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Letter from Heather

This letter concerns a group I know of that wants to take the word God out of the Steps and rewrite it altogether. Although personally in politics I believe in separation of church and state, myself, but considering the Twelve Steps in not political it seems to me a complete reversal and hypocrisy of what the very basis of Nicotine Anonymous was designed for.

This group wants to vote if they can rewrite all the steps and replace God with Higher Power. God is the very foundation of the third Step and those thereafter.

This to me is a violation of Traditions and on some levels almost as upsetting as turning a nicotine addict away.

The readings in other Twelve Steps groups I've attended say these Traditions are not negotiable. Why is this happening in Nicotine Anonymous?

Please let me know how I can explain to this group that it is not acceptable to remove God from the Steps.

If they don't want God in the Steps, perhaps they should join a private group.

Even if I didn't believe in God, I still recognize the Twelve Step group I attend uses God as the ultimate Higher Power.

And that is what makes Step three so important. It's not debatable.

How can I tell them they cannot rewrite Steps and still call it Nicotine Anonymous?

It's like attending a Buddhist meditation group and telling them to take meditation out of their practice. It is a fundamental foundation of its basis.

On a personal level, I consider my self a liberal type person. I often refer to my God as HP.

I thought in order to borrow from AA we must write in a manner that honors the very foundations on which AA was built.

Replies follow...

Steve M...Chair, Bylaws Committee

I agree that a group cannot just change the wording of the Steps and Traditions.

Please refer this group to the Bylaws of Nicotine Anonymous, Article IV, Section 1a: Composition. I quote that section here: "A group may be formed by two (2) or more persons meeting together who practice the Twelve Steps and maintain the Twelve Traditions of Nicotine Anonymous." I believe it is pretty clear that arbitrarily changing the wording of the Steps is not within the spirit of the above, nor is it within the letter of the law, so to speak.

Having said that, there has been much debate at previous World Services Conferences about changing the wording of the Steps. In fact, I believe it was three years ago that there was an actual vote to change the wording. That vote did not pass. But many members do object to the word "God" and want to change references to God to something they feel less objectionable. The point is – there is a procedure groups or individuals need to follow in order to change any of the Steps or Traditions. That procedure is spelled out in "Article XI: Bylaws Amendments" of the Bylaws of Nicotine Anonymous.

Think also about referring the group to Tradition Four. I quote: "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or Nicotine Anonymous as a whole." Again, it is pretty clear that changing the actual wording of the Steps affects both other groups and Nicotine Anonymous as a whole.

Thank you for acting as a guardian of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

Rather than become upset about this, why not look at it as an opportunity to engage this group (and perhaps others) in a dialogue about the Bylaws, Steps and Traditions? My personal feeling is that not enough members and groups really spend enough time considering these things. So perhaps this group will take it upon themselves to dive into the Bylaws, Steps and Traditions, and perhaps show up at a conference in the future in order to

The Twelve Steps of Nicotine Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over nicotine—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other nicotine users and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions reprinted and adapted here with the permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions does not mean that A.A. is affiliated with this program. A.A. is a program of recovery from alcoholism—use of the Twelve Steps in connection with programs and activities which are patterned after A.A., but which address other problems, does not imply otherwise.

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Traditions of Nicotine Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon Nicotine Anonymous unity.
2. 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.
3. The only requirement for Nicotine Anonymous membership is a desire to stop using nicotine.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or Nicotine Anonymous as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the nicotine addict who still suffers.
6. A Nicotine Anonymous group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the Nicotine Anonymous name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every Nicotine Anonymous group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Nicotine Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. Nicotine Anonymous, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Nicotine Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the Nicotine Anonymous name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to

place principles before personalities.

The Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. 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.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups of A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
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Our Preamble...

Nicotine Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women helping each other to live our lives free of nicotine. We share our experience, strength and hope with each other so that we may be free from this powerful addiction. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using nicotine. There are no dues or fees for Nicotine Anonymous membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. Nicotine Anonymous is not allied with any sect, denomination, political entity, organization or institution; does not engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any cause. Our primary purpose is to offer support to those who are trying to gain freedom from nicotine.

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From the Chair

Kathy K., Lindenhurst, N.Y.

On Oct 28, 2005 the World Service Officers of Nicotine Anonymous held another successful World Services meeting in Dallas, Texas. I wanted to thank Bill P., Kate W., and all the other people involved with providing housing, transportation, and food for the attendees. They did a wonderful job and made us all feel welcome. The biggest issue facing Nicotine Anonymous is getting the word out about our existence and continuing to be self-supporting through our own contributions. This is done mainly by the sale of literature. And a part of getting the word out is having available literature, which is both new and existing. In addition, the literature should provide a source of information and help to both the recovering and the still suffering nicotine addict.

At the recent Conference the delegates were asked to approve several pieces of literature one of which included the long version of the Twelve Traditions. Up until the conference there had not been a long version of the traditions. Hopefully at next year's conference the delegates will approve the amended version of the traditions, and they can then be distributed to the fellowship.

In addition to the Twelve Traditions, *The Book of Daily Meditations* is still being worked on but in order for it to be approved at the upcoming conference additional meditations are needed. Another possible book, which is in the works, is a Nicotine Anonymous Outreach Booklet. This would be a useful tool for outreach on all levels of service in the fellowship. Included in the new booklet would be guidelines on how to reach out within the traditions of Nicotine Anonymous as well as providing templates of letters that can be mailed in an effort to reach out to health care professionals and institutions as well as various forms of PSAs for print and radio. As always this is a huge undertaking and any additional help that can be provided is welcome.

The need for new and inspiring literature always exists. The process of rewriting and changing existing literature such as *The Book* is an ongoing process. If the people in fellowship do not write and speak about our growth, struggles and addiction(s) then Nicotine Anonymous cannot continue to grow and evolve as a fellowship. Creating an ongoing influx of new literature is a necessary avenue which we need to follow. As the saying goes 'everything is old is new again' but everything new becomes old very quickly. Nicotine Anonymous needs to constantly reinvent the wheel but this must include all the people in

the fellowship not just the board and its committees.

I invite you to participate in a new and exciting area of your recovery. In doing this work it will help the still suffering nicotine addict and contribute to the continuing growth of Nicotine Anonymous. You can submit ideas, thoughts or new material to Chairperson @nicotine-anonymous.org. or LiteratureCoordinator@nicotine-anonymous.org. As always in the recovery process you are only responsible for the effort not the outcome.

In service,
Kathy K.

Summary letter to the Delegates...

The World Services officers held their quarterly meeting on October twenty-eight in Dallas, Texas. The board would like to thank all the people in Dallas who made us feel welcomed. A special thanks to Kate W., Bill P. and all the other people who helped to transport, houses and feed the attendees.

In an effort to continue to inform the delegates from the last conference and the local Intergroups which they represented, the officers have decided on a brief summary letter. This is the first meeting in which we have sent a letter but in the future my hope is to continue this effort. Hopefully the delegates and the local Intergroups bring this letter and the enclosed materials to their weekly meetings.

Lenna M has cheerfully joined the board as Secretary Emeritus replacing Kelly C. who recently had to resign as secretary emeritus. Barbara D. has graciously accepted the position as Secretary for World Services. She was only elected to the board in May of 2005.

As of November first, *Nicotine Anonymous The Book* will be sold on Amazon.com. More than eighty percent of Nicotine Anonymous' orders are submitted via the Internet.

The 2006 World Services Conference will be held in Lisle, Illinois (outside of Chicago) from April twenty-eight – thirtieth. Registration forms are already available on the Nicotine Anonymous website. www.Nicotine-Anonymous.org.

Christian U. from Dallas has replaced Scott M. as World Wide Meeting List coordinator.

The Book of Daily Meditations still needs forty-two more meditations in order to be approved at the 2006 Conference.

The World Services officers have approved a disclaimer to be posted on the website confirming that www.nicotine-

www.nicotine-anonymous.org is the official website for Nicotine Anonymous World Services.

There has been an increasing number of websites borrowing the Nicotine Anonymous name and falsely aligning themselves with our fellowship.

The officers have approved \$1000.00 for the translation of an additional disclaimer to be posted on the website in each of the foreign literature links. The following is the approved disclaimer: *The following translated material of Nicotine Anonymous World Services literature has been submitted by Nicotine Anonymous members. Nicotine Anonymous World Services has not verified the accuracy of the translation. However, we present the material in good faith.*

Further discussion and modifications (enclosed) concerning the proposed changes to the bylaws *The Removal of an Officer* is enclosed with this letter.

The delegates at the 2006 conference will present this for approval.

The idea was discussed about writing a Nicotine Anonymous Outreach Workbook as a source of reference for Intergroups and individual groups to refer to. Included in the workbook would be template letters as well as other information. The hope in doing this is to outline an outreach approach designed to stay within the Twelve Traditions radiations.

Judi D., the new Outreach Coordinator has written a template letter intended to be mailed out to the prison system, hopefully getting the word out about Nicotine Anonymous. An outreach effort to the prison system in California and New York is continuing to grow.

Three hundred and eight mass mailing letters to smoking cessation clinics and other organizations have been mailed out with the focus being in S. Dakota.

The Nicotine Anonymous website continues to evolve and grow thanks to the efforts of Robin L. our web servant.

Open positions for service include a Sunday email servant and numerous teleservice volunteers to cover the central states and the West Coast.

The active pen pal number is fifty-seven. This is the highest number to date.

Nicotine Anonymous literature continues to be translated in several foreign languages. A new language to be translated is from Iran.

The copyright and reprint policy is continuing to be reworked and refined.

Bill P. has volunteered to coordinate the Translations Committee. This is a newly formed committee in order to address the numerous submissions of translated foreign language Nicotine.

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Summary to the Delegates

Continued from page 3

The World Services board and Checko M., the literature coordinator continues to receive input about the Twelve Traditions, which were presented for approval at the last conference.

These are some of the many topics the World Services officers have explored. If you have any additional concerns or comments please email Kathy K. Chairperson@nicotine-anonymous.org.

Kathy K.

Chairperson of World Services

Letter from Heather

Continued from page 1

introduce a Bylaws Amendment motion. In my opinion, involvement in such things can

only lead to strengthening the group and Nicotine Anonymous as a whole.

Robin ...

Thank you Steve for responding to this from the Bylaws perspective.

As Steve said this has come up for a vote at a previous conference. Since that vote was a very close vote, *Seven Minutes* had and continues to be a place where such a discussion can continue.

Just to comment on one of the concerns, we have, been given permission by AA to adapt the Twelve Steps and Traditions for our use. If NicA ever decides to vote on a change, there is a procedure in place.

On a personal note and everyone knows how I feel, I would love to see this issue before the conference again soon for consideration. Until that time, I will continue to read the Steps as approved by NicA.

Alan...

Just another observation, in both Steps three and eleven, the words "*...as we understood Him.*" is clearly included in each step. The founders of AA in their wisdom when they wrote the Steps added these words and *italicized* them for impact. The idea was to help avoid the very controversy you seem to be having in your group. These words allow each person to interpret God as he or she see fit, whether a "Higher Power" as some in your group prefer, or whatever the personal choice is for each person.

The group does not define God for

anyone. Nor does the Steps. There is enough latitude there fore no change is really necessary since each member's interpretation is personal and may be different than anyone or everyone else.

John O...

Let me preface this by saying how much I love and respect Steve and others here. That would be my last point of agreement.

I disagree wholeheartedly. The Steps are suggested as are the Traditions. Besides, what would we do about it, not list the group on our meeting list? Begrudge those in the area who need recovery the opportunity to get it just because these folks feel the program works better for them with a few changed words? Of course not.

The fourth Tradition states that each group is autonomous except in matters that effect other groups or Nicotine Anonymous as a whole. I again disagree that this has any real effect on any other group or our fellowship. In fact, to prove how little effect it has, I will refresh the memories of you old-timers. If you recall, Mark from Australia came to the 1994 NAWSO Conference in the world's greatest city. It seems the Australian folks had printed up versions of the Steps and Traditions on cloth. They had offered to sell these to other groups.

The Wantagh, NY group was one of those that purchased a set of these. I specifically recall there were some slight changes to the Steps and if memory serves, the precise changes were related to the gender of God in the Steps.

Believe it or not, as I check the meeting lists, there are still eleven meetings in Australia. Moreover, the Wantagh group, one of the oldest on Long Island, is still standing and still bringing recovery to many in the area and I do believe they still have the same shades.

Now as many of you know, I am one of the more conservative folks in the fellowship in regards to the Traditions. And I would rather not change the wording of the Steps. But that doesn't mean that I need to impose that belief on a few folks in Seattle who are looking for their own way.

Perhaps their Higher Power has expressed his or herself in their group conscience in such a manner that they be-

lieve they can find better recovery by changing a couple of words in the Steps. Again, I defy anyone to show me any true harm done to the fellowship by this change. I would say that most newcomers, except for the detail oriented like ourselves would not even notice.

Let us remember we are not the Nicotine Anonymous police. Let us remember that as world servants we are here to serve the groups, not the other way around. Many have tried in vain to make this change and this group has done what they feel best in this area. Let us hope that it helps them find recovery. If you recall from Rodger's own story, the early Smokers Anonymous groups only used eleven Steps because they felt that one did not apply.

And the Traditions are negotiable. If one reads the AA *Twelve and Twelve* carefully, you will see that groups do have the right to violate the Traditions (although I do not believe there is any Tradition violation going on here.) For the most part, when groups do this, the groups themselves tend to suffer. The Traditions, like the Steps, are suggested.

I would highly suggest we leave this group alone to seek the recovery they so thoroughly deserve. And maybe, we may change our Steps to align with theirs.

Heather...

I hear your feelings about this, but if they don't want a Twelve Step meeting they can seek recovery elsewhere.

There are many smoking recovery groups, but what's so good about this one is it's free and it's based on Steps that have worked for years and years.

You say just a few people, but this affects a few people I know and they are upset at this decision and the few and I and are going elsewhere and we are starting a new meeting.

And truly not to sound like a hard ***but yes, I believe if you take God out of the Steps and rewrite your own, then, yes, you should be taken off the meeting schedule because this may be a nice concept according to your beliefs but its not the Twelve Steps. God

Letters from Heather

Continued from page 4

is not a negotiable part of the *Twelve and Twelve* is what I'm talking about, if you ask me.

I want to add the group conscience of this meeting of those who are voting on this are mostly people with little to no clean time off smoking/using.

Coincidental, maybe, maybe not? Perhaps that is a judgment, but someone with a longer time in recovery may be able to base what keeps people clean and sober and I think sticking to the program is the safest route.

By taking God out, then the next newcomer that enters the meeting never hears the traditional message in which the fellowship is formed.

This is not so much about gender of God at all but it is about God.

If I don't think 'In God We Trust' should be printed on one-dollar bills, do I stop using them?

Well, I guess if I hate it too, I can use a credit card, right?

I think the people at this group need to choose, do they want the Twelve Steps of Nicotine Anonymous or do they want their own Step support group? I am not saying it's wrong either way, I'm just saying I don't see it going both ways.

Sorry everyone, you all can hate me if you wish but I am passionate about what saved me in my recovery- end of story.

Gary...

This is a definite violation of Tradition Four. This does affect other groups and NicA as a whole. They cannot call themselves a Nicotine Anonymous meeting if they change the steps. It would be an entirely different program like you said.

My personal opinion is if you change the wording of the Steps from God to whatever, that program will fall flat on its face! This program is God oriented. You know what the trouble with this gender stuff is? It is undermining who God really is and belittling Him to a degree of a necessary evil. The very being that has saved members from an ugly death are wanting to place God down as something quite not spectacular. People are afraid of God. I am dead set against changing the Steps in any which way. If they do, delete them from the World Directory Robin...

As I remember it, the problem with the Australian version was that it said "as a result of these Steps" instead of "as THE result of these Steps".

I don't believe that a group that uses something other than the Nicotine Anonymous Steps and Traditions can be a Nicotine Anonymous group. It's something (and I hope they quit smoking), but it's not Nicotine Anonymous. I disagree with supporting groups that arbitrarily make changes to our foundation.

To me it sounds like it may be time to bring this to the conference again?

Will the board please consider bringing this to the conference in Chicago this year? I think it has had a lot of discussion in *Seven Minutes* since it was originally voted on (which was a request.)

Judi D...

Outreach Coordinator

I agree with Robin. It seems like we have a lot to say about it.

Kenny S...

Just wanted to say I agree with you on this. I do feel it is a violation of Tradition four. If every group re-wrote the Steps to their liking, it certainly would be a problem for NicA as a whole.

I know John's passion for people to get recovery, but there are other ways and other programs besides Nicotine Anonymous, and nothing is stopping these people from starting their own program of recovery, utilizing their own steps if they wish. However, by changing the Steps on their own, I feel that they're not Nicotine Anonymous Group. As Steve pointed out, there are ways within the structure of NicA whereby changes can be brought about.

I myself would like to see God referred to in a gender-neutral way in the Steps, but I wouldn't take it upon myself to try to get my group to arbitrarily make the change for only our meeting.

Checko...

I'll toss in my two cents after quickly scanning comments because I'm running out the door but I am more in line with John O's comments. Consider first what our "Primary Purpose" is... it is not to preserve the word God, nor anyone's religious inclination, etc. it is

"to offer support to those who are trying to gain freedom from nicotine." We are a fellowship based on spiritual principles, words like God, are vehicles to convey (some say stands simply for Good Orderly Direction) a power greater than oneself, not to maintain an alliance to any church or institution, particularly of any one member or even a majority of members. If we as servants diverge from our primary purpose in order to hold onto personal religious views, we fail to serve that purpose.

We are not a church first; we are servants and members of a recovery Program first. Newcomers are what are most important. If we show we value a word or gender of a word more than recovery and support ... fellowship will suffer.

However, it is my understanding that in order to change language of Steps requires seventy-five percent of all members/groups to agree. We can change language in the literature we write or approve at conference by a simple majority.

The tone of discussion reminds me of that adage about the inevitable conflict when discussing religion or focusing on religion first... Tradition One points us toward the value of unity for our common welfare, which I believe is better found through tolerance rather than dominance...nicotine is oppressive enough; we are trying to breathe free.

Gary...

This Gender issue was voted down and that's the way it should stay. If we can't vote on something and leave it be as law, why do we vote on issues in the first place.

One year we vote no, the next year we vote yes and this issue will never be settled. It has been working well over the years, why reinvent the wheel

It has already been settled. If a particular meeting wants to change the steps on their own, they are not a Nicotine Anonymous meeting and should be deleted from the World Service Directory.

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United Kingdom meetings...

To check out the NicA UK homepage go to this link. <http://www.nicotine-anonymous.co.uk/>

If you want to start a meeting in UK call 020-7976-0076 for a starter pack.

Contact Information: Write to: Nicotine Anonymous, PO Box 1516, London SW1H 9WT

Tel: 020 7976 0076 (please leave a message)

Letter from Heather

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Kathy K...

I don't believe a Nicotine Anonymous group should change the Steps and/or the Traditions. I'm not a God person, I'm a Good Orderly Direction person but I do believe you will always find something you don't like in anything you are involved in.

In Alanon they say '...take what you like and leave the rest'. I do that everyday of my life and it is very freeing. I do believe if the desire to change the Steps is real then it should be brought to the Conference. We, NicA can vote on this issue every year and the vote may always be different but so are the people who are attending the Conference. NicA has a system in place to make changes and we should use it as needed. I do think that allowing any group to change the Twelve and Twelve as they so desire does affect NicA as a whole and violates the Traditions.

John O...

I have to confess that I didn't read the initial e-mail carefully. I thought this was a matter of changing gender, but now I see this is about the removal of the word God and not about gender change. If I were a member of this particular group, this would disturb me to no end.

Nonetheless, I refer you all to the traditions that are now posted on our website. These were submitted at the conference and refined to the best of our ability at that conference, to a great degree by those folks receiving this e-mail.

Let me offer a few excerpts:

From the foreword:

"Our fellowship is non-commercial and non-professional, our leaders but trusted servants. No member can tell another, "You can't do that," or "You must do this." If a group fails to observe the Traditions, it risks the possibility of confusion and conflict. Confusion and conflict may turn newcomers away, depriving them of the benefits Nicotine Anonymous has to offer."

From Tradition Four:

"In essence, a group is any two or more nicotine addicts gathered together to achieve abstinence and the group claims no other official association. While our Intergroups and World Services office per-

form valuable functions, they only exist to support the groups and their members. The groups are the heart of Nicotine Anonymous. It is here that recovery and abstinence are attained, sponsors and sponsees are united, and miracles occur. These groups can and have conducted their own matters since before our fellowship officially came into existence. This is why we can confidently allow our groups today to continue to make all their own decisions without interfering in their affairs. Each group is free to do such things as arrange their own meeting format, select topics of discussion and speakers, provide anniversary tokens to recognize abstinence, and determine whether and when to donate group funds to an Intergroup or World Services. As between individual members, the relationship between groups and World Services is strengthened by trust, both given and honored."

And:

"Even with so many temptations to go astray, we still understand that groups need to make their own decisions, and their own mistakes. We have the right to learn from our mistakes.

As we see later in Tradition nine, the fellowship has little but advisory authority over the groups in most matters. We can often only pass on the experience of other groups in similar situations. Ultimately, we need to have faith in our Higher Power who has guided our groups through many tough choices such as the following:"

In the spirit of full disclosure, I myself wrote much of those words above. But, at the end of the day, we have to decide whether we actually believe those words as they are written, or whether we just pay lip service to them. Moreover, I think this is a faith issue, whether we have enough faith to believe that our Higher Power will see these things through. Ironically, my personal belief here is that the Higher Powers of those in this group led them to make this decision, which in turn led them to reduce the wording in regards to God.

And what are the real dangers here? In my experience, the most likely scenario will be that the group will possibly splinter and a separate group may emerge (as

they say in AA, all you need to start a new group is a resentment and a coffee pot). The worse case scenario is that some members will be so alienated that they will leave and not come back. As sad as that is, this happens each and every day in our groups and other groups. I've been to some bad meetings in my travels across the world, and as long as human beings are facilitating the meetings, this will continue to happen.

Again, I would be very dismayed to go through this if it were my group, but the best we could possibly do in response to Heather's request is to send a letter similar to the correspondence referred to in Tradition four stating any experience any of us may have in this regard and the danger to the group. Otherwise, I think we have to allow this group to make it's own mistakes, as both the NicA and AA Traditions writings suggest.

To de-list the group would be a worse crime than the one we assert the group is committing. I think it also would speak more about World Services than it would about the group in question. I have been to some other meetings far worse than this, but that is not a reason to de-list anyone.

From my experience on the board, it is sometimes necessary to take a step back and ask if the decisions we are making are framed by the information necessary to make a prudent decision or is it influenced by an unconscious desire to exert control over a situation we really have no control over.

As unpleasant as this situation may be, I don't see many appropriate choices for recourse here. We need to allow the groups to make their own decisions.

Part two will be continued in the next issue.

Many of the contributors are our trusted servants from World Services.

Send your opinions on this issue to SevenMinutesEditor@nicotine-anonymous.org

This and That...

Author Unknown

In my first few months of quitting smoking I was plagued with bouts of obsessing about cigarettes. I would find myself composing rationalizations in my mind about why I could, should or would smoke. I then discovered that I could counteract these obsessive thoughts by enumerating everything that I could think of to be grateful for; my car runs well, my rent's paid, my pets are healthy, my home is warm and cozy and I made it to my appointment on time. These are not extraordinary events but just regular day to day occurrences that had gone well or situations that pleased me. Doing this not only kept my mind occupied but also reinforced the idea that I am not suffering or being deprived of life's pleasures or rewards because I'm not smoking cigarettes.

Through this practice I've come to understand more about the basis of my own spirituality. I came to realize that though I don't believe in the "parking space God" some people speak of, they find a parking spot with no problem and attribute this to God looking out for them, I do believe that the trials and tribulations of my life fall into correct perspective when I take a moment to recognize my good fortune at finding that perfect parking spot with no problem.

Appreciation for all good things, big and small, that happen in my life are essential to maintaining freedom from nicotine. For me under every urge to smoke is a lack of acceptance about what "is", some wish for things to be other than how they are, some feeling that I'm not getting my share or that I need a reward or a consolation or a distraction from what is happening at that moment. But when I remind myself that I don't get to always have things my way, and when I practice an "attitude of gratitude", I can push away my inclinations toward self pity or resentment by focusing on the positive aspects of my day and then move into a state of acceptance of life on life's terms.

Oftentimes this is easier said than done because my mind keeps cycling back to habitual obsessive thoughts. Those times then require extra concentration, which I think of as sort of a brief form of meditation. First of all I take notice of the tension in my chest and my breathing, which is typically very restricted, not surprising

considering the mental battle I'd probably been engaging in. Then I focus on letting go, exhaling, completely emptying my lungs followed by checking my posture to make sure that I am not collapsing in my center and that I am allowing myself room to breath. Then I allow myself a big "sigh of relieve" while reminding myself that, though I may never have whatever it is I think I want at that moment, I do have much to be grateful for.

Doing this, which may involve no more than a couple of minutes, I've not only lived through the urge for a cigarette but I've also taken the opportunity to tune into my spiritual center and to experience greater peace and satisfaction in my life, for this I am grateful for every craving.

Janice sent this in...

Author Unknown

Steps 1-3 Give up

Steps 4-6 Clean up

Steps 7-9 Make up

Steps 10-12 Grow up

I took one Step, began to moan

I can't do this on my own

I took two Steps, began to pray
restore me God, today

I took three Steps, gave up my will
maybe God loves me still

I took a fourth, I looked inside
Nothing more would I hide

And on the fifth, I said aloud
I've done some wrong, and I'm not proud

I took six Steps, and got prepared
To lose the defects, I was scared

Now I'm at seven, take them away
God, for this I pray

And on eight, the list was long
Amends to make for all the wrong

I took nine Steps, put down my pride
Forgiveness asked, I will not hide

Ten Steps I take each day I pray
Make amends along the way

And on eleven I pray to know
Each day His will, which way to go

I took twelve Steps, I'm like a bird
To others now, I spread the word....

A share by Susan S.

Baby I'm Amazed

Maybe I'm amazed at the way you're with me all the time

Maybe I'm afraid of the way I leave you

Maybe I'm amazed at the way you help me sing my song

You right me when I'm wrong

Maybe I'm amazed at the way I really need you

Paul McCartney

I am having a lot of moments of amazement the last couple of days. I just looked up the above song lyrics!

All of a sudden it kind of hit me - I have not smoked for a long time, for me, fifty-seven days. I struggled for so long and could not even get twenty-four hours. I clearly, not hard since it was so recently, remember getting all set to quit, planning, preparing and then struggling. Waking up on quit day and either deciding it was not a good day to quit after all, or trying to fool myself into forgetting it, or making a run at it and struggling through those first few hours and then smoking.

I cannot tell you what the difference is this time. It's not anything different that I've done. All the things I did this time I did on my other quit attempts.

The one thing that did change was I do believe somewhere deep inside I knew how screwed I was and I knew I could not do this. Who would think that would be a good thing?

My defiance is still there in a weird way. I absolutely refuse to handle this addiction and this quit. This is for God to do I can't do this for myself. I show up here and post and do the other stuff like postpone and delay - but if it were not for my Higher Power I would be smoking. I did the postpone thing before and then I would smoke at the end of the postpone time.

Continued on page 9

Service is the Key...

A **Sunday e-mail servant** is needed and volunteers can contact Alan K. at klein2000@verizon.net

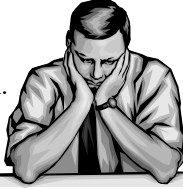
Teleservants are needed and volunteers can contact Kieth M. the Teleservant Coordinator at keitbmbigmac2004@yahoo.com.

Additional **meditations** are needed and submissions can be sent to Kate at DailyMeditations@nicotine-anonymous.org.

Newcomer's Corner

Frustration...

Wake up and smell the nitroglycerin you moron. I'm popping nitroglycerin like an eighty year old, smoking ciga-



rettes with my usual two pots of coffee. Am I really a ****ing imbecile? How did I ever allow this addiction to have such power in my life? Will I ever hit bottom as I did with alcohol? Apparently not.

Just keep telling myself, *one more day*, just wait until XYZ has come and gone, wait until I'm in the hospital after the next heart attack, just wait, wait, wait, smoke, smoke, smoke.

I'm a big fat liar when I say I have a desire to be nicotine free. I have no desire and no intention of becoming a non-smoker. I am absolutely certain that I love smoking and that it's the only thing that keeps me sane. What in God's name am I afraid of? That I'm not me without cigarettes? That's ridiculous. That my life could possibly become any more insane? Not without being committed!

In fact that is precisely what is going to happen. The psychiatrist has told me that in-patient treatment is the next step. I refuse to accept that. Whoever heard of in-patient treatment for nicotine? I'm not going to do it. I don't give a **** anymore.

After all, I can only stay in a state of constant panic and hysteria for so long. All the people here are as crazy as bedbugs, talking about freedom and happiness while not smoking. Wait for your miracle they say...don't quit before the miracle happens is the mantra. I want to believe this but apparently I am blinded by the fog of smoke. I go to meetings but apparently am not listening carefully. I talk to my sponsor but don't apply the things he says to my quit. So I quit and relapse, quit and relapse, more than five months and I've never been able to post smoke free time. Am I stuck on stupid?

The group has given me everything

I need to quit these **** things. While in a meeting, I am convinced that I can do it, ten minutes after the meeting I am smoking. This letter could go on and on and on. Round and round and round and round and round and round I go on the little hamster wheel, going nowhere but to an early grave.

Joe

Joe gets a helping hand...

Hi Joe, not sure if this will help but here's my two cents worth on (how to surrender.) I heard I can't, he can, so I'll let him!

It's more what I don't do than what I do. I also heard this is a program of unlearning more than it is a program of learning. I chose to smoke for a long time. Now they tell me I got to stop choosing? Well I can't stop choosing. In and of myself I am hopeless. In and of myself I can't do this.

But this Higher Power? Well in the depths of my despair I screamed **Help** and then I just gave up. The wind was all knocked out of me. I was at my bottom.

There is a grace where God can do for me what I can't do for myself. And I let it. I just let it happen. I give up.

UNCLE! Like I had to say to my older brothers when they had me pinned when we were wrestling, although Nicotine ain't playing around. And God takes care of the obsession. And I just have to let God. My job is to stay out of the way. And it was the cigarettes that got me there. Put me in a prison of my own making. Helped me lie to me and tell me I got to answer the craving call. Well I don't have to answer that craving call anymore. I can stop believing that lie!

And when I feel the emptiness inside I reach out to people. They share their experience, strength and hope and through them God fills that hole, with things to do and people to try and help.

I suit up and do my part and I try to stay the heck out of God's way. I let God do God's part.



Most of the time I don't have a clue other than just do the next indicated step. I sit back and enjoy the ride, and letting God do his work and five minutes later I do it all over again because I've got to keep surrendering. And I cooperate most times begrudgingly.

It beats the alternative. As I've heard said "I'd rather be on the roller coaster of recovery than on the merry-go-round of my disease."

That's all folks.

Kenny M.

Peter goes online NicA...

Hi people, I quit and lasted eleven days, slipped, then stopped again, then slipped again. I have been smoking regularly since the eighteenth with one day smoke free, last Friday. One change though, no smoking in the house around my cat. Just because I am an addict doesn't mean he has to feel sick too.



I plan to get back in the saddle in a week when I return from visiting family.

For the past week or so I have felt tired, depressed, stinky, out of breath, all the things I once again want to get free of. It's so weird, I gave up feeling good in order to satisfy cravings. That should feel good, to satisfy cravings. But it doesn't work that way does it?

I am lurking and will try to check in while at the old homestead. I will return and then it will be time to start the day by day posting that helped so much during the last quit.

Looking forward to quitting again.

Peter

Dave shares...

Man, this morning was horrible. I mean HORRIBLE! I would have killed for a smoke. I certainly would have traded one of my children for a pack of cigarettes and a lighter. My youngest, to be exact.

Our baby is now 21, but back at home. Works at a job for a while, then quits. Usually just fails to show up for work one day because he was out

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Outreach

Misha sent in the article below...

I was informed at my face-to-face Nicotine Anonymous meeting last night that the Nicotine Anonymous World Services need folks to help translate the NicA literature into languages besides English.

If you are fluent in another language and would like to help, please go to www.nicotineanonymous.org and click on one of the flags. These flags represent some of the languages NicA literature are currently translating but not all the pamphlets are translated yet:

English
Deutsch
Espanol
Francais
Portu-
guese
Svenska
Dansk



If you are fluent in a language other than one of the seven listed, I'm sure NicA would be grateful to have you translate in that language as well.

A positive message from John N.

My freedom from nicotine use hangs on accepting total abstinence. My abstinence hangs on receiving direction and power which I do not possess. I have found my direction and power in the fellowship of Nicotine Anonymous. I now get a burst of energy with every new twelve Step ex-smoker.

How can this miracle be? May the source of all power grant our fellowship continued direction and power to carry this simple message "You don't ever have to smoke again if you don't want to and I promise you a comfortable sobriety if you practice the twelve Steps of NICA."

John N (3-17-1985)

Recent Canadian government research has shown that cigarette smoking not only impairs sexual ability, it ac-

tually causes shrinkage of the male sexual "equipment."

Wow! If that is true, we need to get the word out ASAP! Maybe the warning on the cigarette packs should be updated to reflect this new information.

How about something like this:

Warning: These cigarettes are king size -- how about you?

Warning: Smoking sections in restaurants aren't the only things getting smaller.

Warning: If you don't reduce your smoking, your smoking will reduce you.

Warning: Smoking may lead to ridicule on your honeymoon.

Warning: Smoke rises, but you may not.

Warning: Second-hand smoke can be harmful to children -- That is.. if you're capable of conceiving any.

Warning: Cigarettes get shorter the more you puff -- so do you.

Warning: How can you enjoy a smoke afterwards, if there's no before?

Warning: The only thing left after a smoke is a dead stub.

Warning: Don't throw lit cigarettes in the urinal -- you might not have the range to put them out.

A Poem by Cathy M...

Thankful

I'm thankful today
That someone cared
Enough to stand
By me
Through the times
Of fear and doubt
They believed
I could be free
Though I fought
The simple truth
That my choices
Held my fate
Throughout
My darkest hour
I let go
Of all self hate
How extreme
My life has changed
Is only known
To me
I'm thankful
You
Led me back
On the road to recovery
Today I walk
In footsteps
That were planted there



For me
With people
Who walk hand in hand
With a desire
To be free

Susan S.

Continued from page 7

So I'm feeling the miracle and I want to shout it out for anyone who wants to quit and fears they can't. Knowing I can not stop has been the price of admission to this quit, that one day at a time, is adding up to weeks and months.

I am in a cool little time in my quit where each day feels like a milestone, eight weeks this past Wednesday night at eleven P.M. and it will be two full months on August one. Also just hit the three hundred dollars saved on my quit meter! So I am celebrating everyday.

If you are new here or been here for awhile and struggling, please know that if I can do this, you can too. I struggled and struggled then I gave up, then I gave it to my Higher Power and day by day I have not had to smoke which is a huge miracle because I was a chimney. I really felt like I would be too lost without smoking. That was another nico-lie.

Thanks for being here for this happy addict. I know that the storm will rage again and nico-death will try to get back in but with your help and the care and protection of my Higher Power, I pray that I will not smoke for the rest of today and then tomorrow I will pray again.

The button below is one of many made by Steve M.



Discussion Corner

Carol's Story

My name is Rosalind and I'm a nicotine addict. I wanted to share with you a story about my friend Carol, a smoker, and we spent many a day having coffee, smoking and discussing the difficulties of life. I guess she was my best friend and in my early recovery from alcoholism I had those days that it would feel like nobody loved me and on those days I would call or go see her and ask her if she loved me?

She would then tell me how much she loved me and we would both end up laughing. Me feeling so much better, she was always there for me. I adored her; one of my favorite memories of her was how she would kiss me on the cheek and leave a pair of red lip marks. That never embarrassed me or made me feel funny. It was more like a badge of honor.

At that time we attended meetings together, she an Alanon married to an alkie and me an alcoholic. Those were the good days. Life was fun, we were getting well in our twelve step programs and things were turning around in our lives. Heck, life was good.

Well as things happen, Carol and I grew apart, her in her recovery trip and me in mine. One day the news came that she had lung cancer. Now I don't know if she quit smoking the day she got the news, but know every time I saw her she would beg me to stop smoking. And for the longest time I remember her going around with a bandana wrapped around her head, the chemotherapy had taken her hair along with many other things in her life.

She would come down sometimes when she wasn't feeling too bad and we would drink coffee and I would smoke in front of her as she begged me to stop. But my denial was like a cement wall and nothing could penetrate it. I hadn't found my bottom as she had hers. She'd quit smoking but it was too late for her, she died.

It wasn't pretty or quick. None of that looking classy or smooth, you know, those reasons most of us start smoking in the first place. She was tied to the bed and thrashed around in her pain, not knowing what was going on any more. Tubes ran in and out of her body one with morphine being pumped in her to her veins to dull

the excruciating pain she was in from the cancer. It didn't quite do the job and she continued to feel pain. That was not a fun time in the life of her family and friends. And still I left that room to go out for a smoke and smoked years after until I developed COPD with emphysema.

You know what? The fear was with me constantly, that one day I would get cancer and die the horrible death of my friend Carol, but it never stopped me. The fact I couldn't breathe any longer was the only thing that did.

The Nicotine Anonymous meetings I attended were online as there were no face-to-face meetings in the state of Kansas as far as I knew. The first ones I went to were all type share but eventually we got voice meetings going where we can talk just like a face to face meeting and it's pretty awesome. Nicotine Anonymous is growing in the cyber world due to the lack of face-to-face meetings and I must tell you, it's working quite well. I attended face-to-face AA meetings around twenty-seven years before coming here and really didn't expect the online meetings to measure up, what a surprise they not only measure up but they surpass my wildest dreams.

Want to finish this by saying, I grieve the passing and loss of my friend Carol, I miss her to this day. And somehow I feel I'm honoring her with this quit. I expect to see her someday on the other side and that's a happy thought, but I'm not real rushed to do that or I'd still be smoking.

I smoked for forty-six years and now haven't had to smoke one cigarette for over thirty-seven months. Here online folks get quit meters and keep track of all the money saved and life given back by their quits. Really puts it in black and white, the reality of it all. Yep it's pretty awesome. Came here to save my life and got so danged much more. Well that's all I'll say today. Will write more on the actual experience of my quitting later. For all of you who want to stop using nicotine I got this to tell you. Just go to meetings, that's all you got to do. Don't worry about rushing the quit, just go to meetings and wait for the miracle to happen. If you really want to quit, it's

going to happen. If you don't have meetings close by, then go to online meetings. We have them just about 3 times every day.

The address is <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/voicesofnicotinerecovery/> and you can put that in a search and find us. We will be there waiting for you and ready to help anyway we can.

Mornin' Ole,

Ole and Lena went to the same Lutheran Church. Lena went every Sunday and taught Sunday School. Ole went on Christmas and Easter, and maybe a few times during the year.

One Sunday, Ole was sitting in the pew right behind Lena and got to noticing what a fine looking woman she was. While they were taking up the collection, Ole leaned forward and said, "Lena, how about you and me go to dinner in New Ulm next Friday?"

"Yah, Ole, dot would be nice," Lena replied.

Ole was tickled as all get out. All week long he polished his old Ford truck. On Friday he picked Lena up and took her to the finest restaurant in New Ulm. When they sat down, Ole looked at Lena and asked, "Lena, would you like a cocktail before supper?"

"Oh, no, Ole," Lena said, "Vat would I tell my Sunday School class?"

Ole was a little taken back, but he didn't say much about it. After dinner, he reached in his pocket and pulled out a pack of cigarettes, offering Lena one.

"Oh, no, Ole," Lena said, "Vat would I tell my Sunday School class?"

Well, Ole was feeling kind of low, having had two offers rebuffed. On the way home they passed the Hot Springs Motel, he figured, heck, he'd struck out twice, so he had nothing to lose.

"Hey, Lena, would you like to stop at the motel with me?"

"Yah, Ole, dot would be nice," she replied.

Ole couldn't believe his luck. He whipped his Ford into the parking lot, jumped out of the truck, ran into the hotel office, checked in, ran back out, and took Lena right to the hotel room.

The next morning Ole got up first. He looked at Lena lying on the bed, her hair spread out all over the pillow. "Vat have I done, vat have I done?" Ole thought. He



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Letters to the Editor-

Dear Editor,

After reading Jim L.'s letter in your last issue and what I've been going through with my local group I had to write this letter.

The first thing that gets me about people who want to change the wording of the steps is why don't you form your own group and what stops you from breaking away and being true to your own beliefs? It's a free country and individuals do it all the time. They don't agree so they leave and start their own. But no, they've found something that works in the midst of people who do believe in God as each understood him, take advantage of it and then starts howling down the road that it all has to change to fit their vision as they have arrived at it.

That just sounds like addict behavior to me. I want what I want; this is how I want it and when I want it.

These people are free to disagree but don't impose your problem on me. I happen to believe in the steps as they are written.

So you don't like the wording of things and you want to change things? So you want to take God out of the steps? And the next person believes in God but doesn't like gender preferences and the third one just wants to substitute Higher Power in places. Maybe we should have one set of steps for the agnostic, another for the higher power crowd and the original set for those who still believe in God.

And then you may get Satanists coming in who want to put in lower power instead of higher power and those who don't believe in prayer so Step two will have to be redone and hey, while we're at it why don't we just leave blanks where the steps used to be and each member can fill them in to be their own liking.

Oh wait, I forgot that won't work, that's the reason I came to the meeting in the first place, lack of power, not knowing the answers to my problems, playing god with my own ego and self will run riot.

Oh yea, that's right, my best ideas

got me to the doorstep of Nicotine Anonymous dying from an addiction beyond my control. Yeah I must have forgotten that.

I hope that political correctness does not take preference over principles.

I also hope this letter stirs things up because I for one and tiring of this debate and want to see a decision made one way or the other so it can be put to rest.

A.A. is the strongest of all the twelve-step programs by far. No other program even comes close to its strength in my opinion. They have stood like a rock and thrived for seventy years. I think part of their success is that A.A. knows better than to rewrite steps.

Steve S.

Seattle, Wa.

Dear Editor,

These are my humble opinions on the different people in NicA and the different ways each of us works our programs.

First a little about me. I was raised in God fearing homes, shuffled from one set of relatives to another while my mom and dad played their split up and get back together games.

There were preachers on both sides of my family and all that religion shoved down my throat did nothing but make me real sick.

Sure, on Sundays, everyone put on their best faces but behind the scenes on other days I had my share of watching hypocrites at work.

Everything from abuse; mental, sexual and physical to the children and women, lots of adultery, dishonesty and any other so-called sins you can think of and this was two different sets of families who lived far from each other with nothing in common except their children married and had children and this God they said they believed in.

All my life I've been in churches and then when I was out on my own I continued going to church and was dunked, sprinkled or anything the

churches decided to do to me while I was going down the drain in a cyclone of booze, drugs, suicide attempts and cigarette smoke. Always looking for some church to fix me and of course my guilt kept me going, seeking that fix. My rearing in the so-called Christian home made marriage and child rearing a joke to me and I failed miserably at both.

When I found AA and saw no one was going to shove God or religion down my throat, they made a point to not make me feel guilty, I was able to receive the help that I'd always needed. And I learned about unconditional love. What a concept.

The same with Nicotine Anonymous, when I first came to NicA no one tried to convert me to Christianity or for that matter to any other religion. If they had I wouldn't have stayed.

From being in Twelve-Step programs so long I've read a little about Bill W. and Dr. Bob and have known people who were at the first meetings in Akron, these folks never mentioned religion to me or anyone else that I know of knowing that would turn us away.

The Steps did come from a religious source and that source was biblical, had our first members been from somewhere else and another religion then the Steps would have come from those sources. Say the Koran, etc.

The good thing is I've been on a journey with no destination and my journey has allowed me to evolve and grow.

So I'm saddened to see so many preachers in the program today. I didn't come to AA, NA, NicA or any other Twelve-Step programs to learn about religion, I learned all that when I was growing up and it warped my soul.

I have my own Higher Power thank you so very much and that HP has nothing to do with churches, Bibles, Korans or any other books.. And maybe Higher Power is not the proper word to describe what keeps me growing any more than the word God but because the English language is like it is I use the words to help members understand what I'm talking about.

When I hear someone share and they don't work their program like I

Continued on page 12

Letters to the Editor

Continued from page 11

work mine who am I to judge them?

No one told me I'd be the boss over how other people live their lives and grow and I never took it upon myself to appoint me boss.

Control was part of my using, sick personality. I let controlling others go in order to grow. I can't do both. Controlling others takes too much energy and besides I always get in a mess when I try to control others. Now I use that same energy to create and to work on me.

There are many religions that use the word God so I'm not just speaking about the Christians here but anyone who uses the Twelve-Step programs to convert members to their beliefs. That's not what the Twelve-Step programs are about.

It makes me feel bad to think someone in this program is dissatisfied with other people's Gods, lack of Gods and their spiritual paths, what-ever happened to working your own program?

Just like in other areas of my life, in NicA I also know closed-minded members but it's up to me to let their views infect me or not., I choose not to.

I take what will help me and I leave the rest.

Anonymous

Continued on page 14

Newcomer's Corner

Dave W. Continued from page 8 partying all night with his trashy friends.

A few weeks ago he got a great job and has been doing really well with it. Peace and serenity once again reigned in my home. Then, Friday, he got a huge paycheck and, guess what, partied all night and failed to show up for work on

Saturday.

My wife has been a mess since then. So have I, but she takes her stress, anger and frustration out on me. It's understandable, since our son has not been home and she had to vent with somebody, but...

Anyhow, this morning, it was just intolerable. I'm worried, angry and scared. She's worried, angry and scared and taking it out on me.

All I wanted was my cigarettes and my lighter! All I wanted was a smoke! Or...did I want a cigarette? Or did I want my wife to stop taking her anger and frustration out on me? Did I want a cigarette or did I want my son to keep his job?

What were the things that I could not change? The things I could change? I might be able to change my wife's behavior and my son's behavior, if I spoke with them about how I felt.

So I did. I spoke to my son about the need for him to keep his job, because I cannot afford his upkeep. I spoke to my wife about how it hurt me when she took out her pain and anger on me, because I was hurt and angry, too.

I did what I could do, but only after I asked my HP to give me the courage to do what I needed to do.

I then asked for and received the serenity to accept what I cannot change. It may be that neither my wife nor my son change their behavior, but I have done what I can do.

Thank you, HP, for the Serenity Prayer, which not only teaches me to accept cravings, it also teaches me that what I think is a craving is, usually, an emotional reaction to a problem.

You see, the truth is that I did not have any cravings this morning, at all. I had problems that I wanted to hide from, behind my old friend, the smoke-screen. But, instead, thanks to this program, I confronted my problems with the help of my HP.

If I had smoked this morning, I would be sitting here, right now, wanting another cigarette. Instead, because I confronted my problems, I am sitting here, right now, at peace with myself and the world. Serene. It works, if you work it.

Nawso

Preliminary Profit & Loss January through September 2005 Ordinary Income/Expense

Income	
4000 Donations	4,196.80
4100 Literature Sales	38,062.87
4290 Shipping & Handling	5,229.05
4299 Conference Profit (Loss)	1,936.43
<u>Total Income</u>	49,425.15
Cost of Goods Sold	
5000 COGS	21,105.80
<u>Total COGS</u>	21,105.80
Gross Profit	28,319.35
Expense	
6000 Office Expenses	16,902.65
6600 WSO Expenses	6,440.73
<u>Total Expenses</u>	23,343.38
Net Ordinary Income	4,975.97
Other Income/Expense	
Other Income	
8000 Interest Income	86.95
<u>Total Other Income</u>	86.95
Net Other Income	86.95
Net Income	5,062.92

Service is the Key...

Only You can tell your story.

What was your life like as an active addict?

What happened to get you in the door?

What were your breakthroughs?

Personal stories, articles, poems, art, jokes or adds pertaining to nicotine, nicotine recovery and Nicotine Anonymous can be sent to Susan K. at SevenMinutesEditor@nicotine-anonymous.org or snail mail to

Seven Minutes c/o NAWSO
419 Main St., PMB #370
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

Book of Daily Meditations

One Step At A Time

Almost There

Or email: dailymeditations@nicotineanonymous.org
Reference BODM in your subject line
Additional meditations are needed.

BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS!

CONGRATULATIONS THIS ISSUE GO TO:

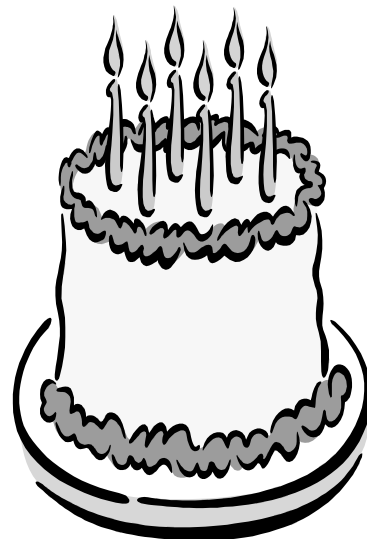
JAMES L. 10/18/1997

GARY M. 11/21/1998

KIM F. 11/9/2004

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Letters to the Editor

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Dear Editor,

A controversy, which is relatively puzzling to me, simply because I don't see the harm in replacing the "word" God with another two "words": Higher Power. Basically the meaning of the two is the same. I suddenly realized the other day, what if the members of NicA did--in the proper way it is supposed to be done--succeed in changing the wording of the twelve steps to use "Higher Power" instead of "God," and all the NicA literature was changed, and it was "proscribed" that all members of NicA must now use the words "Higher Power" instead of "God" in the Steps and Traditions? What would all those members do who are so vehemently protesting the change? Would they leave NicA and start their own splinter group? Would they refuse to use those words and continue to use God instead? Or would they docily accept the change and continue on with their programs using the new version?

This is how I feel when confronted with the many, many mentions of the word "God," the pronoun "He" and the assumption that "He" is my "creator" (which is a Christian belief, but not necessarily the belief of all members who may be spiritual but not Christians). I am being forced to use that word even though it rankles with me each time I find myself having to say it. I have rewritten the steps for myself and put them on the wall in my office using "Higher Power" instead of God, because then I can love the steps and feel comfortable with them. I love my NicA meetings and feel they are the core of my recovery and the beginning of a new and wonderful life that I've begun to make for myself. I try to say "Higher Power" in my head each time the word "God" is used, and sometimes that works. Most of the time it doesn't. Basically, I am being made to constantly repeat something that I don't believe. I say this because it is my opinion, but also because I want those people in the program who believe so strongly in "God," to know that there are other opinions about this issue being held by people who are deeply spiritual and well meaning.

I am not saying that you shouldn't believe what you believe. In fact it brings me

great joy to know that there are others out there who believe in "God" and believe "He" created them, etc. How wonderful to have that powerful a faith. But to deny me my faith and my spirituality seems to be an act of exclusivity: "if you don't believe what I believe then you must be banned from the program!" And we are talking about *belief* here, not words. We are talking about the word God, which in the case of the people who wrote the Twelve Steps is a Christian God. All the AA literature is infused with references to a Christian God and Christian beliefs. I think that many Christians don't realize how pervasive it is because they are so comfortable with it, but for those of us who don't call ourselves Christians--well, I'll just speak about myself--for me, I am abruptly brought back to feelings and issues that are alien to me and that make me feel like this program was not meant to include me.

We're addicts. Most of us smoked because we were hurting, abused, misunderstood, abandoned, and just plain uncomfortable in our bodies for one reason or another. Part of the reason we were feeling that way is because the outside world was trying to make us be something we were not. And now, we are repeating that behavior in the program by making blanket, very judgmental statements about who "gets" to be part of our program and who doesn't. Who stays and who goes. How dare any member tell me what I can do or not do? How dare World Services or any member tell my meeting what we can do or not do? I'm sure there are many meetings out there that have changed the wording of the steps but no one has reported it to the "authorities." There are meetings out there that are using non-NicA literature, that use prayers from other programs (or Christian prayers like "The Lord's Prayer"). Should all these meetings be banned from membership in the "official" Nicotine Anonymous?

Here's what I think we should do.
1) Forget the issue of whether to throw a meeting out if it is not "following the official NicA rules." Every group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or NicA as a whole. If there are meetings out there that want to change the wording of the steps to Higher Power, then let them do it. All the Nicotine

Anonymous literature has the word God in it. If a newcomer to one of those meetings doesn't like that there is no mention of God, he or she will go elsewhere or go online or whatever. That meeting is NOT affecting other meetings or NicA as a whole, as much as some people would like to say it is.

2) Keep talking about ONLY the issue of the gender of "God" and using the words "Higher Power" instead of "God." Let's talk and talk and talk about it. Everyone has a right to express his or her opinion and it should be heard, in these pages, in your meetings, at Inter-group meetings, and at the World Services conferences. Motions will be made and voted on; they will pass or not pass. My belief is that this issue can only do good for the program, because it gives us something to come together on. We can come together and be angry and combative, or we can be open, understanding and non-judgmental, which is what we are all (hopefully) experiencing in our meetings.

Anonymous

Dear Editor,

For myself I have come to believe that the Twelve-Steps of NicA are religious in context and that is the way it is meant to be. I believe the concept of belief has been watered down to such a degree that it is sickening. In our book it talks of believing in a higher power that could be a door knob, a pebble, candle flame and who knows what else. I find this to be very belittling in its very statements.

We say come to believe in a power greater than ourselves will relieve us from sanity. A power greater than ourselves is more than a higher power. I have to believe in a power greater than myself and I choose to call him God. A higher power is only something higher than me if I may say so. That's why someone can say a mountain is my higher power because it is higher, not greater than me. A mountain has no power, a door knob has no power, a candle flame has no power etc., etc. I can take a sledge-hammer and crush a boulder and make all kinds of pebbles or

Letters to the Editor

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Look at all the higher powers I created.

Wow, am I God?

Step two says a power greater than ourselves

Step Three: Made a decision to turn our lives over to God.....

Step Five: Admitted to God.....

Step Six: Were entirely ready for God.....

Step Seven: Humbly ask Him.....

Step Eleven: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscience contact with God.....

Step Twelve: Having a spiritual awakening.....

I don't see anything in there that mentions a candle flame. I can blow out candle flames

I don't see a door-knob opening a door. I can open the door

I don't see a pebble conducting my life. I just kick the pebbles out of the way as I walk as there are too many higher powers there to contend with, zillions of them in fact.

So what is religion? Definitions: The service and worship of God, devotion to a religious faith, a personal set or institutionalized systems of religious beliefs.

This is a spiritual program. So what is a spiritual program? Learning to live by a code of ethics and morality based on Gods will for us in his perfect wisdom.

Definition: Relating to sacred matters, ecclesiastical rather than lay or temporal.

Yes we have the choice of believing in God of our own understanding. The program does not tell you what to believe, but to believe.

As we evolved from the Twelve Steps of AA in the fourth chapter "We Agnostics" ...quoting: as soon as we admitted the possible existence of a Creative Intelligence, a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction" No where in that chapter does it define God is something less than who He is. In fact it states, Yes we are going to talk about God, not in some mantra chanting or idiotic belief in only what we can see, like a tree, but of a spiritual being that created us. A supreme being, God, not a can of super bug juice that will give you energy

and vitality for the day. And certainly not a holy shirt. Or whatever you might deem holy because of your fear of trusting in something you can't see. After all only wimps do that.

Look at Step Seven: Humbly ask Him, a masculine pronoun definitely indicating not a door knob, I don't know, maybe there are male and female door knobs.

We get to Step Eleven and we are supposed to have grown in our growth with God to get a stronger conscience contact with Him. If this is the case why is it talking about a higher power can be a candle flame or pebbles. It's like talking out of two sides of your mouth. It's contradiction all the way. I'm going to meditate with a pebble? Give me a break!

Then we have had our gender issues with God. I think it has a lot to do with feminine issues. Women want God to be a she and others want it to be a neuter something or the other. Wow, God can be an It? The talk has been on the issue of changing our Steps in changing God to be something He isn't. Once that is done, then we won't be a Twelve Step program anymore.

It will be something brand new and guess what? This program would fall flat on its face. The reason being is that people want to deny the existence of God to almost nothing. Like it's a necessary issue to contend with. The very being that has given our life back we want to belittle.

I have stated in meetings that your start in a power greater than yourselves can be the group as they have more knowledge than you as a newcomer but it will fall short as the group is far from perfect and it will fail. There are limitations. It is a starting point that one needs and if he or she listens to the members who have been around for a while they will realize God is the glue that bonds everything together. God and God only is the real basis for our recovery.

Yes this is a religious program but does not tell you any formal way of belief and a spiritual program based on your faith and trust in God.

No, this is not a self will, self help or make your own God program to suit one's self.

Having a spiritual awakening as a result of working these Steps we truly learn to

believe there is a God who has given us the miracle of recovery.

It's interesting how we don't want to make God into something He isn't but we sure pray like He is....In the Bible Jesus was asked how do we pray?...."Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name.....A lot of room for thought.

Gary M

San Clemente

Newcomers Corner

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Paralyzed by Fear

By Cindy D.

In the last year, I've been feeling really BAD physically and know cigarettes are destroying my body, consuming my waking thoughts and disturbing my sleep. Yet, I am paralyzed by the fear of living without cigarettes and at the same time, afraid to continue. Every time I light up, some twenty times a day, I think, this is killing me.

I've failed twice, in the past, when I tried to quit and was unable to get past the all-important "day three." I've got "another" quit date in mind but everyone I know who has successfully quit tells me they just "stopped." They didn't obsess about quitting. There was no quit date, no cutting down, no patches, etc. Could I be one of those people who's just unable to quit. I've seen these people, the ones lung cancer hasn't killed, in their sixties & seventies with skin, teeth & lungs destroyed by nicotine, coughing & gagging. I just can't "wrap" my mind around this anymore.

Mornin' Ole

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shook Lena awake. "Lena, I've got to ask you von thing."

"Vot's dat?" she said, sleepily.

"Vat are you going to tell your Sunday School class?"

"The same ting I always tell dem. You don't have to drink and smoke to have a good time."

Author Unknown

Seven Minutes

NEWS

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