



# The Twelve Traditions of Nicotine Anonymous



# The Twelve Traditions<sup>\*</sup> of Nicotine Anonymous

*Whenever a society or civilization perishes, there is always one  
condition present; they forgot where they came from.*

—CARL SANDBURG



Copyright © 2007 By Nicotine Anonymous®\*  
6333 E. Mockingbird Lane, Suite 147-817  
Dallas, TX 75214

First Printing January 2007

This material may be reproduced ONLY for use within Nicotine Anonymous, except with written permission from Nicotine Anonymous World Services

Printed in the U.S.A.

\*The term "Nicotine Anonymous" is a registered trademark of  
Nicotine Anonymous World Services, Inc.  
6333 E. Mockingbird Lane, Suite 147-817  
Dallas, TX 75214 USA

## *Introduction*

**T**he Twelve Steps, based on ancient and universal spiritual principles, describe a personal path for our recovery. The power of individual recovery is in one member carrying the message to the next, without any thought of personal gain or financial reward—and it works.

The Twelve Traditions are to recovery fellowships what the Twelve Steps are to the individual. They have spiritual significance separately and as an equal partner to the Steps. Groups are encouraged to give adequate time to discuss the Traditions; while sponsors can emphasize this wisdom to newcomers. If the Traditions are watered down, diluted or abandoned, a group's survival or an individual's recovery may be placed at risk.

Bill Wilson (co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous) first drafted the Traditions as a distillation of the shared experiences of the early Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) groups. They are the result of trial and error, sometimes serious error. He expanded them into

---

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

their present form and they were adopted in 1950 at the AA International Convention held in Cleveland.

The Traditions have withstood the test of time. They provide a tried-and-true guide for groups while still allowing for individuality. As Wilson poignantly notes in AA's first tradition—"On anvils of experience, the structure of our Society was hammered out."

The Traditions were developed over time in response to problems as they arose. They are based on experience particular to the common welfare of Alcoholics Anonymous. Our fellowship has adopted them because they have served AA well.

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 (NicA) has to offer.

The Traditions provide form and unity to our entire fellowship. They help guide local groups in a way that has worked at bringing recovery to many people over many years. They gently keep the focus on our primary purpose and ensure that any member of our fellowship can go to any meeting and find the same basic spiritual principles at work. They foster a safe place for each individual by stressing the importance of group unity. Humility is the foundation on which the Traditions are built. The Traditions protect our fellowship from our individual shortcomings; they protect us from ourselves and keep us right-sized, just like the Steps.

May we all continue to deepen our understanding of these principles so that our recovery and our fellowship continue to grow and serve all those who seek freedom from nicotine.

## **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, television and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

*The Twelve Traditions reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Service, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Traditions does not mean that AA*

*is affiliated with this program. AA is program of recovery from alcoholism—use of the Twelve Traditions in connection with programs and activities which are patterned after AA. but which address other problems. does not imply otherwise.*

### **The Twelve Traditions of A.A.**

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 or 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 self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. A.A. as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues hence the A.A. 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 and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

## TRADITION ONE

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

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

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

One of our core issues was addressed by group conscience at the 1988 World Services Conference which established a clear understanding for our definition of *abstinence*. Since 1988, we define abstinence as “a state that begins when all use of nicotine ceases.” Although our name was *Smokers Anonymous* at the

time, we collectively agreed that abstinence from nicotine was our primary purpose, not any particular method of delivery. In 1990, our name became Nicotine Anonymous, which broadened our awareness and outreach as a program to include nicotine addiction in *all* forms.

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

The group’s sole objective is recovery for the individual. Individual and group survival depends on friendly relationships between group members. In our meetings, members share their personal experiences about recovery while other members listen. While each member has a right to express his or her views, an individual member may have to accept the group’s majority voice graciously. An open mind is helpful when listening to other members’ ideas or opinions.

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

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

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

## 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.”*

**W**e frequently say that Nicotine Anonymous is a “We” program. Clearly, many nicotine addicts who believed themselves hopeless have found recovery through the fellowship of Nicotine Anonymous. Although they admitted they were powerless over nicotine on their own, they somehow came to experience miraculous relief from the obsession to use nicotine through the power of a loving God (as they understood that power) acting through the group.

Reinforcing the idea that Nicotine Anonymous is a “We” program, Tradition Two reminds us that final authority in matters affecting Nicotine Anonymous groups never resides with any one individual, but with the group itself through its group conscience. What, exactly, does the term “group conscience” mean?

At the most basic level, it means an issue that requires action is brought to a Nicotine Anonymous group for discussion. The course of action to be taken is then determined by a vote of the group’s members. The use of the word “conscience,” implies that there is a moral imperative to group votes. In fact, there is.

Underlying all the other Traditions, Tradition Five says, “Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the nicotine addict who still suffers.” Each member, then, when participating in a group conscience, should consider whether or not their vote helps the group fulfill its primary purpose. This means

members put personal preferences aside and vote with this higher purpose in mind. When this happens—when members put aside their own agendas and act for the common good—we believe a loving Higher Power’s will is truly made evident through our group conscience.

Since we acknowledge that a Higher Power expresses itself through our group conscience, does that mean that decisions made by a group should never be changed? No, this is not necessarily the case. For example, when our fellowship was first formed, the earliest members decided we should be known as “Smokers Anonymous.” At the time, the name was entirely appropriate because the early members were all smokers. Years later, however, it became clear that our Higher Power no longer desired us to be known as “Smokers Anonymous.” This became evident when it was brought to our attention that the name, “Smokers Anonymous” was already legally registered by a doctor who operated a program that had nothing to do with a Twelve Step process of recovery.

This presented a real problem to our fledgling organization. The doctor was willing to license the name to us for a substantial annual licensing fee. The fellowship could not afford to pay such a fee. The dilemma was brought to the Fifth Annual Smokers Anonymous World Services Conference, held in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1990. According to the Bylaws of our fellowship, the annual World Services Conference serves as “the collective conscience of the fellowship of Nicotine Anonymous [then Smokers Anonymous] as a whole.”

A member present at this pivotal debate in our fellowship’s history described the process as “the most dramatic evidence of the guiding hand of our collective Higher Power at work that I have ever seen.” That discussion had started from a nearly unanimous collective position to “fight the good fight” to keep the full name “Smokers Anonymous.” The idea was that any program called “Anonymous,” as applied to recovery from addiction, should be reserved for the exclusive use of bona fide 12-Step programs.

Within a couple of hours, the nearly unanimous collective position had shifted 180 degrees from a combative determination to keep the term “Smokers” to the acceptance of the term “Nicotine.” It was something like “of course we are inclusive and our recovery process is about gaining and maintaining freedom from a drug, not a delivery system.” That member described the awesome shift, under the guidance of a loving collective Higher Power “like the tide coming in.” The rising tide inevitably swept participants in the discussion to the conclusion that it was time to accept the natural evolution of our fellowship into the more inclusive Nicotine Anonymous.

Changing the name of our fellowship is an example of group conscience operating at the fellowship-wide level. However, group conscience occurs at several different levels throughout Nicotine Anonymous. Group conscience is also expressed at weekly Nicotine Anonymous meetings, at monthly intergroup meetings, and at periodic meetings of the officers of the World Service Office (WSO) of Nicotine Anonymous. There are also many occasions when special committees are formed for conference or retreat planning, revising the Bylaws of Nicotine Anonymous, proposing new or revised literature, and so on. Although these committees may have a chairperson coordinating the efforts of the committee, they use group conscience to reach accord within the committee.

At the group level, members utilize group conscience to determine a wide variety of items. For example, groups need officers—members who are willing to serve in positions such as secretary, chairperson or treasurer. Many groups hold periodic business meetings for the purpose of electing officers and determining other business items. These include how long officers will serve, how long members are required to be abstinent to be eligible for office, whether or not the group will serve coffee at meetings, and how much the group can afford to donate to their local intergroup and to Nicotine Anonymous World Services. There are many other group related items that are decided by group conscience.

### TRADITION THREE

*“The only requirement for  
Nicotine Anonymous membership  
is a desire to stop using nicotine.”*

**A**s a worldwide fellowship, Nicotine Anonymous wants to reach out and include any nicotine user who seeks to join us in the pursuit of living free from nicotine. This one requirement for membership keeps it simple, and keeps it sane. We have one point to rally around, to establish our equality, and simply welcome all newcomers.

We have been freely given the precious gift of recovery and have had the deadly grip of nicotine addiction lifted from our lives. All that was asked of us was that we have a desire (no matter how small) to stop using nicotine. Therefore, how could we now presume to deny this gift to newcomers?

Any differences in beliefs should not interfere with a newcomer's access to the program or our support. Certainly it is true that there are those among us who discovered for themselves that it was necessary for them to shed old beliefs in order to find a new peace in recovery. Becoming a Nicotine Anonymous member, just as forming one's own belief system, is a personal decision. In this way, Tradition Three also protects us from getting caught up in making injurious judgments of others, especially of those of us still (or relapsed) in the powerful grip of nicotine.

As a spiritual program, acknowledging the desire to stop using nicotine embraces the spirit within and avoids judgments toward

the behavior of the disease. Therefore, it is *not* necessary for newcomers to have already stopped using nicotine before they join us. Some newcomers may find it difficult to recognize or acknowledge that desire. For some of us, the desire was so small, we did not even feel we had a desire until day after day, week after week, meeting after meeting, we finally recognized it and eventually got free.

By having only this *one* requirement for membership, we also maintain our openness to all who seek recovery. Newcomers don't have to belong to any other group, believe in God, donate money, or work the steps in a certain way to join. We are not afraid of the emotions expressed when one stops using nicotine. No one is required to be rational or lucid or say all the correct things at meetings. We've been there. We do not exclude anyone from our program for any reason including race, reputation, creed, sexual orientation, gender, disability, or place of origin. If newcomers are not sure the desire to stop using nicotine is within them, but they are willing to find out, they are welcome here.

Most of us lived in a dark pit of denial, alienation, and pain caused by nicotine addiction for many years. We would not leave a suffering addict at the bottom of that pit alone—not when we have the rope of recovery that we can toss down to them. Granted, they have to be willing to take hold of the rope in order to climb out and join us. But, that is all we require.

Some of our members feel they were actually pulled up out of their addiction by the simple act of asking for help. Others find that the gift of recovery from nicotine was more difficult to accept, having to struggle up that rope and slip back down many times before maintaining their abstinence from nicotine. Tradition Three keeps our doors open and our hearts reaching out. Our shared stories reveal both the worst aspects of being caught inside this addiction and the joys of coming out to a new freedom. We are not only aware of the dangers of nicotine addiction, but also very grateful for the spiritual gift of recovery that makes our freedom possible. Therefore, we keep showing up at meetings and tossing down the rope of our truth, which is our experience, strength, and hope, so that others may be lifted to freedom.

Although this program provides us with a spiritual approach to fulfill the desire for freedom, joy, and peace, most nicotine addicts fell into the pit as immature teenagers. We were often driven by a similar desire to feel more freedoms and joys, and then spent many years chasing after them by using nicotine. Coming to see this desire anew is often challenging. At first, we may not have wanted to give up our drug. Perhaps we feared that we could not live without it. Despite attending many meetings or possibly abstaining from nicotine use for periods of time, we felt sure that we had no honest desire to stop.

However, once we discussed this issue with other members, we found others who had not initially felt a tremendous desire to stop either. Some had even repeated in meetings that they did not want to put down nicotine at all. Some of us only wanted to live and were afraid we would die if we continued to use nicotine. Some of us only had a desire to find our Higher Power's will for us. Some of us wanted to improve our health. Many of us only wanted to want to stop using nicotine. We have come to understand that any of these, or even the simple willingness to show up at meetings, can be defined as a desire to stop using nicotine.

Also, there have been those who had difficulty with the issue of nicotine. While they felt they had a desire to quit smoking or chewing tobacco, they may not have felt ready to give up some other nicotine delivery systems. Each of us decides on a way to begin our own process and that a desire to stop using nicotine in all forms may follow in time.

Once clear of the smoke screen nicotine placed between our true desires and thoughts, our collective experience has shown that we do indeed have a great desire to stay free of this cunning and dangerous drug. In addition, most of us also have a great desire to really live our lives. For many of us, going back to using nicotine would mean giving up wonderful new joys that have been added to our lives. Things such as hiking, aerobics, singing, sharing time with friends, intimacy in our relationships, our new found health, and even the ability to sit still through a movie or a plane ride would be taken from us if we returned to our addiction.

Our desire to continue with our new lives now far outweighs any desire we may still have for our drug.

So, if you wish to become a Nicotine Anonymous member, come join us. If you are willing to call us or walk into our rooms, we have faith that the desire to stop is within you. No matter who you are, no matter how many other addictions you may have, no matter what your troubles are, you will find some among us have them too. We want you here with us. We are keeping you in our thoughts and hope you will choose to join us in the wonderful life and freedom we have found after we got free of nicotine. Tradition Three is our welcome to Nicotine Anonymous!

## TRADITION FOUR

*“Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or Nicotine Anonymous as a whole.”*

**A**ccording to the history of our fellowship, Nicotine Anonymous groups (once known as Smokers Anonymous) existed autonomously without even knowing of each other’s existence. They each were able to help addicts achieve freedom from nicotine. They practiced the Twelve Steps and/or provided each other with fellowship.

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 perform 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.

We do encourage all groups to confer with other groups, their intergroup, and World Services whenever they embark on something which may affect other groups or the fellowship. Seeking guidance to gauge an impulse or idea is one of the principles that support our recovery process. A case occurred many years ago when the chairman of an intergroup was contacted by the maker of a new alternative nicotine product. The company offered to finance and staff a toll-free number for them if they would provide support for their customers and include their pamphlets on the groups' literature tables. After conferring with members of other groups, the offer was wisely declined. Besides damaging the reputation of any groups involved, such an endeavor would surely harm the entire fellowship.

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 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:

Many of the New York City area groups evolved from old "A.A. for Non-Smokers" meetings. These were A.A. members who came together to address their addiction to nicotine. Some of these groups changed their name to Nicotine Anonymous, while others kept their old "A.A. for Non-Smokers" name. The New York Metropolitan Area Intergroup had a very brief meeting list and many were eager to list as many meetings as possible. It was voted that these groups could not be listed because of their outside affiliation. Since then, many of these have decided by group conscience to become Nicotine Anonymous meetings. This decision had to be made by the individual groups themselves.

Perhaps the freedom that we offer our groups is part of the attraction of our fellowship. It allows each group to create meetings that best serve its membership. While it is comforting to go to meetings around the world and see the same Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, the varied formats, readings, stories and customs make for a wonderful variety. This serves to keep things interesting and to help us learn to approach our recovery with an open mind.

## TRADITION FIVE

*Each group has but one primary purpose—  
to carry its message to the nicotine addict  
who still suffers.*

**I**n itself, this tradition carries a message to all group members. First, members of each group, acting as a unified whole, have *one primary purpose* to fulfill. Second, we have a valuable *message* that we are to share. Third, to whom we are to carry this message is specifically identified—*the nicotine addict who still suffers*.

At a group level, we communicate our message both in the meaning of our words as well as the manner of our actions. Having a primary purpose serves us like a guiding star, letting us know when we are on course. With recovery comes a newfound enthusiasm which can lead members of a group to try to be many things to many people. A group need take care not to become diluted or distracted regarding its sense of purpose.

Our experience with nicotine and recovery is what we know best. Sharing our story does not require special talents or training. We can each offer what we know and have come to believe. Carrying the message is also accomplished without speaking, when we quietly listen to our fellow members. By focusing on our primary purpose, a group increases the likelihood of acting in good faith toward our principles and maintaining unity in the process. In this simplicity, there is strength.

As a fellowship, we understand this spiritual principle: in order to keep the recovery we have received we need to keep giving this

*gift* away to others who still suffer. To ignore this truth, we risk a relapse as individuals and risk the preservation of the group. This is a mission of love spreading out to members either still in the grip of nicotine or struggling with other aspects of their recovery.

Although we are a program grounded in anonymity, we do not grow in the dark. This love is also expressed in our outreach efforts to those who have not yet heard about our program. Carrying the message is our recovery in action. We look to act in a manner that attracts others, that they may be granted the same peace we seek. Our warm welcome opens our hearts and keeps us from the isolation of addiction. A newcomer's struggle helps remind us of where we have come from, ever deepening our gratitude for another nicotine free day.

Nicotine Anonymous has five tools to help us live nicotine free. The five tools are: meetings, phone/email list, literature, sponsorship, and service. The tools are also a means by which we can carry our message to others who seek help. Meetings carry the message by reminding us to turn our attention toward the solution rather than the problem. In this, there is hope and strength. Sharing provides an opportunity for newcomers to identify with others' past experience as they hear and see possibilities for change. They witness honesty and hope in a safe and supportive setting. The firsthand message our members offer is unique and powerful.

A group's phone list grows whenever a member becomes willing to add his or her name and offer support between meetings. This list is especially important to the still suffering addict whose desire to get free may struggle to be heard above the nagging of nicotine. Newcomers not yet comfortable speaking at meetings may find more ease using other such forms of communication. We have a gentle message that each may heed at his or her own pace.

Our literature is written by members, reviewed by trusted servants, and deemed official by delegates who vote at our annual Conferences to ensure that it carries our message. Our experience is available in several forms such as pamphlets, books, and audio-

tapes. World Services and some intergroups publish newsletters where members contribute their individual experience as well. We know that if we do not reach out to those still suffering we risk stagnating and having no vital purpose.

Sponsorship is the personal embodiment of the principle for how one keeps his or her recovery by kindly giving it away to a sponsee. Sponsors carry the message by sharing the journey of recovery on a one-to-one basis, by listening with care, and by demonstrating through action how Nicotine Anonymous works.

Service is our gratitude in action. Doing service carries our message of commitment and responsibility. Service can also carry our message as a means of making amends and showing we have improved our behavior or attitude. Members who serve become role models, often stretching beyond former fears and limitations in order to fulfill our primary purpose.

Having a primary purpose keeps the intent of our message simple and clear, which may lessen whatever suspicions those still suffering might have about a group. Many of us had doubts and fears about joining groups when we first arrived. For example, newcomers may have concerns about religious issues when they learn we are a spiritually based program. It is imperative that we honor Our Preamble regarding Nicotine Anonymous not being allied with any religious or political organization.

By appropriately carrying our message, each group shows the still suffering nicotine addict we care and what is possible when not under the influence of nicotine. A primary purpose provides us with a focus that reminds us to recognize and value priorities. All this and more reveals the full dimension of our recovery message.

## TRADITION SIX

*“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.”*

**A**t the turn of the twenty-first century, this tradition was referenced in decisions made about linking our web page to web pages of other organizations. Some members felt that linking would imply affiliation. This tradition allows us to *cooperate* with outside entities, but not to *affiliate*. To discern the difference between those two words (*cooperate* and *affiliate*) was a challenge for some Nicotine Anonymous members.

Some members wanted us to throw caution to the wind and link up to any and everything that had anything to do with nicotine cessation. Some felt it would “only be fair” because many organizations send us referrals. However, as of this writing, our group conscience has decided to have our web page make mention of other resources, but not provide links to those sites. We have also decided that other sites can have links to us, but we will not provide reciprocal links to them.

We see other organizations help people to quit smoking and some of their “graduates” come into our rooms. Some of our members have wondered why we shouldn’t merge with them and take advantage of some of their infrastructure. Or, if that is out of order, they wonder why we can’t at least endorse them, especially in cities and towns where we don’t have any meetings. People are always asking for the names and phone numbers of rehabs where people can go for a week of nicotine abstinence.

Some of our members have wondered if we should send them to the Nicotine Anonymous web page so they can click on a link to get the information they so desperately need. These members have asked, “Isn’t that helping the still suffering addict?” Tradition Six tells us that this is not the way our program will help them. Tradition Six helps us to *keep it simple* and to have appropriate, yet useful relationships with other organizations on a fellowship-wide level.

Although each party starts as a separate entity when a relationship is established, there occurs (either in actuality or perception) an inevitable blending of identities and/or policies. The difficulty for us would exist if, for example, we were to form such a relationship with another organization. While both may have the common interest of good health and spirituality, the affiliation would have each organization losing some of its original character and specialty. Tradition Six protects us from diluting or altering what we are and what we do. Tradition Six maintains our fellowship’s unique ability to help the nicotine addict who still suffers.

We recognize that people do have other problems and members should be able to inform other members about resources where they might seek additional assistance without the risk of our fellowship becoming affiliated with those other groups. For example, people often gain some weight when they quit smoking. On a personal basis, there is nothing wrong with sharing information about another fellowship or organization that could be of further help to a fellow member, but for our fellowship to officially affiliate with that other group or organization would be a major mistake.

During the 1980s, one of our members was contacted by a drug company which was producing a nicotine gum to help people quit smoking. The company was going to offer us a much needed toll free number along with a person who would maintain a database of our worldwide meeting list. This service would have been completely free to us. In exchange, we would have been required to put this company’s literature on our literature table with our own conference-approved literature. It was

a tempting deal, but thanks to the wisdom of Tradition Six we declined their offer.

We have a very powerful safety valve in the form of Tradition Six. Helping the still suffering addict is our primary purpose. Tradition Six helps our fellowship focus our efforts on that essential task and avoid becoming diverted or diluted by an outside enterprise or even a related facility.

## TRADITION SEVEN

*“Every Nicotine Anonymous group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”*

**O**ne clear function of this tradition is to guide how we accept monetary contributions only from our members and not from any outside contributors, no matter how well-meaning those offers may be. This way each group maintains its autonomy and our fellowship remains independent. It is vital that we do not accept any outside contributions, lest we become dependent on that outside individual or group for our survival. Our survival needs to be determined by our own contributions, otherwise we may become involved in outside issues and politics. These other agendas could weaken and confuse our message, threatening or even ending our mission.

Early in the life of a particular Nicotine Anonymous group, the group was very graciously offered a meeting place free of charge. Several members argued that being a small group, survival depended on accepting that offer. However, through a group conscience, it was determined that in order for the group to maintain its autonomy, it would have to decline this very generous offer. Instead, they decided to negotiate a monthly “donation” in return for a meeting room. The group realized this was a vital decision that protected the integrity of our message and honored this Tradition of our fellowship. Even if it meant this one meeting might close without outside contributions, the group was willing to accept that possibility.

Looking more deeply into this tradition, we cannot be totally self-supporting without each of us contributing service to our group, intergroup, and World Services. Service is not only one of the tools of personal recovery, it is the life blood for our entire fellowship. If we only *take* from the fellowship, we no longer *make* a fellowship. Whenever any one of us is content to sit back and let “someone else” make the necessary commitments, the existence of a group, and eventually Nicotine Anonymous itself is threatened.

Self supporting through service means actions such as attending both group and business meetings on a regular basis, sharing at meetings, working the steps, sponsoring people, setting up and cleaning up meetings, subscribing and contributing to fellowship newsletters, as well as taking on chairperson, treasurer, or secretary positions. Self-supporting service, as much or more than monetary contributions, will insure our continued ability to serve all nicotine users who seek our help. Thus, by honoring this Tradition, we maintain our primary purpose and the spiritual foundation upon which our Fellowship is based.

## TRADITION EIGHT

*Nicotine Anonymous should remain forever  
non-professional, but our service centers  
may employ special workers.*

**I**n order to maintain our spiritual foundation we need to determine appropriate boundaries regarding involvement with professionals. The manner in which members serve our fellowship needs to be in accordance with all our traditions and steps. The integrity of our program's principles should not become compromised or brought under suspicion with matters related to monetary profits.

A function of our primary principle, anonymity, is that it affords all members an equality of status. If some members were to carry our message of recovery identified as "paid Nicotine Anonymous professionals" an inequality of status would result. Such implied inequality could lead other members to feel less valued or less inclined to serve the group or even share their story. A member who gains financially for carrying the message of Nicotine Anonymous would not be in keeping with the spiritual principle of personal recovery—to freely give what we have been freely given.

Our Preamble states that there are no dues or fees for Nicotine Anonymous membership. Tradition Three establishes the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using nicotine. Having members charge money as professionals for doing Step Twelve work would be contrary to our principles.

However, Tradition Seven guides our groups to be self-supporting. In order for our fellowship to function effectively and efficiently there are practical and appropriate circumstances for members, who understand our program, to be paid or have expenses covered for services rendered. These members would be considered “special workers.” They help with the regular tasks of operating the fellowship in a way that supports our efforts to help nicotine addicts.

For example, it could be appropriate to compensate a professional office manager with the necessary skills to address the ongoing business of an intergroup or World Services. Fellowship funds could pay a member whose job it is to respond to literature orders and mail packages to groups and individual members. Although volunteers offer their talents freely to serve in many capacities, they cannot be expected to carry the message of recovery as well as carry the full load of running every aspect our fellowship.

Additionally, health care professionals can arrange to have meetings available at their agencies to serve clients and patients. A member may open a nicotine rehab facility as a career. As long as compensation is not received for directly doing Nicotine Anonymous Twelfth Step work as a Nicotine Anonymous member, they are not violating this tradition. Therapists who are also Nicotine Anonymous members can treat clients for nicotine addiction, but when attending Nicotine Anonymous meetings simply as a member they have no more authority or status than any other member. Meetings are not a “place of business” and no professional should solicit clients at meetings. No member can be a “Nicotine Anonymous professional.”

Nicotine Anonymous meetings are not professionally facilitated therapy groups. Therefore, we would not endorse any one form of therapy because Tradition Ten guides us away from claiming an opinion on outside issues. Our program is unique. It consists of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. These, together with the five tools, are what we know and what we offer.

## TRADITION NINE

*“Nicotine Anonymous as such ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.”*

**A**t first, this statement may pose a paradox about our program. If we have no organization, then how is it that we have our intergroups, World Service office, board, and committees? Are these not examples of organization? Without organization, will we not have anarchy?

Well, yes, we do have anarchy. Anarchy is the absence of government, and we certainly have no government. However, what we do have are servants, staff, and volunteers who serve the entirety of our fellowship. Whether we speak of a telephone volunteer, an officer of the board, or paid office assistant, each works to serve the needs of the fellowship in general and individual members upon request.

There is actually great comfort to be derived from this lack of structure. The leaders of each group, committee, or board are there to serve the members, not to dictate or impose their will. No one can tell any member or group what they must do. Like the steps, our guidelines and traditions are suggestions. In the experience of many of our members, not working the steps has had extreme consequences, often leading to relapse. The same is true of our Traditions. We have often seen non-adherence to the Traditions lead to a group's demise. Even so, we can only make suggestions based on our experiences of how other groups dealt with similar situations. There is no enforcement or judicial branch

of our fellowship. In fact, it is the servants and leaders who have to answer to the members and groups of Nicotine Anonymous.

Groups, intergroups, and World Services each set their own parameters for choosing its servants and leaders. There may be a simple rotation of commitments or a formal election of officers. Those elected or chosen derive their authority solely from those who have selected them. They are charged with the task of serving the fellowship in line with the principles of the program and to uphold the Twelve Traditions of Nicotine Anonymous.

In the early days, groups existed without regional intergroups or a World Services office. Today, these regional committees and World Services provide essential services such as printing meeting lists, distributing literature, answering phones and correspondence, and spreading the message of our fellowship wherever possible. World Services prints all Conference-approved literature. Over the years these services have proved essential to our fellowship's existence and our personal recovery. Most of us could not imagine the program without them.

When our volunteers truly embrace the humble principles of service, fellowship, and selflessness, there is no need to grab vainly for the powers of control, prestige, and selfishness. A spirit of cooperation and a singleness of purpose are all that is necessary to provide Nicotine Anonymous with its unique structure of service, fellowship, and recovery.

## TRADITION TEN

*“Nicotine Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues hence the Nicotine Anonymous name ought never be drawn into public controversy.”*

**T**radition Ten helps remind us to fulfill our primary purpose, which is to carry the message to the nicotine addict that still suffers. Therefore, Nicotine Anonymous should not divert its attention by involving itself in outside issues or public controversy.

As recovering nicotine addicts we know that the use of nicotine is harmful and some may, in fact, believe that it should be banned, controlled, or limited. Therefore, it is tempting to say that we should support lawsuits against tobacco companies, take out ads that support outlawing nicotine, participate with groups that want to ban smoking, or support politicians who seek to limit places where people can smoke.

Tradition Ten clearly tells us “No.” We have no opinion as a group about tobacco companies, various nicotine products, or the nicotine use of others. True, we as individual addicts may have differing opinions on these subjects. However, as a group, as Nicotine Anonymous, we state or take no position.

Smoking, dipping, chewing . . . these are things that we all enjoyed at one point while using nicotine. How we stopped using, how we came to believe, how we gained freedom from this powerful addiction . . . these are the things we share in order to help the person who is still suffering.

No member, using the name of Nicotine Anonymous or claiming to be a spokesperson for our program or as a representative of Nicotine Anonymous, should ever express an opinion, at the public level, on outside controversial issues, particularly those of politics, nicotine reform, or religion. Nicotine Anonymous neither endorses nor opposes any cause or candidate. We do not even oppose the manufacture, sale, or use of nicotine products. As a fellowship, we have no opinion on government subsidies to tobacco farmers or when, how, and where nicotine is packaged or consumed. Although Nicotine Anonymous is a spiritual program, we have no opinion on religion or religious institutions. Many of us come from various religious and political backgrounds. To insist that any member support a particular religion or political cause would not only destroy our fellowship, but would violate the first tradition regarding the primary importance of our common unity.

The founders of the Alcoholics Anonymous program wisely decided not to take on the alcohol manufacturers or participate in a temperance movement to ban alcohol. They realized that such a move would be futile and would likely destroy the foundation of their recovery. Similarly, Nicotine Anonymous cannot divert from our primary purpose in order to rail against the tobacco companies or promote legislation as to how and when people may smoke, dip, or chew.

Also, many nicotine users chose to end their use of nicotine with the help of nicotine withdrawal aids such as the nicotine patch, nicotine gum, or prescription medications. Use of such substances is up to each individual and should not be dictated or criticized by the group. Providing support in order to live free of nicotine is our primary purpose, not how an individual member may choose to get free.

This Tradition may be personally difficult to live up to because we probably all have opinions on such issues. However, when we act as a representative of Nicotine Anonymous, we need to avoid public debates on such controversial issues, focusing instead on maintaining the sanity and strength of our fellowship so that we can be helpful to the nicotine addict who still suffers.

## TRADITION ELEVEN

*Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, television, and films.*

**A**s nicotine addicts our lives were out of control and unmanageable. We used nicotine to the extreme. One was not enough; thousands were not enough. We saw no problem in the extremes we went to in order to get and maintain a daily supply of nicotine. Our behavior with nicotine, whether inhaling it or chewing it, lacked boundaries as our smoke, butts, or spit polluted the environs wherever we went.

Like many of the principles of our program, Tradition Eleven guides us in our recovery to have appropriate limits when we “carry the message” to those outside of our fellowship. The integrity and longevity of our fellowship depends on this time-tested principle. Certainly we want people to know about what we offer. However, it is essential that the focus remain on the program rather than the personalities within the fellowship. We want people *attracted* to our program because of its principles, not because of who is in it. Anonymity not only protects the individual, it protects the program from the human shortcomings we all have.

Anonymity is not a matter for each member to determine for himself or herself. If a member was to think: “I don’t care if the public knows I am a Nicotine Anonymous member, I have nothing to hide” this would be overlooking that this is a “WE” program, not a “ME” program. Nicotine Anonymous’ spiritual principles

include humility, which is essential to our recovery. Consider if one member grabs the spotlight, then others may become jealous or try to compete. This would erode unity. Additionally, Nicotine Anonymous members ought to remain mindful that, although we are not affiliated with Alcoholics Anonymous (and other 12-step fellowships), we are part of a recovery community sharing this program and we need to show our respect and gratitude by honoring this Tradition for the sake of all.

The media is filled with advertisements using celebrities to make personal endorsements of products. The ads may be effective for those corporations, but there are risks. If that personality “falls from grace” or one’s “pedestal” becomes a target for the press, the situation could reflect poorly on the company or product. Nicotine Anonymous acknowledges relapses are a reality from which no member is immune. Nicotine Anonymous accepts the wisdom learned by Alcoholics Anonymous—promotions highlighting *the person* are not the best way for us to carry the message.

Many newcomers hear about us by word of mouth from other members or by local meeting notices inviting anyone with a desire to stop using nicotine to come to a meeting. Publicity in various forms has also been an important way for the nicotine addict who still suffers to hear about Nicotine Anonymous. Early in our organization’s history, a member wrote a *Reader’s Digest* story about our program and the article significantly raised public awareness of our existence. Also, columns in *Dear Abby* and *Ann Landers* referring to our fellowship caught many an eye. These were not examples of self-promotion because they kept the focus on the fellowship.

There are many ways to appropriately publicize what we offer. NAWS has pamphlets suitable for outreach efforts such as “Introducing Nicotine Anonymous,” “To the Newcomer and Sponsorship in Nicotine Anonymous,” and “Introducing Nicotine Anonymous to the Medical Profession.” Nicotine Anonymous World Services also has CDs with a public service announcement that members can ask local radio stations to broadcast. Some other examples are as follows: local meeting announcements

placed in newspapers and on palm cards; information provided to local chapters of national health organizations; Nicotine Anonymous literature presented at health fairs or offered to the offices of health professionals and hospitals.

If a member were to write a book or be interviewed by public media there are some appropriate options. Individuals can use their full name if they forgo mentioning they are Nicotine Anonymous members and simply identify themselves as nicotine addicts. If individuals are identifying themselves as Nicotine Anonymous members, the other option would be to conceal their faces and use first names only.

Many of our members did not show up to a meeting the first time they heard about it or work the steps the first time they read them. They could not be “sold” this program, they had to become ready. The best way we carry this message is by our sharing our experience, strength, and hope at meetings, serving in outreach efforts, by frankly explaining what Nicotine Anonymous is about, and by living the results of our spiritual awakening by practicing program principles in our daily lives. If what nicotine addicts see and hear *attracts* them, they will find our warm welcome.

Out of respect for others, we do not tell people that they *need our program* or what they *should* do. We do not ensure everyone a “guarantee of success.” We are not selling, we are showing.

Faith and humility are spiritual principles, and to remain a spiritual program, we need to practice faith and humility in our public relations policy.

## TRADITION TWELVE

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

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

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

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

Anonymity guides us to serve, rather than govern, moving us to do good in this world and show kindness. Avoiding self-promotion, we are less likely to pontificate opinions about outside issues. Our intentions will be more attractive as we carry the

message of Nicotine Anonymous. For our groups to be self-supporting, individual members cannot act in self-interest alone.

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

The principle of confidentiality is more likely to be honored where anonymity is practiced. This enhances the chances that newcomers will *keep showing up* and begin letting go. Nicotine has no less affect on those with notoriety, wealth, intellect, or any other such “social advantage.” We all start at Step One. Similarly, anonymity is there to provide even those of fame with the opportunity to start at Step One and have their confidentiality respected by all members. Confidentiality engenders trust. Where there is trust, the courage to change can receive the support of fellow members. Trust can deepen one’s faith in the care and guidance of a higher power.

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

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

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

Exercising anonymity and humility does not mean we cannot celebrate. Groups may celebrate a member’s abstinence or anniversary with applause and tokens. This is not intended to elevate

any one member's status, but simply to celebrate the recovery brought about by honest effort and the grace of a higher power.

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