

## **Appendix to CAR Motion 54 Updated**

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF NAR-ANON**

*Our group experience suggests that the unity of the Nar-Anon Family Groups depends upon our adherence to these traditions. ~The Nar-Anon Blue Booklet*

Nar-Anon's Twelve Traditions are a set of spiritual principles to guide us in our relationships with others at home, at work, at meetings, and in service. The traditions are the spiritual principles we use to keep our meetings healthy. They are suggestions to be used with the guidance of our Higher Power to help create unity among the groups and the fellowship. In any group situation, there will likely be differences of opinion. The traditions can help us decide what is best for the greatest number.

The traditions build a road for us to follow. The existence of Nar-Anon depends upon the discussion, understanding, and application of these traditions.

We can apply the traditions in many areas of our personal lives as well as in our groups. By studying the traditions, we learn how to apply them at home, at work, and in our families. We are learning to think about what benefits the greatest number in any given situation. When we practice our recovery, we give everyone a voice and are open to the opinions and suggestions of others. We no longer need to be right or force our ideas on the group.

The traditions are fluid. Our understanding and use of them change with time and experience. We hope the questions inspire conversation and exploration of the principles and concepts. Take time to discuss the questions with your sponsor, sponsees, home group members, and other Nar-Anon members.

### **SUGGESTIONS AS YOU BEGIN**

- Listen to our Higher Power for guidance when applying the traditions.
- Study how, where, when, and why to apply the traditions.
- Find a group of people with whom we can discuss the traditions.

# THE TWELVE TRADITIONS

<p>Tradition One</p> <p><b>OUR COMMON WELFARE SHOULD COME FIRST; PERSONAL PROGRESS FOR THE GREATEST NUMBER DEPENDS ON UNITY.</b></p>	<p><b>UNITY</b></p>	<p><b>BELONGING</b></p>
<p>Tradition Two</p> <p><b>FOR OUR GROUP PURPOSES THERE IS BUT ONE AUTHORITY – A LOVING GOD AS HE MAY EXPRESS HIMSELF IN OUR GROUP CONSCIENCE. OUR LEADERS ARE BUT TRUSTED SERVANTS – THEY DO NOT GOVERN.</b></p>	<p><b>TRUST</b></p>	
<p>Tradition Three</p> <p><b>THE RELATIVES OF ADDICTS, WHEN GATHERED FOR MUTUAL AID, MAY CALL THEMSELVES A NAR-ANON FAMILY GROUP, PROVIDED THAT AS A GROUP, THEY HAVE NO OTHER AFFILIATION. THE ONLY REQUIREMENT FOR MEMBERSHIP IS THAT THERE BE A PROBLEM OF ADDICTION IN A RELATIVE OR FRIEND</b></p>	<p><b>MUTUAL AID</b></p>	
<p>Tradition Four</p> <p><b>EACH GROUP SHOULD BE AUTONOMOUS EXCEPT IN MATTERS AFFECTING OTHER NAR-ANON FAMILY GROUPS, OR NA AS A WHOLE.</b></p>	<p><b>AUTONOMY</b></p>	<p><b>MOTIVATION</b></p>
<p>Tradition Five</p> <p><b>EACH NAR-ANON FAMILY GROUP HAS BUT ONE PURPOSE; TO HELP FAMILIES OF ADDICTS. WE DO THIS BY PRACTICING THE TWELVE STEPS OF NAR-ANON, BY ENCOURAGING AND UNDERSTANDING OUR ADDICTED RELATIVES, AND BY WELCOMING AND GIVING COMFORT TO FAMILIES OF ADDICTS.</b></p>	<p><b>PURPOSE</b></p>	
<p>Tradition Six</p> <p><b>OUR FAMILY GROUPS OUGHT NEVER TO ENDORSE, FINANCE OR LEND OUR NAME TO ANY OUTSIDE ENTERPRISE, LEST PROBLEMS OF MONEY, PROPERTY AND PRESTIGE DIVERT US FROM OUR PRIMARY SPIRITUAL AIM; BUT ALTHOUGH A SEPARATE ENTITY, WE SHOULD ALWAYS COOPERATE WITH NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS.</b></p>	<p><b>FOCUS</b></p>	
<p>Tradition Seven</p> <p><b>EVERY GROUP OUGHT TO BE FULLY SELF-SUPPORTING, DECLINING OUTSIDE CONTRIBUTIONS.</b></p>	<p><b>SELF-SUPPORTING</b></p>	<p><b>SUSTAINING</b></p>
<p>Tradition Eight</p> <p><b>NAR-ANON TWELFTH STEP WORK SHOULD REMAIN FOREVER NON-PROFESSIONAL, BUT OUR SERVICE CENTERS MAY EMPLOY SPECIAL WORKERS.</b></p>	<p><b>NON-PROFESSIONAL</b></p>	
<p>Tradition Nine</p> <p><b>OUR GROUPS, AS SUCH OUGHT NEVER TO BE ORGANIZED, BUT WE MAY CREATE SERVICE BOARDS OR COMMITTEES DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE TO THOSE THEY SERVE.</b></p>	<p><b>SERVICE</b></p>	
<p>Tradition Ten</p> <p><b>THE NAR-ANON FAMILY GROUPS HAVE NO OPINION ON OUTSIDE ISSUES; HENCE OUR NAME OUGHT NEVER BE DRAWN INTO PUBLIC CONTROVERSY.</b></p>	<p><b>NEUTRALITY</b></p>	<p><b>COMMUNITY</b></p>
<p>Tradition Eleven</p> <p><b>OUR PUBLIC RELATIONS POLICY IS BASED ON ATTRACTION RATHER THAN PROMOTION; WE NEED ALWAYS MAINTAIN PERSONAL ANONYMITY AT THE LEVEL OF PRESS, RADIO, FILMS, INTERNET, AND OTHER FORMS OF MASS MEDIA. WE NEED GUARD WITH SPECIAL CARE THE ANONYMITY OF ALL NA MEMBERS.</b></p>	<p><b>ATTRACTION</b></p>	
<p>Tradition Twelve</p> <p><b>ANONYMITY IS THE SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION OF ALL OUR TRADITIONS, EVER REMINDING US TO PLACE PRINCIPLES ABOVE PERSONALITIES.</b></p>	<p><b>ANONYMITY</b></p>	

## TRADITION ONE

### **Tradition One: Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends on unity.**

Tradition One gives us our first glimpse into the heart of the group and how it beats. It is the principle of placing *we before me*. It helps us realize we are part of something bigger than ourselves.

What is common welfare, and how do we describe it? What is unity, and how do we achieve it? How does our personal progress depend on common welfare and unity? These are the principles we want to explore, understand, and use to guide our fellowship and groups as we fulfill our one purpose, to help families and friends of addicts. The traditions are based on words or phrases which may not be familiar to some of us. Yet, our personal progress is shaped by their use. The principles embodied in each tradition are intertwined with the spiritual nature of our program. With our willingness to make room for a power greater than ourselves, we are guided to apply the traditions to our lives. Understanding these principles takes time, practice, and growth.

Most of us come to the program wanting help and relief from chaos. We are looking for answers to make the impact of addiction, and the pain go away. That is our focus. We respond based on our experiences, fears, and anxieties that come from living with the disease of addiction. These are not easy to change, remove, or forget. The principles of common welfare and unity were not our primary concern.

Our common welfare is the health, happiness, and prosperity of the group, rather than just a few of its members. It gives us a chance to put aside personal agendas in order to achieve an atmosphere of unity and trust. Each of us has opinions, ideas, and a vision for the group, some stronger than others. Sharing them, discussing them openly and honestly with others, and listening with an open mind are the start of placing our common welfare first. Learning to make decisions that benefit all of our members helps us let go of old habits and fears. Successfully letting go gives us a sense of freedom and shows us how practicing the traditions creates unity in the group.

Our personal progress comes from finding trust and safety, which gives us a spirit of serenity. As part of a bigger fellowship, groups are links, interconnected like chains. As members of Nar-Anon, we all have equal privileges and responsibilities. Each of us is responsible for the existence and growth of Nar-Anon. We come to believe that our group puts our common welfare first, including what is best for our personal progress. We find comfort in the fact that we are not alone; we all matter. Friendships form despite our differences.

We welcome members with different experiences. Some members may be living with active addiction; others may not. As each member needs the fellowship's support to survive, the fellowship also needs the support of its members to survive. Personalities different from our own can teach us lessons and help us grow and change. We learn to take what we like and leave the rest. The more diverse we are as a group, the more people we can ultimately help. In this way, our common welfare and unity become our strength. What we once saw as our weakness blooms into one of our greatest assets. A slogan we can live by is Principles Above Personalities.

What is unity, and how do we know if it is working? Unity shapes us and, in turn, shapes our group. Unity is an underlying feeling of safety and security that we sense when we come into the rooms of Nar-Anon. Addiction tends to separate and isolate us while working the program brings us together. The groups are the foundation upon which our fellowship is built. When we are unified in message and action, our groups become stable, healthy, and inviting to all who seek recovery. A home group with a clear and consistent message, based on Nar-Anon principles, is welcoming and comforting and fosters the growth of all its members. When members work the steps, apply the traditions, and practice a life of recovery, groups grow stronger. We are interdependent. Each member contributes to the whole when they participate and share their gifts.

***A member shares:** As I practice the program, my personal progress should promote unity. My recovery is connected to the recovery of others in my group and vice versa. In that way, I contribute to the unity of the fellowship.*

**~ Suggestions for Applying Tradition One ~**

- Choose a home group.
- Be of service in a home group.
- Don't be alone – use the phone.
- Practice anonymity - *what you hear here, stays here.*
- Use Conference Approved Literature (CAL) to ensure a consistent message.
- Place principles above personalities.
- Listen to learn, share to heal.
- Sponsorship – get one, be one.
- Contribute to the Seventh Tradition.
- Attend conventions, workshops, and events.

1. Why are unity and our common welfare essential in Nar-Anon's first tradition?
2. What is the importance of the word first in Tradition One?

*~ As a Group ~*

The group provides the structure, support, and experience members need to heal. Many of us embrace our home group as a chosen family. We find love, comfort, kindness, acceptance, and understanding. These are qualities we come to cherish and seek in all areas of our lives. As we begin to care about the other members and our group, we see the value of keeping our meetings healthy. How do we go about doing this?

An atmosphere where all members have an equal chance to recover is essential. It is easy to get off track and lose sight of our primary purpose, thus forgetting to put our common welfare first. Applying the traditions fosters an environment that encourages progress for the greatest number and helps to keep our meetings healthy.

Our experience shows groups that flourish are stable, inviting, and open to all who seek recovery. We lead by example and show others how to share, recover, and be of service. We find it helpful to share how the Nar-Anon program works and how our lives improve when we work the program as intended.

Cooperation and collaboration of groups ensure the survival of Nar-Anon as a whole. Despite many issues that can cause division, mutual commitment binds us together and leads to unity. Focusing on Nar-Anon's common interests leads to worldwide growth and prosperity. Commitment to collective recovery and well-being is in our personal interest.

It is easier for us to learn through encouragement and gentle guidance. Newcomers do not always understand we are here for ourselves, not to get our addicts clean. When members share in inappropriate ways, we avoid reprimanding or embarrassing them during the meeting. Instead, we can choose to talk with them one on one outside the meeting, to remind them of the traditions. Groups allow members the freedom to find their way, one day at a time.

Consistency creates unity. Reading a set meeting format, using conference approved literature (CAL), having a welcoming attitude for all members, and encouraging rotating service positions are beneficial to the health of our meetings. When members attend another meeting they feel at home, whether in their hometown, another state, or country. Hearing the same message helps us feel welcome, comfortable, and safe.

We keep our meetings healthy by avoiding three destructive forces – discussion of any religious denomination, gossip, and dictatorship. We do not crosstalk during the meeting; instead, we hold space for members to share openly and honestly without fear of judgment.

Each group is autonomous; as such, a group conscience decides how the group is run. Meeting formats vary, and creativity is welcomed. Groups complement each other. One meeting may be a group discussion while another studies the steps and the traditions. Still others will focus on using our daily reader for topics. Some experienced members are called to participate and lead a beginner's meeting. In this way, we can share the gifts of recovery with new members while growing ourselves. Trust is gained when the meeting starts and ends on time, anonymity is respected, and we feel safe to share.

Like a warp and weft, each group is necessary to create the life-saving fabric of Nar-Anon strong.

***A member shares:*** *When I joined Nar-Anon, I learned how to be part of a group. I am no longer an individual; I am part of a whole. My group is a new family, and I want only good things for them. I am learning to accept diversity to keep principles above personalities.*

3. How is common welfare demonstrated in our group?
4. How does our group interact with other groups?
5. How can our group get involved with Nar-Anon events happening in our area?
6. What creates group unity?
7. How does sharing my experience, strength, and hope benefit the group?
8. How does respecting the anonymity of all members contribute to group unity?
9. How can gossip destroy the group?
10. How can focusing the group's attention on just one member hinder the common welfare and unity of the group?
11. How can we avoid hurting the group with our words or actions?
12. Why is crosstalk harmful to the unity of the group?

***~ As a Member ~***

At first glance, Tradition One may appear to discount the value of individual members and place more importance on the group. Some of us felt we put the needs of the addict before our own. It can be difficult to understand why we should consider the common

welfare of Nar-Anon before our personal well-being. How could such a concept be helpful?

As we talk with other members about the ideas contained in Tradition One, we are able to be honest with ourselves and ask, "Where would most of us be if we did not have our Nar-Anon meetings?" Admittedly, we would be worse off, for the impact of addiction on the family is too much for us to handle on our own. Before we came to our first meeting, it was common for us to isolate. Joining Nar-Anon gives us an opportunity to be part of a fellowship.

Over time, we begin to depend on the support of our home group and its members. We even find it is essential to our recovery. In fact, without it, we may not survive. The common welfare of Nar-Anon becomes vital to our personal progress. Unity begins when we realize the value of helping one another. With this experience, it becomes natural for us to place the common welfare of Nar-Anon ahead of our wants and needs. We begin to see that by putting unity first we are also helping ourselves. By participating in our own recovery, we strengthen the unity of our group and our fellowship.

It takes time to open our hearts and minds to the power of the program. Some of us are slow to accept the help of the group and its members. Many are afraid to either ask for or accept help. Some prefer to figure it out alone. Yet, the longer we attend Nar-Anon, the easier it is to admit we need each other and the group. If our lives are going to change, our common welfare must come first.

As members of the Nar-Anon Family Groups, we find ways to come together in harmony to create an atmosphere where members can find peace of mind whether the addict is clean or not. There are various ways to accomplish unity. Many of us find by being honest, open-minded, inclusive, and understanding, we build a structure upon which we can all stand. Others learn to disagree, with humility, showing support for the group's decision even if it is different from theirs. Surrender and acceptance are necessary to achieve unity. The more we trust a Higher Power, the easier it is to put aside our personal desires and opinions.

The principles of the fellowship help us to give up self-will. We maintain unity by expressing kindness and concern in the way we speak and interact. A loving and encouraging environment creates a sense of serenity and safety. The love we express to others attracts newcomers, strengthens members, and enhances the spirit of unity and common welfare.

Whether in-person or virtually, some dedicate their time to ensuring the meeting is open, Nar-Anon literature is available, and the lights are on for the new member's first meeting. Most of us agree good communication makes room for all voices to be heard. We listen

to each other with an open heart and mind. We find giving our time and attention to others encourages mutual growth. In this way, we gather together for mutual aid.

Noticing our differences is easy. It takes willingness and courage to embrace those differences as our strengths. Experience shows us unity does not require conformity. We encourage members to be true to themselves and embrace their differences. Many of us see diversity as one of our greatest assets. Everyone is welcome; no one is turned away. In time, we each find our purpose within the group.

Some members are comfortable reaching out to those who are struggling. Many connect with each other outside the meeting. We become willing to welcome a phone call from members looking for support. The phone is not always an easy tool to use. Without realizing it, when we make our first call, we become part of the fellowship. We ask for help and are encouraged by a warm reception. As we become comfortable in recovery, we are willing to answer the phone even when we do not recognize the number or when we would rather not talk. We put unity and others first. By giving of our time and attention, we find the chance to give back what was freely given to us.

Sponsorship increases unity within the group and across the fellowship. Getting a sponsor and beginning to work the steps is a way of practicing Tradition One. In this way, we are placing our common welfare first while assuring our personal progress and growth. When members choose sponsorship everyone in the group benefits. It is easier to work the Twelve Steps when others in our meeting are doing it as well. Some will be inspired to work the program when they witness the serenity of others even during times of crisis. As we grow, we become prepared to be a sponsor ourselves; the circle of recovery widens.

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions. In the practice of Tradition One, anonymity plays a vital role. Members place the group's common welfare and unity first by keeping the specifics of their shares anonymous. When members share the spiritual principles used in a situation, it helps the progress of others. We share, leaving the who, what, when, where, and why anonymous. This allows us to focus on the tools of the program. By honoring anonymity, we create a safe environment for members to share. Trust in the program and in each other grows. Slowly, we begin to open ourselves to the group, believing what is shared in the meeting, stays in the meeting. Each of us is entrusted to ensure the confidence placed in us is not broken.

When we use the principle of anonymity, we ignore divisive differences. We learn to let go of prejudice and focus only on our shared identity as recovering individuals. Each of us has equal rights and responsibilities in the growth and unity of the fellowship.



As we come to experience the benefits the Nar-Anon program has to offer, we become willing to contribute to its growth. Our common welfare depends upon our ability to be fully self-supporting, as stated in our Seventh Tradition. No matter the size or type, we each do our part through voluntary contributions and service to the fellowship.

Throughout the year, Nar-Anon Family Groups come together to celebrate recovery. We do so by holding conventions, workshops, Narathons, and special events. We gather to share our experience, strength, and hope with each other. By doing so, we unite in a common cause. Our pain of loving an addict lessens. We are inspired to continue our journey when we hear how others overcome their struggles. As members, we can contribute to our common welfare, growth, and unity by attending and serving at these events.

***A member shares:*** *I absorb strength from Nar-Anon meetings by being in the same room with people who know exactly what I have been through. I experience a spirit of unity and community. I am in the same boat as everyone in that room. Whether on rough or calm waters, we each have an oar in the water. When we enter the boat, we are weak and unfamiliar with the strength and courage recovery takes. As we work together, we all get stronger. We rely on the strength of others when needed. We row in unison. If I paddle alone, I go nowhere or go in circles, but by rowing together we all move forward and make progress on our journeys. When one person is tired, the others might paddle a little harder to make up for the one. In this way, we take turns supporting one another. The unity of mind and action makes the journey smoother and gentler for all those sitting in the boat of recovery. When I embarked on recovery, I thought I was alone, but soon found hope and inner peace knowing I am not. We are all in this together.*

13. Why is unity necessary for the health of the group?
14. How does focusing on our common welfare create unity?
15. How does applying Tradition One help the progress of my recovery?
16. What do I have in common with other members?
17. How does having a sponsor and working the steps benefit the group?
18. Give an example of what is meant by the phrase, *unity does not require conformity*.

### ***~ In Relationships ~***

#### **Family**

Tradition One is relevant in our families and homes, beginning with care and concern for the common welfare of all. When we make decisions, we consider the family as a whole.

Personal progress for each family member depends on unity.

When active addiction impacts families, we may experience isolation, desperation, and discord. The disease often alienates the family, relatives, and friends from the rest of the world. Family members can turn against each other.

If our thoughts, actions, and behaviors are concentrated only on the addict, we have nothing left for ourselves. The January 23<sup>rd</sup> reading in *Sharing Experience, Strength, & Hope* states, "Too often in the chaotic household of an addict, the needs of the addict are met at the expense of everyone else in the household." It helps to turn the focus away from the addict, remembering each person's well-being is equally important.

***A member shares:*** *Before Nar-Anon, my wife and I behaved in a self-serving manner, using money we didn't have and becoming resentful of the other's choices. We could not control our debt because we didn't have the tools to discuss finances. This ultimately resulted in losing the house and accumulating debt that took us six years to pay off. We now use Tradition One to discuss money and our approach to parenting and finances. We discuss calmly and invite our Higher Power into our decision-making process, considering the common welfare of the entire family.*

19. How is common welfare relevant to family relationships?
20. How can Tradition One be used to encourage family unity?
21. How can I take care of myself while being considerate of others?
22. How can caring for myself contribute to the welfare of my family?
23. How can I change the way I communicate to be considerate of other family members?

***A member shares:*** *When I came to Nar-Anon, I found that it was not my devotion to my husband that caused the family to suffer; it was my dedication to his addiction. Tradition One tells me, "Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends on unity." The welfare of my family depends on this principle, as does the welfare of Nar-Anon meetings. I make decisions with my husband now, and we make those decisions based on the needs of the family as a unit rather than on the needs of one individual person. I am grateful to understand this concept. No one person will ever be the most important person in my family, even if that person is me.*

## Workplace

This tradition can be helpful in our workplace. When we put common welfare first, we can be unified in our purpose. We develop communication skills by respecting and accepting each other. We carefully consider others' viewpoints and value harmony and togetherness in our attitudes and actions. In the workplace, we are responsible for our own conduct.

The need to be in control can create imbalance and cause discord among co-workers. One controlling person can make others hesitate to voice their opinions. Simply by listening to other ideas, we open our minds to new possibilities. Self-will is not the nature of our program. If self-will dominates, then conflicts may arise.

Each person can help build an atmosphere of unity and trust in the workplace. We promote common welfare among co-workers by

- Placing principles above personalities.
- Taking credit as a team.
- Using the slogan: THINK: Thoughtful, Honest, Intelligent, Necessary, and Kind.
- Committing to do our best no matter the circumstances.
- Asking for help when faced with a challenge.

***A member shares:*** *I have worked with the same group of people for several years. I always felt I valued our common welfare. What I discovered after a few years in recovery is that I didn't understand common welfare at all. I was doing what I thought was best for all of us with no regard for their input. In other words, I thought I knew best. Today, I value everyone's input, and we make decisions together. The outcome is not always exactly as I wanted, but surprisingly the results are almost always good.*

24. How can I apply Tradition One to support unity in the workplace?
25. How can an open mind improve my working relationships?
26. How can our attitudes and actions promote our common welfare in the workplace?

### ~ In Service ~

Service creates a feeling of belonging and a sense of worth. It requires a commitment to our common welfare and personal progress. Member participation is needed to steer the ship of recovery for us all. As each member needs support from the fellowship, so the

fellowship needs the support of its members. When elected to hold a service position, we are trusted to honor the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts of Nar-Anon. Humility, diversity, creativity, innovation, unity, patience, tolerance, love, and kindness are qualities that thrive when we are of service. Keeping our common welfare at the forefront of each decision ensures the fellowship's future.

When we engage in activities that ensure the survival of the fellowship, we do not work for ourselves alone, but for those who will join us in the future. The important thing is we consider the interests of members who will come after us.

When some of us come into service, we are first learning how to work within a group and serve it selflessly. The actual practice of placing the unity of the group before self may be foreign to us. Instead of relying on old behaviors, we trust the process, follow the lead of those already serving, keep an open mind, and presume goodwill.

We may face obstacles such as getting lost in policy and procedure, acting impulsively, and taking matters into our own hands. We sometimes feel enormous pressure to get things done. When we pause, ask for help, have open discussions, and gather the necessary information, we avoid many of the pitfalls of service.

If we focus on our common welfare, it is easier to offer autonomy to those who serve. It is counterproductive to tell others how to do their job. Instead, we try to pay attention to the opinions of others with an open mind, trusting that each member has our best interests at heart when they make decisions, implement motions, or take actions.

Each of us has different gifts and skills. Taking the time to accept and acknowledge our strengths and weaknesses will lead us to the service positions we are best suited to fill. As members, we sometimes feel pressured to take on a job that we cannot complete or are not qualified to do. Some of us choose to decline the position, and others say yes, admitting they need assistance to complete the task. Recognizing we are willing to serve opens the door for us to ask for help. We reach out with a humble heart to other members and ask them to show us the way.

Being of service in Nar-Anon often results in unexpected friendships. Sharing experiences with others forms a bond. Working together, having the same goal, seeing it develop, and completing a project gives us a unique feeling of accomplishment. We can do together what we could not do alone. Spending quality time with other members to visualize and complete a project from start to finish, despite the twists and turns that sometimes occur, can only help us to grow a selfless spirit. No matter our personalities, differences, or similarities, we learn from everyone we work with and become better because of it.

Our commitment to our common recovery and well-being is in our individual interests. Cooperation and collaboration in service ensures continuity, growth, prosperity, and survival of the world-wide fellowship.

***A member shares:*** *I am aware that at times I do too much, which doesn't give an opportunity for others to step up. Because of my enthusiasm for Nar-Anon and my need to control, I have subconsciously been enabling the group.*

27. What is the importance of the word "first" in Tradition One?
28. What are the benefits of service beyond the group level to my personal progress?
29. How do I encourage members to serve?
30. How do I support those who are serving?
31. Why is it important to rotate service positions?
32. After being in service, what is my responsibility to newly elected trusted servants?
33. How do the different service positions work together in the group?

### ***~Reflections on Tradition One~***

According to Tradition One, unity is built upon a strong foundation of successful groups and healthy relationships. When faced with indecision, it may be helpful to consider this tradition and the common welfare of those affected. We need to understand that no problem, argument, or disagreement is as important as our need for each other's support. We should always ask ourselves, "Will the words I say, or the questions I ask, and the actions I take separate us from each other or bring us closer?" We learn that what may be important to us as individuals may or may not be what is best for the group or Nar-Anon as a whole.

As a symbol of unity, we often sit in a circle. No one is greater or lesser than another. While maintaining our individuality, focusing on unity draws us together. We find Nar-Anon a safe place for growth and recovery. Our varied experience, strength, and hope allow personal progress for the greatest number. In the rooms we are always invited to take what we need and leave the rest.

Unity is a spirit that enables members around the world to heal. Confident we have found a kind Higher Power we gain the strength to work together on a common goal.

For those interested in additional Nar-Anon Resources, explore the following:

- *Keeping Our Meetings Healthy – Nar-Anon Blue Book (B201)*
- *Guidelines to a Healthy Meeting (S-303)*
- *Appropriate Sharing and Crosstalk (S-308)*
- *Our Traditions - Principles for Groups and Beyond (B219)*

APPROVAL DRAFT - NOT FOR USE IN MEETINGS

## TRADITION TWO

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

In Step Two we came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. Now in Tradition Two we recognize that Power as the authority in our group conscience. This tradition puts the decisions for our groups in the hands of an ultimate authority, rather than individuals. Each of us is equal and important in our groups and has something to contribute. All ideas and thoughts are welcome, and every member is encouraged to fully participate in the decision-making process.

A group conscience is a spiritual exercise. We learn to trust the process as we realize our members are united in a common purpose and want what is best for all. We keep our hearts and minds open to our Higher Power's guidance.

Humility is vital in this tradition, reminding us we are human. When we surrender to the idea that there is but one authority, a Higher Power as we understand it, we can accept each decision made for the sake of unity. Nar-Anon is a program based on unity, not governance. When we bring a Higher Power into our group conscience, we receive the necessary guidance. We are strengthened by our diversity, even if we disagree.

Remember, a group conscience is not permanent. We learn lessons through trial and error. A group can make a new decision when it is deemed appropriate. Flexibility helps the group evolve and improve as we focus on the welfare of the group. By listening, keeping an open mind, and withholding judgment, we learn healthy behaviors to resolve conflict and chaos.

Some members may not initially understand the value of the traditions. The traditions exist to protect the unity of the groups and ensure Nar-Anon's future. We see the problems that arise when meetings do not follow them. At first, we practice them because we need to and then because we want to.

It is a privilege to be a trusted servant. When we serve in the spirit of unity we learn kindness, compassion, and concern for others. We have the confidence to be honest and caring as we face challenges together. We are amazed at the rewards of service.

## ~ *Suggestions for Applying Tradition Two* ~

- Start with a prayer.
- Keep an open mind.
- Presume goodwill.
- Participate.
- Be conscious of the common welfare of the group.
- Reference the traditions and concepts.
- Remind ourselves a Higher Power is every present.

**A member shares:** *As a newcomer, I heard trusted servants do not govern in our groups. Then I heard, "Our leaders are but trusted servants – they do not govern," and dictatorship is a destructive force. These were far-fetched notions for me coming in as a desperate newcomer. In my everyday life, I dictated to everyone around me, benevolently, if you were lucky. I was a mom, aunt, wife, daughter, friend, and co-worker. In each relationship, I was the dominant personality. It was my way or the highway, managerial and self-righteous but in a nice way.*

*I watched how others behaved in the rooms. I watched the leaders: the secretary, treasurer, literature person, group service representative, and long-timers. I watched members work together in a supportive non-dictatorial manner. This was a brand-new way to behave, and I wanted it. It felt spiritual and the meetings came to embody my first belief in a power greater than myself.*

*When I tried to push a vote my way, I did it with my normal self-righteous niceness. A loving member would remind me that we are allowed to share our opinions. I learned how to listen to others. I learned equanimity. I learned that the spirituality present in our meetings is led by the principles of our program: the steps, traditions, and concepts and the guidelines that keep our meetings healthy. I learned that the ultimate authority is our Higher Power.*

## ~ *As a Group* ~

To practice Tradition Two, we must learn to think beyond ourselves. We are now part of a group. In the group, no one member governs or is in control. We begin to trust ourselves and other members by opening our minds and listening to others share their experiences practicing the traditions. This happens as we attend meetings regularly, listen



to members share, and realize how to apply the principles in our lives. We find we are not alone and have a Higher Power who guides us. When we trust the process, we will want to participate in it.

When a common purpose unites us, our group functions in the best way possible. The group can then make decisions that will help it succeed and grow. Members share their experience, strength, and hope in our meetings, as well as in our group conscience. It is tempting to think our voices do not matter and our attendance is unnecessary. Showing up for business meetings is essential to keep our groups healthy. We are all responsible for the well-being of the whole. A group conscience is our opportunity to ask questions, give our opinions, keep an open mind, and seek guidance from a loving Higher Power.

All members are equal and have something to contribute. Diverse ideas and opinions contribute to the well-being of the group. Anyone may have a suggestion that either solves a problem or sends the discussion in a different direction. There are times we may become the lone voice in a discussion. This tradition allows us to state our case and cite the principles that apply. We do this in the spirit of love. All members have a voice and should have an opportunity to be heard. Newer members may be hesitant to speak. It is essential to have an atmosphere in which all members feel comfortable giving their ideas and opinions without criticism.

***A member shares:*** *Recently, we had a group conscience vote on the time and place of our group meeting. All the members abstained, so the issue was not resolved that day. I suggested a repeat vote by email. The chairman reminded me that according to the Second Tradition we take a group conscience with our Higher Power's guidance. Part of my disease was thinking that I had the power to make that decision. A week later, we received information that made the decision clearer and easier. I saw how the Second Tradition works to maintain the health of our groups. When I accept a service position, I become a trusted servant. No one in our fellowship commands, controls, or somehow forces the other members. For our group purposes, there is but one authority - a loving God.*

1. How does our group explain the group conscience process?
2. What situations would require the need for a group conscience?
3. Who can request a group conscience?
4. How do I participate in a group conscience?

A group conscience is a tool for discerning our Higher Power's will for the group. It is an expression of unity. Just like our recovery, our participation in a group conscience requires that we surrender our self-will and listen patiently. Though everyone might not

agree with all ideas or suggestions, a group conscience is achieved when everyone willingly supports the group decision.

A group conscience is more than just a vote. One person or a majority may dominate a meeting and stifle those who have a different opinion. One lone dissenter can bring another perspective. By listening to each other and seeking our Higher Power's guidance, we maintain a healthy group. Some members have developed friendships, and it is often easy for friends to agree. By ignoring the member who disagrees, we miss the opportunity to hear all sides of the discussion. We give all members' voices equal consideration

***A member shares:*** Reasonable debate is what we learn and do in our groups. The hearing of all opinions in a loving environment invites a Higher Power into our decision-making process. This allows all participants to feel at ease to express their opinion. Our strength is in our diversity. I came to embrace this idea when I became aware of the presence of a Higher Power in our group conscience.

5. How often does your group take a group conscience?
6. How does the group benefit when members seek direction from their Higher Power in making group decisions?
7. Explain why it is essential that all members have an opportunity to participate.
8. How do we encourage participation in our group conscience?

***A member shares:*** If I speak and my voice shakes, I remember to speak even if I am the only one who has that voice.

Notifying members in advance when a group conscience will be held allows all members the opportunity to prepare for the discussion. The group makes decisions based on spiritual principles and the common welfare of the group.

9. What are the pros and cons to accepting thoughts from visiting members?
10. How does my group gather ideas for a group conscience?

***A member shares:*** I discovered that collective wisdom far exceeds my limited knowledge and understanding of each situation. The only value I can offer is my voice and my vote as directed by my conscience. I have come to realize in Nar-Anon that my assessment of situations has not always been accurate. In this regard I try to be still while waiting for signs from my Higher Power. I

*listen to all viewpoints, opening myself up to all opinions. Finally, I wait for the group conscience and accept the decision.*

**~ As a Member ~**

Tradition Two demonstrates that group conscience is the way a loving Higher Power is expressed in our group. Group members, including our leaders, are committed to seeking guidance from a humbling, spiritual force that is greater than ourselves. One member does not direct the process. We seek a collective and common good, which is recovery and healing for all. We participate equally in this process by sharing our experiences and listening to one another in a supportive, considerate way. The result is trust in each other. With this trust, we make decisions that mutually benefit the group, and we develop a caring attitude towards one another.

A Higher Power works through the group, bringing us greater insight into ourselves and others. As the Nar-Anon Preamble says, "We carry the message of hope by letting others know that they are not alone." We see spiritual power at work when we receive support, affirmation, and understanding from the group. We then offer the same gifts to others.

***A member shares:*** *I'd like to share one example of how our Higher Power worked through our group conscience. Our Nar-Anon group had to decide whether to begin and close our meeting with the long version of the Serenity Prayer. The proposal was presented; the long version was read. This became an occasion for us to discuss KEEPING OUR MEETINGS HEALTHY. "Addiction respects no particular religion; therefore, our program must be designed to help us regardless of our various beliefs. Let us not defeat our purpose by discussing any particular denomination." Our group conscience, our sensitivities to one another, and the inspired wisdom of a Higher Power, allowed us to continue with the conference approved version of our beloved Serenity Prayer.*

11. Why is it important that I participate in the group conscience?
12. How can I use the slogan *listen and learn* in a group conscience?
13. Why is group conscience a necessary part of the decision-making process?

How do we, as individual members, participate in a group conscience? We recognize we have a responsibility to the group, and we have a voice and a vote. Individual opinions matter. If we do not understand something, we can ask questions to make sure we are fully aware of the purpose and consequences of the decisions. We listen to the ideas and opinions of others with an open mind and heart.

We trust that a Higher Power is present in the group. We believe that a common purpose unites us. We want what is best for everyone. As part of the participation in the group, we express our opinion. The key to having a group conscience is staying open to all viewpoints. We may have an idea that we are afraid to share. We encourage members to share openly and honestly without fear. We hear all sides of the discussion with love and respect. Being the one lone voice takes courage; hearing the one lone voice requires an open mind.

14. Which tools best prepare me for the group conscience?
15. In what ways can I consider our common welfare when we make a group conscience decision?
16. How can I keep an open mind, accept, and respect the group conscience decision?
17. What are useful tools I can use when I disagree?

***A member shares:*** *In my daily life, I am required to make decisions and take action. For guidance in these decisions, I turn to my Higher Power. In Nar-Anon I have learned to apply three principles that have greatly assisted me. I ask God for guidance to do his will and for the courage and power to carry it out. I try to do what I consider to be the next right thing. And finally, I try to accept challenging situations with an acceptance that the action taken and its outcome are simply in God's hands.*

### **~ In Relationships ~**

#### **Family**

Practicing the traditions in our homes can benefit family life. When we involve family members in the decision-making process, we show respect for their thoughts. A group conscience can work within the family unit as it does in our meetings. Discussion engages family members and gives everyone a voice.

We show respect and concern for the common welfare of the family by patiently listening to what each person has to say. Bringing a calm and focused demeanor to a situation can help create a safe and loving environment. A benefit of the program is taking home what we have learned and sharing it with family members.

***A member shares:*** *I have come to see my family as a spiritual group. We have a common welfare. I try not to be dominant and hear the opinions of all family members who are affected before rendering a decision. Recently our family had conversations around our financial affairs. This used to be a very*

*difficult subject. We did not talk about it and got into financial trouble. Now we treat each other like we do in our groups. We listen without crosstalk. We try to hear each other and then reach a group conscience.*

18. How has Nar-Anon encouraged listening to others in my family?
19. How can varying viewpoints help in finding solutions?
20. How has applying Tradition Two improved my family's communication?
21. What tools do we use to get a Higher Power's guidance during a family discussion?
22. How do I allow the will of a Higher Power to be expressed in family decisions?
23. Once I express my opinion, how do I let go of my expectation that I will get my way?
24. How does voicing my opinion in a calm, loving way help me to have healthier relationships?

***A member shares:*** *In my personal life, I have discovered that difficult and troubling situations are not always as bad as I imagine, but rather a projection of my fear of the unknown. In this regard, I try to live in the here and now and deal with whatever happens when it happens. With the help and guidance of my Higher Power and the wisdom of the Nar-Anon 12 Step Program, I am gaining confidence in my ability to do the next right thing. I don't always get it right; however, it helps me to get out of the way of all natural consequences and avoid attempting to be in control of all outcomes. In this regard, my Higher Power has been very helpful. I am regularly amazed at situations that appear to be sent by a Higher Power.*

## **Workplace**

Tradition Two can be helpful to guide us in all our affairs. The principle of being a trusted servant is applicable in the workplace. Bringing spiritual principles to work allows us to listen with an open mind and look for ways to respond differently and more effectively.

We can bring a spirit of service and willingness to be inclusive and considerate of our co-workers. We seek to trust others and to be trustworthy. When we bring pertinent information to the table and state our opinion, we let it go and let God work in the conscience of the group. In this way, we stand up for ourselves but not against others. When we have a humble heart, we no longer try to prove ourselves or need to take credit. We learn to care about those we work with instead of just ourselves.

***A member shares:*** *At work I used to have problems with those I deemed not worthy of their position. I would become resentful and act out by being curt with them and not giving their requests proper attention. I would*

*sometimes even argue with them. When I listen with an open mind I can respect others' opinions, even when I disagree.*

25. How does Tradition Two help me better communicate with my co-workers?
26. How have my relationships with others changed as a result of practicing Tradition Two in the workplace?

***A member shares:*** *I sometimes find myself in situations at work where I know what is right, and I become irritated when folks don't get with the program. When I have an "I" attitude, I am not working with others. I am working against them. This way of thinking is ridiculous because they are on my team.*

27. As a leader, how can I apply this tradition in the workplace?
28. In what ways do I bring my Higher Power to work with me?

***A member shares:*** *I recently had a project where I was the lead to design a new website. I was given the gift of shepherding this project by my manager. He guided me and provided me with direction but let me "sink or swim." As part of the project, I suggested the creation of a subcommittee made up of the designers in the organization. I encouraged all opinions, and the group heard them out. Afterwards we took a group conscience. There were a number of times when my opinion did not carry. This example was why I wanted to lead the project in this manner. Allowing God to speak in the conscience of the group resulted in a better website than we would have if any individual had dominated the design process.*

### **~ In Service ~**

Nar-Anon is a fellowship of equals. We leave our backgrounds, education, and professions at the door. We come together and are unified by a common bond, having a loved one who suffers from the disease of addiction. Our leaders are but trusted servants. Rotation of positions is imperative to the success of the group and to keep meetings healthy. Without periodic changes in our service positions, the atmosphere can become controlling and enabling, causing discord and a loss of membership. When a member serves in a position for a lengthy time, it keeps others from participating in this essential part of recovery.

***A member shares:*** *When I accept a service position, I become a trusted servant. No one in our fellowship commands or controls other members. In*

*my service work, I have discovered that the collective wisdom of all committee members far exceeds my limited knowledge and understanding of each situation. The only value I can offer is my voice and my vote, as directed by my conscience.*

29. Explain why rotation of service is vital.
30. What does the spiritual aspect of service mean to me?
31. How is being of service to the group helping me recover?
32. What service positions have I held in my home group or beyond?
33. How did doing service help me understand this tradition?

Knowledge of the principles of Nar-Anon, and the willingness to apply them are important traits we look for in electing trusted servants. A healthy group aware of the concepts and traditions is able to make informed decisions. At the time of nomination, we read the position description from the *Guide to Local Services (GLS)* or *Guide to World Services (GWS)*. This ensures everyone understands the duties and responsibilities of the position. Often there is more than one nominee. At this point, an election is held. The type of election process used varies according to group conscience.

The GLS and GWS suggest terms of service for some positions. Group conscience determines the length of other service positions. The period of service may vary according to the availability and desire of the members. When the period of service is complete, the rotation of service takes place. In this way, every member has the opportunity to grow through service, which strengthens the group.

Here are some points to consider when electing a trusted servant:

- Does the member have the necessary experience?
- Will the outgoing trusted servant be available to help the incoming trusted servant understand the position?
- Do we ask the trusted servant to notify the group or committee if they cannot fulfill the role?
- Does the member see the value of two-way communication?
- Does the member have a working knowledge of Nar-Anon' Twelve Steps, Traditions and Concepts of Service and the service guides?
- Does the member have a service sponsor?

Nar-Anon is a growing fellowship. There may be a time when we need to select trusted

servants who are unfamiliar with the principles and may be new to the program. For example, newly formed groups, areas, and regions may not have enough members who meet the suggested guidelines to fill all the positions. When this happens, others in the fellowship may provide support and encouragement.

In Nar-Anon there is no hierarchy; any member can serve the fellowship. Tradition Two reminds us how all members, from those who make coffee to those who serve at the world service level, are all trusted servants; they do not govern. Governing implies control. As trusted servants we lead based on the principles of Nar-Anon. Service is one of the three legs of recovery. Some members serve where guided, others fill in where there is a need.

For stability the GLS and GWS suggest terms of service for some positions. Group conscience determines the length of other service positions. The period of service may vary according to the availability and desire of the member. When the period of service is complete, the rotation of service takes place. In this way, every member has the opportunity to grow through service, which strengthens the group.

34. What are some characteristics of a trusted servant?
35. On what basis do I choose trusted servants?
36. How can I be an effective leader without governing?
37. What can I do if one of the trusted servants is doing more governing than leading?
38. How do I support our trusted servants?

***A member shares:*** *I have come to realize in Nar-Anon that my assessment of situations has not always been accurate. In this regard, I try to be still while waiting for signs from my Higher Power. I listen to all viewpoints, opening myself up to all opinions. Finally, I wait for the group conscience and accept the decision.*

39. Explain the spiritual principles of Tradition Two.

### **~Reflections on Tradition Two~**

The Twelve Steps of Nar-Anon teach us to invite the presence of our Higher Power into our lives as we learn to cope with the effects of addiction. In Tradition Two, we realize groups function best when members seek guidance from a Higher Power. Groups make decisions through the process of the group conscience.



Members can help guide the group using the tools of the program without dominating or exerting authority. During the group conscience, everyone has the opportunity to speak. While it is ideal if all members participated in the group conscience, that is not always the case. During the discussion, we presume goodwill in all participants.

The regular rotation of service positions ensures everyone has the opportunity to participate and contribute to a healthy functioning group. If we are unable to volunteer for a service position, we can serve by supporting those who do.

For those interested in additional Nar-Anon resources, explore the following:

- *Group Conscience and Business Meeting pamphlet S-305*
- *Service literature: Guide to Local Services and Guide to World Services*
- *Guidelines for a Healthy Meeting S-303*

## TRADITION THREE

**Tradition Three: The relatives of addicts, when gathered for mutual aid, may call themselves a Nar-Anon Family Group, provided that as a group, they have no other affiliation. The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of addiction in a relative or friend.**

Tradition Three is the keystone of our traditions and concepts. It sets in place who we are, how to help each other, the requirement for membership, and warns of the dangers of affiliation. The Nar-Anon groups are the foundation of our fellowship. As group members, we learn to place the fellowship's needs above our individual needs. We come to understand that without Nar-Anon, we would again be struggling with addiction alone. After some time in recovery, we see that we need Nar-Anon and each other. We can now take the necessary actions to contribute to the growth of our fellowship.

This tradition offers support and comfort. Families and friends of addicts searching for help find we are welcome at any Nar-Anon meeting regardless of whether they are living with active addiction. Loving an addict can be overwhelming. The Nar-Anon program is for anyone seeking the experience, strength, and hope of others who understand. Our fellowship strives to help members feel at home, supported, and understood. As part of the group, we soon feel we are no longer alone.

Participation in a Nar-Anon Family Group focuses on what we have in common, being affected by the addiction in a relative or friend. This tradition reminds us we gather for mutual aid. We identify with those who have similar struggles. By sharing and listening, we are helping others as well as ourselves. We learn it is possible to respond differently and find peace. Our social or economic status, where we live, our relationship to the addict, or their drug of choice does not matter. When we come into the rooms, we are all equal.

### *~ Suggestions for Applying Tradition Three ~*

- Listen and look for similar experiences as members share.
- We are a member when we say we are.
- Share the program tools that help us in our recovery.
- Become familiar with the responsibilities of a group.
- Avoid possible affiliation.
- Remember the meeting is open to all who are affected by the addiction of someone near to them.

- Apply and practice the steps, traditions, and concepts.
- Start a group or join a virtual one when there is not a meeting nearby.

### ~ *As a Group* ~

Inherent in Tradition Three are the group's responsibilities. When we start a new group, we agree to follow Nar-Anon's mission and vision statements, work the Twelve Steps, honor the Traditions and Concepts, and participate in the service structure. We gather together for mutual aid and focus on our primary purpose, to help families and friends of addicts.

The addict may be a family member, close friend, or co-worker. As we listen to members share, we realize it is difficult no matter who the addict is in our life. Tradition Three reminds us that the only requirement for membership is a problem of addiction in a relative or friend.

As a group, we welcome and accept anyone who considers themselves a member. We all belong. Membership is not questioned, nor is it beneficial to divide into specific categories. To keep groups inclusive and unified, they must be open to everyone. Once someone is impacted by addiction, it can never be erased. Likewise, we are always affected, even after death, divorce, or an extended period of recovery by the addict. Joining a group offers us an opportunity to find a better way to live. Our groups encourage members to find serenity and peace of mind through recovery.

We come to Nar-Anon and find people like ourselves whose lives have been affected by addiction. After attending for some time, we get to know each other and find we have various likes, dislikes, beliefs, and interests. Sometimes those interests may be outside the scope of our meetings. We refrain from discussing outside issues such as religion, politics, and current events in our groups. During meetings, we focus on our mutual need for recovery and look for solutions found in the steps and traditions.

***A member shares:*** *During a family session at the treatment center where the addict was living, it was recommended I attend a Nar-Anon meeting. When I walked through the door of my first meeting, I had limited knowledge about twelve step fellowships. I did not know what to expect. Would I fit in? What kind of people went to Nar-Anon? Was I dressed appropriately? It was so helpful to discover we all fit in because of the one thing we have in common: the addiction problem in a relative or friend. Nothing else mattered to those who welcomed me that day.*

To keep the Nar-Anon recovery message open to everyone, it is essential we avoid the mention of any religious affiliation. As stated in the Nar-Anon Blue Booklet, "...our program must be designed to help us regardless of our various beliefs." A God of our understanding may be different from that of another. We are free to find our own Higher Power.

What is affiliation? Affiliation implies we are connected to, associated with or part of another organization or movement. We lose our autonomy and independence when we affiliate with outside entities. Doing so prevents and distracts us from our primary purpose of carrying Nar-Anon's message of hope. Affiliation can be divisive and confusing. It can destroy a group or harm the common welfare and unity of Nar-Anon, driving members away.

1. Why would naming our group after the facility where we meet be considered affiliation?
2. How does affiliation with outside organizations affect a group?
3. How does my group strive to include everyone?
4. How does focusing on what we have in common strengthen the group?
5. How can groups support the recovery of each member no matter the relationship to the addict?

***A member shares:*** *In our home group, we use the Suggested Meeting Format. We added a few statements from the "Guidelines for Healthy Meetings" (S-303) pamphlet to deter members from talking about the addict or bringing their religion into the discussion. A suggested comment is "What works for one person may not work for another."*

6. How does my group encourage sharing?
7. How does my group keep the program spiritual yet not affiliated with any specific religion or organization?

### **~ As a Member ~**

Becoming a member of the Nar-Anon Family Groups is a personal decision. We all have the right to decide what type of member we will be. Members come in all forms. The more diverse we are as a fellowship, the more individuals we can help. We are a worldwide fellowship of equals, and each of us has a purpose and a role to fulfill. Those who have worked the Twelve Steps with a sponsor can show others how they did it.

Newer members inspire everyone when they say, "I have only been coming a few weeks, and already I feel better!" Sharing stories of change gives hope to those who are struggling.

When members keep to themselves, feel like a burden, believe they do not have anything of value to share, or are afraid to ask for help, a meeting may stop growing. Each member is a vital link in the process of recovery. We need each other. Addiction is too much to face alone. As members, we have the opportunity to participate in our service structure. Some members may jump into service and volunteer to be a group secretary, treasurer, or to chair a meeting. Others may choose to focus on sponsorship. Some serve the meeting by coming early or staying late to talk with members one-on-one. Still others prefer to serve beyond the group level. No matter how we serve, each person is essential to the health, growth, vitality, and strength of the group. When one member gives, another receives.

The impact of addiction changes our behavior. Nar-Anon offers a lifelong change in our thinking. Anyone with a problem of addiction in a relative or friend belongs, regardless of the addict's drug of choice. There is no entrance exam, no dues or fees, and no graduation. Meetings are always open. Our members may come from different cultures, speak a variety of languages, and have distinct customs. Yet, we have one thing in common. We have all been affected by the addiction of someone near to us.

***A member shares:*** *I decided to go to a Nar-Anon meeting. I found the building and started searching for the room. I could hear laughter down the hall. Once I got to the room, I realized the laughter was coming from where the Nar-Anon meeting was going to be. I stood outside waiting for the Nar-Anon people to arrive. Eventually someone noticed me and came out to talk. I explained I was waiting for the Nar-Anon meeting and the person invited me to come into the room. I said I would wait for the Nar-Anon people to arrive, and he said he was a Nar-Anon member. I was baffled. How could relatives of addicts get together and tell jokes? Didn't they understand how serious this is? My loved one might die, and these people were laughing. I thought I was the sane one and these people were all crazy. It took a few months for me to realize the joy of Nar-Anon. Slowly, I came to see we all share the same pain. Nar-Anon offers us a way to exchange our pain for gratitude.*

8. Why did I come back after my first meeting?
9. What does it mean to be a member?

***A member shares:*** *Over the last year I have had the opportunity to travel*

*to many states and visit different meetings. I have noticed when my home group had visitors, we treated them differently. We knew they were not newcomers, as they told us where they were from.*

*That should not relieve us of our responsibility to them. They may feel that they are not being accepted as they do not know us and are uneasy. Why don't we listen to them with as much intent as we do the newcomer, helping them to feel at ease and at home? Today I am more aware of the needs of every person who comes and sits in a chair in any meeting I attend.*

10. How can I support everyone in the meeting?

What is mutual aid and how can we create it? Mutual aid is reciprocal, voluntary, and beneficial assistance to all involved. It is the reason the meetings feel safe, comfortable, and welcoming. Many members describe a feeling of relief during their first meeting. Members trust and rely on each other for the support needed to work the program. When we see each other as equals, we can identify with what others are going through. Everyone is uniquely qualified to carry the Nar-Anon message of hope.

We give our time and attention to the member who is sharing. We know in our hearts we are understood when we receive eye contact, see others nodding, smiling, laughing, acknowledging, "That happened to me, too." We feel we belong and can say, "I've been there, done that. I thought I was the only one who felt, thought, and acted this way." When we decide to give the Nar-Anon Twelve Step Program a try, we experience unity. Mutual aid allows us to realize we are not so different after all.

***A member shares:*** *Keeping the focus on me was not easy. As I listened to those who shared in the meetings I attended, I began to see a pattern. Those who referred to an addict every week never seemed to get relief from the misery in their lives. Those who talked about how they reacted to a situation and not to a person seemed to be happier and more at ease as the weeks progressed. I found myself listening to those people and using their strategies in my life. I challenged myself to refer only to myself in my shares - not referring to any other person. I found it easier as time went on and found my focus shifting to what I could control, rather than what I could not control.*

11. What is mutual aid?

12. How do I support others without cross-talking?

13. How can I, through the application of the Twelve Steps of Nar-Anon, fulfill the group's one purpose, helping families and friends of addicts?

14. What can I do to ensure Nar-Anon will be there for the newcomer in the future?
15. How does keeping the focus on my recovery help me and help others?

**~ In Relationships ~**

### **Family**

When our family is affected by the problem of addiction in a relative or friend, we may not feel comfortable talking honestly about it within the family. However, in order for change and healing to begin, we must acknowledge the elephant in the room and call it by its name – addiction.

Tradition Three helps us start the conversation. Once we admit addiction is affecting our lives, healing can begin for everyone. We no longer have to be ashamed, keep secrets, suffer from wounded pride, or blame others. We come to find we all contribute to the family disease of addiction. We are all responsible to recover by sharing honestly how addiction has affected us.

***A member shares:*** *After about three months in the program, on the way home from the meeting, my thirteen-year-old asked from the back seat, "Dad is an addict, isn't he?" I opened my mouth to say no and keep the secret but admitted the family truth and said yes.*

16. How did I determine if there was a problem of addiction in a family member or friend?

Addiction is a family disease; it affects every member of the family. The agony and torture of addiction separates family members from one another. As a member of Nar-Anon we have an opportunity to demonstrate recovery in all our affairs. We shift our focus from the addict to ourselves and all family members, remembering our principles of unity, equality, and autonomy. We make living amends to our family by example and changed behaviors.

When we work the steps, we see our relationship with the addict was harmful to us all. The problem of addiction manifested itself in various ways. Our condemning words reinforced the addict's poor self-esteem. It was counterproductive to place blame and shame on them. The influence of addiction caused us to neglect ourselves and other family members. We found ourselves doing what we never thought we would do. We were driven by worry and anxiety. We were overcome by FOG - Fear, Obligation, Guilt. As soon as we admit and accept there is a problem of addiction in our home, recovery can begin for the whole family.

17. What made me realize that addiction is a family disease?

It is important to acknowledge the adults are not the only family members affected by the addiction of a loved one or friend. Children and teenagers also need a place to share their experiences, fears, and struggles of living with addiction. Narateen provides peer support in a safe environment for sharing and healing.

18. How do we have an honest discussion with children who are affected by someone else's addiction?

Are we surprised to learn the principle of mutual aid can apply to the family? Family decisions should benefit each member. Remember, we are a team. When we give the addict more attention than other members, the family unit suffers. Resentments can develop when one member feels they are not being heard or considered. Tradition One reminds us we must consider the family's common welfare. When we talk openly and honestly about our feelings, we can make decisions together. Recovery provides a common language and a set of principles helping us to effectively support each other.

19. What is my responsibility as a member of the family?

20. How can I practice mutual aid in my home?

21. How do I show my support to other family members?

22. How do I respond when other members have concerns or feel neglected?

## **Workplace**

The concept of mutual aid is easily applied in the workplace in the way we collaborate, cooperate, and communicate. We start by being supportive, inspiring, and unifying. Mutual aid is respectful, energizing, and uplifting. Offering to share vacation time for a sick co-worker, helping to complete a project, or covering shifts in an emergency are a few examples of using this tradition in the workplace.

Our program's spiritual foundation rests on anonymity. It is natural to want to share what we have learned in Nar-Anon when we discover a co-worker may be living with addiction. However, approaching someone in the workplace must be handled delicately. We have a responsibility to carry the message to a family member or friend who is suffering from the addiction of someone near to them. When approaching someone, we remember to be respectful and considerate of what they are going through.

We lend an ear and may choose to break our anonymity by sharing we are members of



Nar-Anon. If the person is not open to the conversation, we respect their privacy. Nar-Anon is a program of attraction rather than promotion. We have planted the seed.

A local meeting list could be put on a bulletin board or left in a breakroom if company policy permits. This offers information that help is available through Nar-Anon. Perhaps we could even start a meeting in a workplace; however, before doing so we must consider our traditions. Is the building open to the public? Can the meeting be offered in a way that honors anonymity? Is it clear the meeting is not affiliated with the host location, company, or business?

23. How does my behavior contribute to mutual aid in my work environment?

24. What would I do if I thought a co-worker had a problem of addiction in their life?

*~ In Service ~*

Cooperation with each other to ensure Nar-Anon's future is at the core of mutual aid. Service to the Nar-Anon Family Groups often happens before we are even aware we are doing it. The first time we share in a meeting, we are being of service and participating in mutual aid. One member helping the next lays the foundation upon which we build our future.

Our mission is to carry the message of hope to those affected by someone else's addiction. We do this by letting others know they are not alone and providing a safe place to determine if they belong in Nar-Anon. Mutual aid leads the way, allowing each member to receive and to give to the fellowship.

As a newer member, our service to the group includes attending meetings, calling other members in times of crisis, seeking out a sponsor, and purchasing and reading Conference Approved Literature (CAL). As we grow in recovery, we share our experience, strength, and hope by chairing a meeting, sharing how we worked the steps, holding an elected service position, contributing financially, and sponsoring others. Some of us start new Nar-Anon meetings. All these activities and more are necessary for the health of our fellowship.

Mutual aid in service requires trust in one another. We find using our traditions automatically builds this trust. For example, when the chair doesn't show up at the meeting, the meeting still goes on. Without hesitation, another member volunteers to lead. Slowly we are given opportunities to grow in service. We find Nar-Anon is a safe place to trust each other and experiment with new behaviors. We have each other's backs.

The common problem of living with active addiction and loving an addict binds us together. However, it is not the problem of addiction that keeps us coming back. We return day after day because we have found a common solution to the family disease of addiction. It is that solution which attracts and inspires new members struggling with addiction or loss of an addict to join us. Mutual aid is a powerful force. We feel its presence when we say things such as, "That was a great meeting;" "The speaker last night told my story;" and "Page 42 in the SESH helped me get through the night."

***A member shares:*** *When I first attended Nar-Anon, all I wanted was for someone to help me. The people in the room helped me by letting me know I was not alone and would never be on the journey by myself. I attended many meetings and learned how to cope. One of my meetings was about to close because the person who started it could no longer attend. I offered to help keep the meeting going. I enjoyed the meeting and did not want it to close. I soon learned the value of service within the meeting. It gave me a new focus, and I found that I was no longer coping; I was thriving. I eventually began other types of service. Each taught me new skills and new ways to enjoy my life. Taking the first step in any journey is scary, but it is always worth it.*

Nar-Anon runs on mutual aid and the willingness of its members to participate in the service structure. Everyone is welcomed and asked to be of service to their group, area, region, world service committees, or the board of trustees. Service is a way to increase our personal growth and recovery. Not all members have the ability to serve in each position. We take our time as we explore each service opportunity. Some of us are great at committee work. Others find they are best suited for public outreach. Those most comfortable one-on-one serve as sponsors. Not all members participate in the same way. Still, as members, we all serve in some way. We realize we could not have grown in recovery without giving back to the fellowship that gave to us.

25. What more can I do to support our trusted servants?
26. How can I give back to Nar-Anon what it has given to me?
27. Which service positions have I held?
28. What service positions might I want to hold in the future?
29. Which of my character assets are valuable to Nar-Anon service?
30. How does being in Nar-Anon service impact my recovery, growth, and personal life?

### ~ Reflections on Tradition Three ~

The Nar-Anon program helps us find recovery from the effects of someone else's addiction. Tradition Three reminds us, as Nar-Anon members, we gather together for mutual aid. What we have in common is that we have been affected by the addiction of a relative or friend. This is our only requirement for membership. We use the traditions to improve all of our relationships.

As a group, we have no affiliation or connections with outside organizations, preserving our singleness of purpose without clouding our message. Even in our relationship with Narcotics Anonymous, we always cooperate and never affiliate.

Having completed the first three Traditions, we are now aware of the importance of healthy groups, the value of trusted servants, and the process of group conscience. Focusing on our recovery fosters unity and puts our common welfare first. We have a deeper understanding of the principles essential to creating vibrant relationships within our groups, service structure, and personal lives. In the study of Tradition Four, our focus turns to autonomy.

For those interested in additional Nar-Anon Resources, explore the following:

- *Keeping Our Meetings Healthy – Nar-Anon Blue Book Pages 12-13*
- *Appropriate Sharing and Crosstalk (S-308)*
- *Guidelines to Healthy Meetings (S-303)*
- *Inappropriate and Disruptive Behavior (S-326) pending conference approval*
- *No Nar-Anon Group in Your Area? (S-309) pending conference approval*
- *Our Traditions - Principles for Groups and Beyond (B219)*