any other things I "don't like"
3. I must remember there is not only one way to:
 - Drive to a particular place
 - Arrange the house
 - Organize our stuff
 - Manage the money

I am reminded to be aware of what things do I insist (subtly or not) on having **my** way? I must be ever mindful that I need to really listen and not just say what I want to say.

Humility seems the key to right living. It is my tendency to be spiritually proud and I am talented in self-justification and rebellion. I work hard at behaving myself - and at the same time, I have changed so that my life is generally quite harmonious. It is not a way of life that I have relationship crises - but the exception. I have them though - with my boss, family members, A.A. members, and friends. The difference for me today though is that I take steps to repair as best I can - to admit that I was wrong, to try and repair. Unity of any group I'm in is something I want and am willing to work toward making happen.

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Tradition Two: For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

Humility, again, seems to be a primary principle in the Second Tradition - a reliance on a power greater than me as well as continued self-appraisal and the willingness (and desire) to have my character further refined. I must be mindful of the fact that there is an authority greater than mine - and I'm not referring to **God** - but to the collective consciousness of the group. (Remember, **any** group.)

Actually, so far, it has been rather easy for me to accept the group's decision(s). I can't recall right now when it has been challenging not to. I'm not sure about when a group decides something that I really won't accept - like "to allow smoking in the meeting" or something like that. I really would go elsewhere. I recall reading somewhere "in our literature" or on a "speaker tape from someone who knows" that changing groups like this is not desirable. I don't know. (Remember, I'm learning) I think that the principle of the serenity prayer is applicable in any group too. I may divorce, change jobs or meeting, if I truly think change is the way to go, rather than acceptance and compliance.

Here are the Tradition Two questions from the Checklist I can ask myself, in regards to any group:

Do I criticize or do I trust and support my group officers, AA committees, and office workers?
Newcomers? Old-timers?

Am I absolutely trustworthy, even in secret, with AA Twelfth Step jobs or other AA responsibility?

Do I look for credit in my AA jobs? Praise for my AA ideas?

Do I have to save face in group discussion, or can I yield in good spirit to the group conscience and work cheerfully along with it?

Although I have been sober a few years, am I still willing to serve my turn at AA chores?

In group discussions, do I sound off about matters on which I have no experience and little knowledge?

In looking over the Checklist, I feel pleased with my progress in this area. I decided a long time ago to at least ACT humble even if I don't feel like it - and I think this has carried me a long way - to the point where I actually do feel more humble than I thought possible. (not to say I don't come across like a know-it-all sometimes.)

I aim to not be critical of others - especially AA, but anywhere. I sometimes do think critical, judgmental, superior thoughts - but I rarely give them life. That's what one of my AA teachers taught me when I was brand new: "sometimes we can't control what we think, but we can control whether we bring these things to life by speaking them."

I criticize and do not trust some political/government officials. I think that the principles of the serenity prayer may be applicable here too. I can see that by learning and voting I may possibly bring about change.

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I've been told that there is not an A.A. sober today who don't practice the principles of the 12 traditions. How much better to know what we're doing **and** reap the benefits!