



**WHEN IT WORKS:**

**12 Basics**

The Twelve Principles of  
Narcotics Anonymous

# FORWARD

This piece of historical NA literature is now up for Input and Review. This document was discovered by Members of Home Groups on a historical NA archive. The Members thought it was such a powerful piece of literature that it should be formatted into an accessible booklet, taken through the Input and Review process, and shared with the NA world for free. After many, many hours of working on retyping and formatting the document, it then went through four workshops where this booklet was compared to the original document to make sure every line matched up. The Groups involved in these workshops did a minimal amount of Input and Review where needed for grammar, spelling, etc. The Groups changed as little as possible to preserve the original document.

A lot of mystery surrounded this piece for the Members and Groups involved in this project. Many addicts from all over the world were asked for information on it; mostly wanting to know where this amazing piece of literature came from, and why the whole world did not have it on their literature table. Most sources pointed to one addict. This addict has given an incalculable amount of labor of love to our literature already through writings like “The Twelve Traditions of NA” chapter in our Basic Text, our original service manual “The NA Tree,” the “Triangle of Self-Obsession” IP No. 12, as well as many other valuable pieces of timeless NA literature. It is known that this addict believed in the spirit of Open Participation literature that goes through the Input and Review process like our Gray Book, and our original Basic Text’s did. In that spirit of “labor of love” this piece of literature is now offered up to any and all NA Members and Groups wishing to participate in being a part of and sharing this literature with any addict seeking recovery.

This is a Literary Work in progress. Please copy and share this with your local Home Group for Input and Review.

Please send your input to  
nahelp.org@gmail.com

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# WHEN IT WORKS: 12 Basics

## The Twelve Principles of Narcotics Anonymous

The seeds of the miracles of NA are found in the following principles. Each principle is behind a step for an individual NA member, or a tradition for a collective body of NA members.

1. **Hope** gives us something positive to look for and move towards. We can admit our need for help as we begin to share in our common welfare.
2. **Surrender** to the things we cannot change through our own power is a way to get on with our lives. We seek a Higher Power of our own understanding and that becomes our ultimate guide and a source of strength.
3. **Acceptance** allows evasion and denial to give way to reality and peace. With the care of God, we are granted the power to welcome new people and ideas into our lives.
4. **Honesty** is the ability to match up our insides with our outsides. It allows what we don't care about to go away and what we really want to appear and develop in our lives.
5. **Open-mindedness** is our bridge to the experience of others. It is the passageway out of loneliness into the life of the Spirit.
6. **Willingness** to try is the beginning of doing our part. However grand or humble that might be, it is a state of readiness replacing depression and anxiety.
7. **Faith** is the evidence of our trust in God. True faith is the result of surrender coupled with experience that God can and will do for us if we ask for help.
8. **Tolerance** is knowing the other person has the same spirit in them as us and being curious about what that spirit is trying to do.
9. **Patience** is taking time for things to move into place without force or breakage.
10. **Humility** is knowing the importance of doing our part well and being open to the many forms of help required for a full and abundant life.
11. **Unconditional love** is given where we sense our spirit in another human being.
12. **Sharing and caring** is the active and passive forms of love that keeps us alive and allowing god to use us as instruments.

1 Principles are the language of miracles. Increasing our language ability  
2 helps us make the right choices. Our minds often play tricks on us, due to  
3 our disease, and we use spiritual principles as guidelines out of the tricks.  
4 These principles can be mimicked but unspiritual people lack certain  
5 characteristics associated with spiritual growth. We each have to reach a  
6 point of surrender to enter the state we call 'recovery.' In NA, we have our  
7 own spiritual awakening, and this gives us our own evidence of the reality  
8 of the God of our understanding. We have to have our own miracles for  
9 spirituality to be real to us. Without principles, it is easy to fall back into  
10 our comfortable rationales where most of the world is wrong and we, poor  
11 isolated victims, are lost in a world of fools. We learn to create words to  
12 describe what is going on in our hearts so others can help us and so we can  
13 help ourselves. Recovery is getting back with humanity.

14 Spiritual growth is discovering ways to put principles into action. To grow  
15 spiritually requires three things: surrender, learning, and practice. We have  
16 found that maintaining our spiritual condition is the best safeguard against  
17 relapse. Our spiritual condition determines the quality of our life.  
18 Regardless of our station in life, it is possible to achieve a great state of  
19 mind and spirit. Many of our members spend a great deal of time in our  
20 meetings and functioning as part of our active service structure. Others go  
21 about their business in good faith and show their gratitude for recovery  
22 through personal service. Personal service is helping addicts seeking  
23 recovery.

24 As we grow in recovery, unanticipated differences of viewpoint develop  
25 from newly acquired information. When we begin to apply it, we discover  
26 ways to reconcile what we have learned with what we have known before  
27 the situations around us. Pretending that these differences don't exist will  
28 ensure that they dominate us. Secrets have great power. We see this happen  
29 in any area of our lives where we are not free to openly discuss our feelings.  
30 While it may be a simple matter to resolve in open discussion, when we  
31 won't even admit something is wrong, it takes on the enduring quality of  
32 stone. Until we found recovery, the inability to come out into the open with  
33 living problems has kept addicts in prisons of their own making. Just the

1 fact that there are others who share our concerns, sets us free from feeling  
2 that we are alone.

3 The Twelve Principles listed in the Fourth Chapter of the Basic Text,  
4 Narcotics Anonymous, are the keys to joining the steps with the traditions.  
5 It is easier to avoid the pitfalls that come with practicing a spiritual way of  
6 life against the stains of everyday reality. Too often good members have  
7 been pitted against one another where they have common cause in staying  
8 clean and helping others. Many times, simple misunderstandings have  
9 grown into grave conflicts entirely disproportionate to the original issues.  
10 Stubbornness and close-mindedness prolong conflict. Communication must  
11 intervene lest nature take its course.

12 In keeping with our growth as a Fellowship and the spiritual nature of our  
13 program of recovery, it must be noted that we cannot serve two masters. We  
14 are spiritual first, and everything else second. We cannot allow the forces  
15 of worldly concerns to erode our spiritual love and caring. We want to  
16 maintain our sensitivity and sincerity as our worldwide Fellowship grows.  
17 If we are to survive the incredible and emotional strains of our growth, we  
18 will always have to look to our roots to remain on sound spiritual ground.  
19 These roots have to do with the memories we each have of the excitement  
20 and happiness we felt when we finally realized that NA could indeed grant  
21 us a new life. There, experiences put us all on equal ground in service as  
22 well as in recovery. They are our reference point for understanding what  
23 and why we do what we do the way we do it.

24 One thing that will doom us to stagnation in recovery is an attitude of  
25 indifference towards spiritual principles. When we are young in recovery,  
26 the world is full of uncertainty and discovery. We are forced to summon our  
27 inner reserves to learn about getting clean and staying clean. We are really  
28 trying and really listen to what others have to say. We read spiritual  
29 literature and expect to find new answers to help us reorient ourselves to the  
30 clean life. When we think we know the answers, we float into indifference.  
31 We know we don't really know all the answers, but we have been clean a  
32 while and there is no one to tell us to get real anymore. Intolerance is when  
33 we do the same thing to other people. We discount the fact that they are

1 clean and trying, even in difficulty, to make sense of their lives and find  
2 their way out of their traps.

3 Instead of floating in a sea of uncertainty, we can begin moving forward in  
4 directions of our choice. Many lost dreams have only waited in the darkness  
5 of our memories. Many times, we will find ourselves waking up to  
6 rediscover forgotten feelings or lost goals that had become impossible in  
7 active addiction. Principles are what guide us around the pitfalls and away  
8 from the thin ice where reality cannot support us. We get on an honest  
9 footing with reality and it supports us. If there were really something terrible  
10 out there, waiting to get us, it has surely had its chance. We find that we  
11 have to act on the opportunity in front of us on a daily or moment-by-  
12 moment basis to be able to see ahead to the next opportunity. If we do not  
13 do what's in front of us, we feel ourselves falling behind. If this happens,  
14 all we have to do is ask the God of our understanding for help to get back  
15 on the recovery road. Principles give us words to describe functional parts  
16 of our new reality. They all come from a spiritual focus inside our being.  
17 Without this focus, the principles fall back into being mere words without  
18 the spiritual force, like a candle without a flame. It is scary to experience  
19 this.

20 We all find we need help. This is what we do in our meetings when we get  
21 beyond withdrawal and the obsession to use is lifted from us. Most all NA  
22 members can remember times when the program seemed unreal, unsafe and  
23 uncertain. They got past the crisis and continued going to meetings and  
24 found their objections were just one more effort to return to active addiction.

25 Enrichment describes the way members bring their current personal  
26 experience into the rooms of NA to share what they are finding with others.  
27 This stops short of endorsing outside issues, but valid experience is what  
28 keeps NA alive and growing. We carry our program with us into any area  
29 of our new lives. What we discover is brought back and shared with other  
30 members and may become part of the spoken or written body of the material  
31 we all draw in recovery. This way any experience any of us has that  
32 encourages or enhances an addict's chance of staying clean or living a better  
33 life gets taken into our meetings and shared out to those who may find it

1 useful. This does not mean that we tell members to go to our therapist, our  
2 church, or another support group. We can share what we learned there and  
3 how it interested us or helped us in our recovery. The process of twelve-  
4 step recovery is amazingly resilient and absorptive of this sort of input.

5 From the computer field we hear, “Information overload equals pattern  
6 perception.” A member might share some pain and anger from childhood  
7 that came out in a group therapy session. It is absurd that this member  
8 wouldn’t say where the event took place. We can share these things without  
9 endorsing outside enterprises or expressing opinions on outside issues. The  
10 world is our preserve in recovery. No door is closed to us, why then would  
11 we shut ourselves in unless we were fearful, once again, of losing control.

12 The principles we explore in this chapter relate both to the Twelve Steps  
13 and the Twelve Traditions. There was an old idea that behind each NA step  
14 and Tradition was a common principle. The idea is that the individual  
15 expression of the principle is in the step and the collective expression is in  
16 the Tradition. Admission of our addiction and the foundation of our  
17 common welfare both rest on our hope...

## 18 PRINCIPLE ONE

# 19 HOPE

20 *“Hope is to faith as desire is to willingness.”*

21 Since our origins as a program and Fellowship, one common element  
22 provided for our common welfare: hope. Hope for recovery. Hope that the  
23 obsession will someday be lifted. Hope that the program is for real. Hope  
24 that things will start making sense. Hope for ourselves and others. When  
25 an addict attends an NA meeting and hears a message of hope, their ability  
26 to admit their need for help begins. Hope is catching, in a sense, and can  
27 be transmitted by spiritual interaction.

28 Hope is to desire something reasonable and attainable. The desire for  
29 recovery was unreasonable and unattainable for us until we found NA.

1 Those who have gone before us had this desire and it is the same desire for  
2 recovery that makes us members today. Hope keeps us alive and vital as a  
3 Fellowship. Hope wards off negativity and apathy. While hope may seem  
4 intangible to some, its effects are profoundly visible. You can tell by  
5 looking at someone that they are hopeful. It is at the head of our list of  
6 spiritual principles because with hope, problems don't seem  
7 insurmountable. Anticipation of things getting better can be the beginning  
8 of fulfillment.

9 We know when we feel hopeless; solutions are apt to appear distant and  
10 unlikely. A lot of us in NA learn to give and receive hope from one  
11 another at the onset of our recovery. When we feel hopeful, our sense of  
12 security, optimism and self-reliance eliminate many of our concerns and  
13 help us deal with the rest. On the other hand, hopelessness breeds despair  
14 and the simplest things can seem overwhelming. As a principle, hope  
15 becomes something to be treasured. Like any treasure, there are those who  
16 would steal what they could have honestly. As a fundamental part of our  
17 recovery, NA members are asked to avoid any act that would threaten to  
18 dampen or extinguish hope in the hearts of our members.

19 Hopelessness has its hallmarks also. Dejection, despair, desperation,  
20 despondency, discouragement can result in an incapacity for hope. When  
21 we feel these things in recovery, we learn to realize spiritual principles are  
22 being violated in some way that affects us. In this way, principles may  
23 guide us out of our hopelessness.

24 Policies ensuring every member is capable of having a voice in NA have  
25 been a part of our Traditions and Service Structure since we first began to  
26 grow as a Fellowship. In the early seventies, dreams began which were  
27 realized by the creation of our World Service Conference in 1975. Even in  
28 our earliest days, the efforts to begin and carry the NA message were  
29 almost entirely dependent on the hope that a better way was possible for  
30 addicts. The value of the hope offered by these 'open door' policies was  
31 made apparent by a series of efforts where the 'door' was closed to all but  
32 a few. The failure of these efforts and the feelings of hopelessness among  
33 the many waiting on the few, proved to be a severe test for our Fellowship.



1 We can withstand some adversity because it is familiar ground for most of  
2 us. To have our sense of hope and assurance threatened not only dampens  
3 our spirits but can lead to a sense of utter abandonment - a dangerous  
4 place for recovering addicts. Hope allows us to take our first Step, though  
5 it may be so small as to go almost unnoticed. Hope allows us to make the  
6 surrenders we each must face if we are to grow in recovery. Hope is also  
7 the basis of our First Tradition. We would have no common welfare  
8 without hope.

9 As our trust, confidence, and faith grows, so does our sense of hope.  
10 Exploitation of our members, falsification of minutes and reports,  
11 controlled elections and manipulations of group conscience have caused  
12 many of our members to lose hope. In this sense, hope as a principle may  
13 give some of us the clarity we need to avoid doing these things when they  
14 may seem desirable or important. Blindness to the effects of our actions on  
15 others makes talk of God and hope seem unimportant and unrealistic at the  
16 times when we need help the most.

17 There are at least two ways to learn this lesson: give in to the temptation  
18 and violate spiritual principles or avoid violating our structure and its  
19 principles. It is easy to do one and requires great faith to do the other.  
20 Where we fall into error, a public Tenth Step among our membership, is  
21 the best way to stop the disorder and gain the forgiveness we need from  
22 others. The Tenth Step puts closure on the harm done. Rule breaking  
23 always risks harming others and should be avoided by earnest study and  
24 meditation.

25 Where hope and a sense of purpose prevails, we addicts begin to learn  
26 feelings long lost to most of us through our active addiction. At times, we  
27 may feel almost too buoyant, too enthusiastic. Our aspirations may exceed  
28 what is possible for us - yet often in recovery today's dream is tomorrow's  
29 reality. Without a dream, we may have no tomorrow. A sense of hope  
30 allows us to discuss matters that may be unpleasant or make us  
31 uncomfortable. When disorders occur, we suffer until we get back to the  
32 NA way: Steps, Traditions, and Principles. Hope helps us surrender to the  
33 1st Step.

1 One addict shares simply: “Hope is a small word but a big thing, and if it  
2 wasn’t shown to me through NA, I think I might have died.”

3 PRINCIPLE TWO  
4 **SURRENDER**

5 *“Surrender to the things we cannot change through our own power is a  
6 way to get on with our lives. We seek a Higher Power of our own  
7 understanding and that becomes our ultimate guide and source of  
8 strength.”*

9 Our submission is voluntary and grants immediate relief from antagonism,  
10 hate, counterplotting, rivalry, and all the ways we are otherwise at cross  
11 purposes with life. Surrender is positive for us because we have hope, and  
12 many others to turn to, whatever our dilemma. We do not barter good  
13 treatment for non-using. Where new members have gotten that impression,  
14 they get loaded as soon as something does not go their way. We need to  
15 carefully explain to newcomers that our 1st Step means we acknowledge  
16 we cannot use regardless of events or the actions of other people.  
17 Surrender is a personal event. It is the beginning of personal  
18 responsibility.

19 In keeping with our NA 12 Steps and 12 Traditions, it becomes obvious  
20 that the recovery process of Narcotics Anonymous won’t work without an  
21 individual capacity for surrender. Surrender qualifies as a principle in its  
22 own right. Surrendered, recovering addicts are the most tangible part of  
23 our common welfare. The principle of surrender can guide us when we  
24 don’t know what to do. Without surrender to our powerlessness, we are  
25 catapulted back into our disease.

26 When we try to participate in NA services without a capacity for spiritual  
27 surrender, we find it impossible to make or maintain conscious contact  
28 with our Higher Power. Without our Higher Power to strengthen and guide  
29 us, we set about trying to do service as if it were a business. This business  
30 would retail merchandise to our members like they were customers. NA

1 members build this program, service its needs, and direct world services.  
2 Service is simple with the help of a loving God. Otherwise, we quickly  
3 find ourselves lost in a sea of paperwork, reports and personalities.  
4 Responsibility to other service bodies can interfere with the direct  
5 responsibility we all have to our group. Without this sense of  
6 responsibility to directly inform, respect, and listen to what our members  
7 want, service degenerates into personal rivalry.

8 We find ourselves on opposite sides of imaginary boundaries, cut off from  
9 those who have helped us, unable to ask for help and clinging to the  
10 struggle to be right. NA is a practical program of working principles. Our  
11 addiction can build traps for us, even in recovery. One great old timer  
12 remarked, "There are three things an addict needs to live: food, shelter,  
13 and someone to blame it on."

14 Trying to do service as part of our Twelfth Step without spiritual  
15 assistance, we become miserable, confused, unhappy, and resentful. All  
16 the beauty and freshness of recovery fades and service opportunities  
17 become a series of chores. Surrender allows us to look at the bright side at  
18 any given point. The principles that gave us power to escape from our  
19 addiction slide neatly into place and things begin to make sense again.

20 Our desperation fades and we gain the ability to see the long view - on a  
21 daily basis! Our sense of attachment to obsessive ideas and our personal  
22 preferences are once again mixed in with the ideas and preferences of  
23 others. The sense of win or lose is replaced with a continuum of thought,  
24 feeling, and interaction with others. We are never alone. As our fear  
25 decreases, our sense of purpose and the ability to laugh at ourselves  
26 returns.

27 Those unable to carry their recovery into their service can be hard  
28 workers, brilliant tacticians, and convincing speakers. Oftentimes, their  
29 efforts have provided benefits to our Fellowship that we have accepted  
30 graciously. We know as no one else can how the disease of addiction can  
31 drive addicts.

1 We need only to be loving, kind and gentle in the face of those who cannot  
2 surrender their self-will. We may have to be especially firm about  
3 maintaining correct policies and procedures. Those who have yet to  
4 surrender in the sense of this principle do not yet believe God can restore  
5 them to sanity and will try to get better results by applying money,  
6 willpower and manipulations of group conscience.

7 Rewriting guidelines should only be done when there are serious problems  
8 with the existing guidelines. Otherwise, it is prudent to follow the guides  
9 for several reasons. One is to let people know your service is self-less and  
10 you are surrendered enough to follow the guides. Casual rewriting of  
11 guidelines is a symptom of a committee without faith. Major rewrites  
12 indicate either an inability to study, or the presumption that prior  
13 committees failed to embed working principles that both get the job done  
14 and adhere to our spiritual nature. All our major achievements in NA have  
15 been the result of courage, faith, and a willingness to work with others for  
16 the common good. Our periods characterized by excessive preoccupation  
17 with guidelines have been infertile and indicate an unclear sense of  
18 purpose. Concern is focused not so much on what we can do to help  
19 addicts, but how we go about it. This brings personal preferences into  
20 sharper focus than the object of our service - to help others. The resulting  
21 conflicts have deadened the service initiative and little service gets  
22 through to those we serve.

23 Guidelines can only point the way for an inspired service body to do  
24 something for the benefit of others. Guidelines can never take the place of  
25 people. Changes have to be made in a structurally correct manner if they  
26 are to be successful in 'guiding' us. Otherwise, they are seen as attempts  
27 to make rules for others rather than offer assistance charted from  
28 successful personal experience. Service committees cannot function  
29 without knowledge of what their contributions will mean, and how they  
30 will fit into NA as a whole.

31 No sensible person can work in a situation where the rules are changed  
32 without consultation. There are too many ways to serve in NA for our  
33 members to waste precious time trying to serve on a committee that cannot

1 maintain internal order and adherence to the principle of direct  
2 responsibility to the Fellowship. Layering is a term to describe committee  
3 systems that become cut loose from their roots in the Fellowship. They  
4 float and attempt to perpetuate one another through responding to one  
5 another more than to the Fellowship. The same thing plagues other  
6 organizations of any description.

7 We should never allow ourselves to be deluded into thinking good  
8 guidelines will replace good people and principled actions. In Twelve Step  
9 service, we surrender to the Fellowship's will as we surrender to the God  
10 of our understanding in recovery. We have in our early years seen what  
11 happens when members proceed on faith, and function within their  
12 guidelines. Even against great odds, they succeeded. Those who tried to  
13 introduce policies and procedures through trickery have consistently failed  
14 to please this Fellowship. There always comes a time when the 'cat gets  
15 out of the bag.' Committees that have become obsessed with changing  
16 their guides have found, or at least shown others, that the real work of the  
17 Fellowship languished undone. Without faulting others or casting blame,  
18 we NA's finally saw the truth of the matter: That we are miracles and so  
19 are our service efforts. In the world of miracles, there is little need for ego  
20 and much need for God. For those who have experienced this realization,  
21 surrender has become a key principle in their service. Service is based on  
22 our Twelfth Step awakening. When we get a high percentage of people  
23 new to recovery, we will be inconvenienced for a while. This is not a good  
24 time to vote on major changes of policy.

25 As soon as the rush for political support and competition for key service  
26 positions wears off, we have noticed that the secrets become known.  
27 Perhaps members knew all along, but their voices were drowned out. The  
28 posturing slumps and clean-up process begins. Members who have the  
29 deep love and dedication will be on hand to help. We pick up the pieces  
30 and help members bond into a great and loving Fellowship. Surrender as a  
31 principle allows us to go on and do our part. Whatever the service season  
32 happens to be, we get all the help we need from a loving God.

1 We can see clearly that the need to manage and control stems from fear of  
2 losing control. We have seen members get hurt when changes took place  
3 too quickly. By working to keep members informed of all sides of a  
4 subject, they can be asked to express their will without the strain and  
5 tension or rushing things. Active listening and clearly formulated efforts to  
6 take the fears and concerns of others seriously in a prayerful manner  
7 allows us to give assistance when asked. We can serve in this manner.

8 Those who attempt to govern us deserve our patience and understanding  
9 but not our tolerance. If we tolerate improper acts, we become participants  
10 in those acts. We have not come through our entire painful struggle to  
11 behave as if we lacked good sense. Even if it is uncomfortable and there  
12 seems to be no one else to speak out, take up for your principles and state  
13 your views clearly. You may be the one God chooses to use as an  
14 instrument that day. If necessary, write out your feelings and request time  
15 to read them to the group involved. Once you've been recognized and had  
16 your say with each person who might need to hear it, let go of it and tend  
17 to your recovery. Surrender allows us to do what we can do and frees us  
18 from trying to do what we cannot.

19 When we see others in pain that are maintaining their composure and  
20 struggling to use spiritual principles instead of reverting to their old ways,  
21 it gives us courage. Degeneration sets in as soon as we stop telling the  
22 truth and doing the things we need to do to maintain our spiritual way of  
23 living. For many of us, pain has become all too familiar and we have to  
24 adapt a "happiness habit" to overcome our tendency to be morose and  
25 downcast.

26 Wherever we need peace, it can come almost instantly if we apply  
27 acceptance. Peace is a state where we remain totally free to do what we  
28 can. We don't have to bother with concerns and issues that are in fact  
29 beyond our ability. We hope that we'll be ready when things get better. It  
30 takes a lot of energy to perpetuate a lie, but truth perpetuates itself.

1 PRINCIPLE THREE  
2 **ACCEPTANCE**

3 *“Acceptance allows evasion and denial to be replaced by reality and*  
4 *peace. With the care of God, we are granted the power to welcome new*  
5 *people and new ideas into our lives.”*

6 Through ongoing recovery, we all find our addiction trying to regain  
7 control of our lives through the weakest point in our personal program.  
8 We may find ourselves, without warning, caught up in substitution - an  
9 extension of our basic addiction. It may be obsessive food, sex, vomiting,  
10 gambling or any number of combinations.

11 The acceptance we find in the Third Step and the simplification of our  
12 requirements for membership to its most basic desire for freedom, stress  
13 the surrender and the hope we ourselves felt as newcomers. We constantly  
14 strive to accept life in life’s terms and avoid pre-occupying ourselves with  
15 blaming others. Even if there are others involved, we must find a way to  
16 better our situation and the key to doing that is personal responsibility.

17 The belief that our Higher Power had taken control of our lives and our  
18 wills allows us to take acceptance into every part of our lives. In short, the  
19 word ‘acceptance’ expands through application into something we do  
20 almost habitually. Acceptance becomes a working principle in our lives.  
21 On several levels, acceptance helps us both in personal recovery and  
22 service to others. On one level, we know the Fellowship got along before  
23 we came and will continue with or without us. Service can be no ego trip  
24 unless we want the pain the ego brings with its limitations. On another  
25 level, we can feel the spirit moving through us. Sometimes it can be  
26 frightening even though we know it is loving - it’s so big. We just accept  
27 and do our part in faith. This is the absolute best any of us can do  
28 personally.

29 Acceptance, as a principle, can be a doorway to solutions by applying a  
30 small amount of pressure in the place that holds the door shut. Rather than  
31 breaking down or prying open the doors, it is a key that unlocks them non-

1 destructively. Since real acceptance tunes us into reality, we waste less  
2 time, energy and emotion trying to do things beyond our personal power.  
3 This extra time and energy becomes available to help us do better in those  
4 areas of our lives where we find we are able to be effective. Imagine, if  
5 you had an extra half an hour to talk with those you love or an extra half-  
6 day to do your job. Our capacity for quality increases when we're less  
7 concerned with quantity.

8 As we grow spiritually, we find others will react differently to us. Some  
9 may become jealous. We learn not to flaunt our spirituality. Our  
10 acceptance may infuriate someone who wants us upset. Many times, we  
11 will experience the feeling that we have done something wrong only to  
12 find out someone is trying to manipulate our emotions. It's amazing what  
13 you can see when you wake up in recovery! Many of our old reactions  
14 simply don't give us what we need. When someone tries to help us, we  
15 accept it. We don't retaliate with negative emotion and violence to cover  
16 up the fact that we may need help. They are not trying to put us down or  
17 make us feel less than they are. We learn to just accept the help and be  
18 grateful. As we change, the world around us appears to change. We all  
19 have certain capabilities. There is nothing that we can do that cannot be  
20 undone by simply speeding up until we can no longer do it. At the same  
21 time, we could do many things if we just slowed down and paid a little  
22 more attention. Recovery allows us the time and opportunity to do this  
23 with the help of others who have a stake in our recovery through their  
24 identification with us.

25 Acceptance of what God chooses to do with our will and life after we  
26 make our decision to let go, enjoins us to help make the way plain only to  
27 those who ask for help in some way. A phone call from someone who  
28 knows we are a member, a coincidental encounter or a person who shows  
29 up at an NA meeting is open to help. We have realized the vanity of trying  
30 to carry our message to those who do not want it.

31 Acceptance taken to the level of a principle also requires that we check out  
32 our facts and pray to make sure we know what we're accepting! While  
33 serenity applies to those things we cannot change, it takes courage and



1 wisdom for those things we can help make better. Many of us ask, “What  
2 would God have me do?” in a variety of situations. Often, an unsuspected  
3 opportunity appears to us. Though the word acceptance may have a  
4 connotation of resignation, impotence, compromise and other meanings  
5 for many of us, recovery places acceptance in its positive form. It is  
6 honest. For addicts who are accustomed to throwing themselves at the  
7 world it is a new wisdom to be able to back off. It is also a new choice.

8 As addicts, we seem to have an innate tendency to find closed doors and  
9 brick walls to butt with our heads. Acceptance can be a way of going on,  
10 opening ourselves to God’s Will when a door is closed to us. For the time  
11 being, acceptance can be seen in a far more positive light where we are  
12 repeatedly put into positions where we are forced to face some challenge  
13 or demand. Many of us grow in recovery to be able to meet these  
14 challenges and satisfy them in every way. In our war with life, we often  
15 take a characteristic exception to things. Learning to live with ease and  
16 comfort may be a process of learning to be more accepting of things.

17 Accepting newcomers as members whether they act right to us or not.  
18 Accepting that if God’s truly running the show, many things cease to be  
19 our business. Accepting a genuine love of life back into our scheme of  
20 things. Accepting that what may appear frightening to us is as nothing to  
21 our loving God. Accepting that others may think, act and believe  
22 differently from us and still be good people, not a threat to us. Accepting  
23 that, as addicts we simply suffer from a disease and that daily abstinence  
24 and spiritual growth are the most important items on any given day.

25 Acceptance in time may mellow into gratitude. It seems that without  
26 gratitude, grateful acceptance, we never come to rest and have a tough  
27 time going on in the spiritual sense. As long as we are rooted in things, we  
28 are tied to them. When we realize that our needs are being met, somewhat  
29 regardless of our worthiness, we can take the option to slow down  
30 whatever we are doing and do it better.

1 PRINCIPLE FOUR

2 **HONESTY**

3 *“Honesty is the ability to match up our insides with our outsides. It allows*  
4 *what we don’t care about to go away and what we really want to appear*  
5 *and develop in our lives.”*

6 Getting honest and learning to live openly with ourselves, God and others  
7 is such a big part of recovery, it becomes a general principle through  
8 constant application. Like the other spiritual principles that guide us in  
9 recovery, it tells us what to do in situations that may be turning points. The  
10 problem areas may be opportunities that require spiritual principles for  
11 solution. By applying spiritual principles, like honesty, we automatically  
12 make ourselves as more trustworthy, a better friend and a reliable human  
13 being. Since like attracts like, we can be honest enough for it to become  
14 our normal thing to do: an acquired learning that becomes habitual. When  
15 this happens, we can move in circles reserved for those who play by the  
16 rules.

17 For most of us, our admission of powerlessness over our addiction is the  
18 first honesty we’ve been certain of in quite a while. As we come to realize  
19 that we are loved and respected for our honesty, we can come to other  
20 truths about ourselves.

21 Certainly, an addict in recovery is going through a series of struggles to  
22 overcome the habits we acquire in active addiction. Those of our members  
23 who have achieved long periods of total abstinence and spiritual growth  
24 share the fact that each release from the chains of our disease places new  
25 demands for personal, spiritual honesty on us. Each trust bond formed is a  
26 new chance to betray. Like the other forms our disease takes, we learn to  
27 make the correct choice. Our choices bring us out of fear, denial and  
28 hopelessness. None of us are perfect yet through the power of the Twelve  
29 Steps, we are gradually able to face life on life’s terms.

30 Honesty as a principle, as a new habitual tool we utilize to deal with things  
31 as they come up, protects us in recovery and fleshes out the dead portions

1 of our lives. The help of other members, a good sponsor and a home group  
2 eases our way considerably.

3 Many of us have ‘traded off’ different forms of honesty. If we were sick  
4 and hurting inside, we might parade a great show of paid bills and cash  
5 register honesty. We divert attention away from our emotional dishonesty  
6 and pain. Then we pretend the program has let us down! If we have been  
7 more open about our thievery, we may treasure certain rationalizations  
8 about why we do these things, exhibiting great care and dexterity to shift  
9 blame for our offenses onto someone else. We only need to do this as long  
10 as we are helpless to change. As soon as we can admit our desire for  
11 change, we can begin to laugh at ourselves and stop pretending that we  
12 didn’t know what we were doing. Most of us knew, we just didn’t know  
13 any better. Our ability to make ourselves miserable with faulty logic is  
14 almost incredible.

15 Honesty, as a principle, tells us to turn away from lies and falsehoods; to  
16 turn towards reality and get used to using the new power recovery brings.  
17 If we honestly don’t like our jobs, we change jobs. If we have amends we  
18 need to make, we become willing and make them. If we’re not happy in  
19 our associations or relationships, we use the power of a loving God and  
20 find a way to become happy.

21 Awareness in itself is not honesty, but it is a prerequisite. As we slowly  
22 become aware of our actions and feelings and their consequences, we need  
23 to be honest about our motivations. We can fool others, but we can’t  
24 afford to fool ourselves. As we become more aware of our actions, we  
25 begin to realize that the self-awareness is indeed the key to our recovery.  
26 Awareness allows us to identify with what is going on around us. Our first  
27 step is the first honest admission many of us have made in a while. This  
28 kind of honesty gives us the ability to question our initial ideas and  
29 feelings and look beyond them. By being open-minded, we can allow  
30 others to plant the seed of awareness in us, blossoming into honesty.

31 Dazed and out of step with the world of non-addicts, we began to live  
32 private fearful lives. We would not reveal ourselves to others as we came

1 to expect personal rejection. This prevented our forming trust bonds and  
2 increased our isolation. Getting to know someone new or someone who  
3 didn't use the way we did was a serious threat.

4 Surrender is critical for self-honesty. Surrender is to concede without  
5 reservations; to unconditionally accept reality. When we surrender, and  
6 really get honest, we realize that we are powerless not only over our  
7 addiction but over many other aspects of our lives as well. We become  
8 open-minded to new possibilities and ideas beyond our self-centeredness.  
9 We accept the fact that we have a disease, and that our best thinking got us  
10 here. This new attitude gives us the ability to question our initial ideas and  
11 look beyond them. Surrender results in freedom, ego-erasure and God-  
12 centeredness, as opposed to self-centeredness.

13 When we come to NA, we enter a society where spiritual principles are  
14 valued. As we grow to want what others in recovery have, we become  
15 willing to adopt these principles. We have the desire to be honest before  
16 we may actually have the ability. Our need for acceptance, and to be a part  
17 of what we want to identify with around us, leads us. We are attracted to  
18 this way of life. Our approval seeking behavior can help us move towards  
19 recovery. Later on, we may get into honesty for honesty's sake.

20 Desire and willingness must go hand in hand if we are to recover. If we  
21 have the desire to change, and we exercise the willingness to do so, then  
22 we will succeed. Our desire and willingness for honesty are fueled by our  
23 need for self-love and nurturing. Our desire to practice honesty grows  
24 when we see the direct benefits in our lives. The desire to take risks and be  
25 honest becomes less fearful. As we continue to do things that feel right,  
26 our desire grows. The willingness to act honestly and responsibly comes  
27 when we take action. When we're all jammed up, and we scream "Help  
28 me, what do I do?" We call our sponsors. They inevitably ask, "Are you  
29 willing to get real about this?" Getting real means getting honest. When  
30 we get real, we get to choose whether we go on as we are or make some  
31 changes. It is no longer necessary to live in procrastination and inaction.

1 Unavoidable pain and hardship may accompany us as we grow. We learn  
2 to focus on growth with gratitude and stop giving energy to the pain. We  
3 learn to ask for help a thousand ways and help comes through each in  
4 time. Through the Steps, we discover the things we've been doing to cause  
5 our problems and are relieved of the necessity to pursue them any longer.  
6 We learn the rules of responsibility and try to avoid injuring others  
7 through our actions or inaction.

8 As we experience personality change for ourselves, our goals change. We  
9 find money and possessions are meaningless if we don't feel good about  
10 ourselves. Sex is not only empty without love, it can be life threatening. A  
11 good reputation triggers self-destructiveness if our insides don't match our  
12 outsides.

13 As these changes take place, we are experiencing revitalization on every  
14 level: mental, physical, and spiritual. We don't get involved with plots  
15 because we don't like what plots bring. We don't allow authority figures  
16 to make us break laws, legal or moral. As we blink our way into the world  
17 of personal responsibility, we come to see the futility of scheming and  
18 manipulating others. Perhaps others can take chances. If we want the clean  
19 life and freedom from guilt, despair and embarrassment, we will not  
20 knowingly do wrong. Sadly, we know if no one else is aware of our  
21 wrongdoing, we ourselves are witnesses, and we know how to punish  
22 ourselves.

23 An honest mistake, even an intentional mistake where we were  
24 temporarily blinded to the negative effects can be amended. Our disease is  
25 such that amends making is a survival skill. Amends need to be made  
26 quickly once an error has become known to us. We ask our higher power  
27 for strength and guidance. We do what must be done to correct the wrong.  
28 We trust and have faith we will be guided. Often, we find ourselves in  
29 need of the basics that personally helped us get clean and stay clean in the  
30 first place to restore our sense of balance.

**OPEN-MINDEDNESS**

*“Open-mindedness is our bridge to the experience of others. It is the passageway out of loneliness into the life of the Spirit.”*

Fear and guilt keep us from doing what we can do today. Both limit us and prevent us from re-experiencing past pain. Our pain has taught us to avoid situations where we have failed. Are the limitations of the past really protecting us? Or are they merely carry-overs from our active addiction and early recovery?

Open-mindedness becomes a key principle in recovery because it is something we can do on a daily basis that can provide both the opportunity and break we need to grow at the same time. We literally give ourselves a break when we check our past limitations by attempting to do things that we have rightfully associated with failure in the past.

We're not living in the past, unless we make that choice! By choosing to be open-minded, we can exert our willingness to try and see what happens. Sometimes, the failure will set in immediately and we will need to draw back. Practice and repetition will surprise us often enough to reward our efforts. We are not the people we once were. Our minds clear, our memories begin to function properly and our ability to act meaningfully increases. If our range of action doesn't increase as time goes by, we will be one of those who say, "Recovery isn't paying off. Im not changing!" This very dissatisfaction can be used for positive change. We can snap out of it, and say to ourselves, "OK, I'm going to get with the program and change my life!" Admission of our disease, coming to believe in a Higher Power and turning ourselves over to the care of a Loving God is a damn good start! The negativity of our self-assessment is gone in the moment of real surrender.

Well, guess who is in charge of your recovery? If we are not willing to step out on faith occasionally, we have no way of changing except dumb luck. Fortunately, we even get a little of that occasionally. With open-

1 mindedness, we can sit and think about something without the urgency to  
2 jump to conclusions or apply narrow limitations on what we surface in our  
3 minds.

4 The underlying fear that if we don't keep our thoughts and feelings in  
5 strict control we will relapse or go out of control, ceases to apply. We  
6 transfer control of our wills and lives to the care of a loving God of our  
7 understanding. How else can we experience the miraculous nature of  
8 recovery? If we have come this far without consciously realizing the  
9 miracles we are given, we are living under a cloud and should pray for its  
10 removal. A great part of our freedom is in our increasing ability to just  
11 listen, just read, just observe. We all get to choose whether we want to add  
12 something to our living and thinking, wait a while or simply decline the  
13 matter at hand for the present.

14 It is our freedom of spirit to be able to do this - a great treasure in itself.  
15 How different from the old pathways grown up with past pain and despair,  
16 pathways that got smaller and more confining as our addiction progressed.  
17 Today, we can entertain new viewpoints and ideas when they come up or  
18 when we find them through seeking. It is a way of growing.

19 Part of the miracle of personality change comes clear to us when in the  
20 midst of learning how to do something new, we find ourselves snapping  
21 out of some unpleasant feeling carried over from our using days. New  
22 understandings help us see past these painful memories and explore the  
23 present. Another important thing about genuine open-mindedness is being  
24 able to hold ourselves in check when we need time to think something  
25 through. We keep doing whatever works for us until the new idea proves  
26 itself on some feeling level. We can progress steadily. We no longer need  
27 to flee the present.

28 An old NA saying, "If it ain't practical, it ain't spiritual," reminds us to  
29 keep our recovery real. As we have less guilt about ourselves, we have  
30 less need for elaborate efforts to make up for our past wrongs. We can  
31 avail ourselves of common good judgement and check out our ideas with

1 our sponsor. In matters of real concern to us, we can seek help through NA  
2 in many ways.

3 If we are upset, emotional or overly concerned about anything, we learn to  
4 suspend action, pray and seek out a member who understands our situation  
5 and has personal experience to share with us. It is through surrender, faith  
6 and inventorying ourselves, not the other persons in our lives, that we are  
7 able to grow. At many points in recovery, we need to remember these  
8 things because we are going to gain the appearance of power over our  
9 lives and the lives of others.

10 If we cannot remain open-minded and teachable, we will find ourselves  
11 stagnating and reverting to the games of manipulation and control. There  
12 is a difference between discipline and control. Control deadens because it  
13 offers no choice and lack of having a say in our lives is killing to our  
14 spirits.

15 Discipline allows us to cultivate our lives by exploring the meanings of  
16 words like: training, moderation, restraint, concentration, caution and  
17 forbearance. We are free to avoid the excesses that lead to much of our  
18 pain and guilt. We can develop habits of conduct and methods of  
19 preparing ourselves before we get into something instead of floundering  
20 from one crisis to another. Caution and discretion will become functional  
21 parts of our living rather than elaborate reactions to the ordinary events of  
22 life.

23 As order and balance replace the desperation that gave us the desire for  
24 recovery in the first place, open-mindedness takes on another important  
25 function. We use openness as a form of enlivening our daily awareness.  
26 There is always something happening and yet if we are not careful, we'll  
27 walk out the door on some sunny day and see nothing but rain clouds. Our  
28 addiction will sell us that our hard-won ease and comfort is boring and  
29 uneventful!

30 We need to be as able as a newcomer to renew our spirituality on a daily  
31 basis. We have to find things to be glad about and express our gratitude



1 for it to have a real effect in our lives. We have to find our errors and  
2 amend them to prevent the buildup of negative feelings that if left  
3 unattended, will fill us with foreboding and worry. We have to step out on  
4 faith and do something new occasionally. These things weren't necessary  
5 in a life filled with compulsion and obsession. Our disease kept us  
6 running. Clean, we have to learn how to be sensible and explore living on  
7 a new basis.

8 PRINCIPLE SIX  
9 **WILLINGNESS**

10 *“Willingness to try is the beginning of doing our part. However grand or*  
11 *humble that might be, it is a state of readiness replacing depression and*  
12 *anxiety.”*

13 The drive for personal gain in all its forms is based on a fear of  
14 insufficiency. Past a reasonable point, this drive becomes obsessive and  
15 can create problems. In our pasts, we were always losing things and  
16 replacement was a constant nagging problem. Our constant efforts to find  
17 and get more of the chemicals that had us enslaved created a lack of living  
18 skills we may need to regain in recovery.

19 When desperation born of obsessive need and compulsive usage of drugs  
20 against our will is removed, what is left to drive us? How do we manage?  
21 What is important enough to us now to keep us going? When our lives are  
22 washed clean of the more conspicuous aspects of our addiction, what do  
23 we do? Do we become addicted to people, places and things? Do we  
24 substitute cravings for money, property and the good opinion of others in  
25 place of the old obsessions? Do we trade one obvious form of addiction  
26 for another that may be harder to detect as a living problem?

27 Many, many of us have done this. Recovery from the disease of addiction  
28 hasn't been around long enough for all the repercussions to be taken into  
29 account. One thing seems safe enough to advance at this point though:  
30 swapping addictions won't work. Real freedom consists of being able to

1 live without fear and pain. In NA, we stress constantly that spiritual  
2 principles are necessary for ongoing recovery.

3 A lot of us grow complacent after the initial thrill of being drug free wears  
4 off. We want more. We isolate ourselves and hide our feelings from others  
5 - perhaps through a misguided fear of disapproval or maybe we're letting  
6 our addiction guide us into another pathway the disease is known to take.  
7 At times, something needs to shake us into remembering that to recover,  
8 we go deeper and deeper into the spiritual principles beginning with  
9 surrender. Again, and again, we surrender to our need for help. It opens  
10 the way to growth.

11 Willingness is a principle because it allows us to get a grip on the fact that  
12 before change can occur, we have to give our permission. We have to stop  
13 holding back inside. We have to relax our personal will with all its  
14 preconceptions and preferences so we can look at alternatives. When we  
15 want to select something new in our lives, the choice is up to us. Without  
16 our willingness, we never get to make the choice and remain tied up in  
17 many of our past limitations, illusions and habits.

18 The capacity to do our part in severing the ties to the past, our personal  
19 defects of character, brings us to the threshold of a new inner freedom. All  
20 we can do on our own is become willing to let the God of our  
21 understanding take over what is otherwise impossible for us.

22 Games of acquisition, control, manipulation, sabotage, projection, worry,  
23 revenge, resentment, blame assessment and character assassination are no  
24 longer necessary for those in the care of a loving God. The elimination of  
25 these and other defense mechanisms, frees up enormous amounts of time  
26 and energy.

27 Our willingness is really an extension of our initial surrender. For us to  
28 come to believe in a power greater than ourselves who can and will take  
29 care of our wills and our lives, we have to gain some understanding. Our  
30 old defenses grew up in the isolation, loneliness, despair and feelings of

1 worthless that are the progression of our disease. A new life comes  
2 from learning new ways.

3 We will learn the infinite power of the truth. We will base our actions and  
4 goals on the miracles we find in recovery. Most, if not all, recovering  
5 addicts can remember numerous occasions where the principles of NA and  
6 recovery just didn't seem adequate. We went forward on faith and found  
7 our prior fears justified. Crisis after crisis failed to get us loaded or rob us  
8 of our inner faith and growing convictions. Even where we were forced to  
9 pay for crimes committed while we were still using, many of our members  
10 have been able to stay clean through incarceration. Severe medical  
11 problems have failed to assure relapse where our members were able to  
12 apply spiritual principles to the obstacles in their paths.

13 Money, property and prestige have the power to seduce addicts in  
14 recovery that may mistake the desire for personal gain for a blessing of  
15 recovery. Many of us who have sought these things to the exclusion of  
16 prayer, faith and meditation share in pain and desperation the addictive  
17 nature of these delusions. Instead of making us happy, they turned out to  
18 be elaborate, attractive, socially acceptable traps.

19 Those who are able to withstand these temptations, succeeded by  
20 incredible luck or the direct application of spiritual principles. Somehow,  
21 in their hearts, they remained desirous of more recovery and maintained a  
22 spiritual way of life.

23 The Sixth Tradition points out the danger to recovery that lies in money,  
24 property and prestige. Excess funds, obsessive accumulation of property  
25 and a concern with what others think of us threatens our spirituality.  
26 Where these things are seen as more real or more important than the God  
27 of our understanding, recovery fails.

28 These things ever divide and rarely unite people. Only with great humility,  
29 patience and tolerance have we survived and grown from the divisive,  
30 dispiriting effects of money, property, and prestige - either as individuals  
31 or as local Fellowships.

1 While some of our guidelines, Traditions and policies of inclusion and  
2 openness may have seemed to hamper some of our members, the truth is  
3 that they only hamper our defects of character! These principles protect  
4 and to a certain extent assure our common welfare. Just as spiritual  
5 principles don't conflict with one another, it is also true that we can't be  
6 open and honest while being sneaky and manipulative. Where spiritual  
7 principles fall into disuse and are seen as less important than NA  
8 “business”, it is hard to tell the difference between members of our  
9 Fellowship and members of outside organizations. The love and spiritual  
10 empathy are lacking. The preoccupation with making a profit and ensuring  
11 a paycheck takes precedence over keeping faith with the Fellowship.  
12 Keeping faith can be made to seem so relative when in fact it is our basic  
13 building block.

14 Those who put personal concerns ahead of our common welfare should be  
15 hampered. The willingness to allow God to use you as an instrument is  
16 crucial for addicts in recovery. Yet, there is a big difference in the quality  
17 of feelings that come from selfless service as compared to selfish attempts  
18 to control others. Perhaps the way to tell one from the other is to look for  
19 signs of surrender as opposed to signs of pushiness.

20 Willingness is an applied form of open-mindedness. It is the way we feel  
21 before we take actions based on faith. As we personally become able to let  
22 go of defects through willingness, we are able to put spiritual integrity  
23 ahead of concerns for money, property and prestige.

## 24 PRINCIPLE SEVEN

# 25 FAITH

26 *“Faith is evidence of our trust in God. True faith is the result of surrender*  
27 *coupled with experience that God can and will do for us if we ask for*  
28 *help”*

29 Doing for ourselves, frees us and enable us to stand on our own. We used  
30 to manipulate others into doing for us. The defects that held us back in life

1 are cut away by active surrender to facts, desire for something better and  
2 the willingness to do our part. Prayer to the God of our understanding to  
3 remove our shortcomings severs our ties with our old ways.

4 As we increase in personal responsibility, we reduce our dependence on  
5 others. By doing what we can and should do for ourselves we are freed of  
6 blaming others. Games of manipulation and fear of losing control become  
7 troublesome and inconvenient when we learn we are free to act directly.  
8 Before faith, we looked at life in terms of past pain and present failure.  
9 After gaining faith, we look at life differently. For the first time since  
10 childhood, the future may begin to hold some charm for us.

11 Deceit, falsification and plots are actually unnecessary for those who have  
12 come to know themselves through faith in a loving God who is able to  
13 help them. If a person wants their own money, property and prestige, they  
14 must first discover that they already have some money, some property and  
15 some prestige. These things may exist in such small quantities that it may  
16 never occur to us that we could be grateful for them. However, it has been  
17 our experience that if we aren't grateful for what we have, we will likely  
18 fail to acknowledge an increase and only long for more. Taking care of  
19 and being grateful for what we already have is the surest way to get more.  
20 If we are not taking care of what we have, then the very people who could  
21 help us will judge us unable to handle more!

22 As recovering addicts, we know what happens when we get more than we  
23 need or can care for: the answer to our prayers is first a burden, then a  
24 curse. We learn to ask God to remove our shortcomings because we no  
25 longer want to fall short. We correctly suspect there are better ways to  
26 meet our needs and can see the sense of letting go our grasp on the old so  
27 we can reach out for the new. Like our other spiritual principles, faith  
28 becomes more than a word to us through our own experience and  
29 application.

30 While faith can seem an invisible, internal quality, the results are highly  
31 visible to those around us. They can see the saddening need for  
32 justification, placing blame on others and selfish motivation - and they can

1 see the lack of it. When we realize how we have been standing in the way  
2 of our own happiness by trying to force out of others what can only be  
3 given freely, we can begin to reverse the processes that have entrapped us  
4 and accept ourselves and others as they are. By doing this, we are  
5 beginning to get real. In reality, we can find ourselves and make contact  
6 with others without resorting to the games we used to play.

7 As we continue on our spiritual journey, we realize that our growth comes  
8 from changes that occur first inside and later show up in how we think,  
9 act, feel and speak. As fear lessens, faith increases. While fear constantly  
10 robs us of time, energy and good feelings, faith rewards us with these  
11 things. Faith is ordinarily a subject for meetings and personal recovery.  
12 Since our service positions require some degree of knowledge of our  
13 Twelve Steps and Traditions, it is worth noting that we are expected to  
14 apply spiritual principles to our service. We all know of painful periods  
15 when members forgot the spiritual in service and got so caught up in the  
16 “business” of NA, all other considerations were set to the side. It has taken  
17 great faith for us to survive these assaults on our spiritual body. Our  
18 knowledge of spiritual principles is based in our spiritual condition and  
19 our progress into the Twelve Steps.

20 Unavoidably, we elect people to serve who are in various stages of  
21 recovery and this actually means that while someone may be comfortable  
22 with surrender to their disease in general terms, they may be absolutely  
23 unable to admit fault or gain direction through prayer and meditation.  
24 Remembering this may help some members show special attention to  
25 others where politics and personal rivalries come into play.

26 It is vital that enough old-timers stay involved to offset the violence of  
27 personal opinion and rumor mongering that defeat our spiritual aims.  
28 Many of us are almost totally inexperienced with positive group actions  
29 and get fearful when violations occur. There are always ways to set things  
30 right and go on clean. We just have to use the power of spiritual principles  
31 to maintain order and sound procedures.

1 While these problems are usually very simple in origin, there is nothing  
2 uncomplicated about twenty or fifty addicts full of ego, adrenaline and the  
3 fear that if their side doesn't win, addicts will die. They'll kill you so  
4 addicts don't die. If we lose our faith and allow the disease to run our lives  
5 again, we're in real trouble.

6 Only the calmative effect of members who have survived some of these  
7 situations can point out some positive things, what we're here for and even  
8 make a few jokes to relieve the tension. It used to be we had little  
9 historical experience on which to base our policies, much less written  
10 documents, reports and accumulated minutes going back in some cases  
11 several decades.

12 Today, with God's help, we can again pray, discuss and meditate on things  
13 that bother us and gain knowledge without having to go through known  
14 problem areas again! We have found that through faith we are enabled to  
15 go beyond some of our personal boundaries. Usually, when the facts are  
16 finally dug out, simple knowledge of what to do in the situation at hand  
17 comes out at the same time. Sometimes, it takes faith just to get the facts  
18 straight.

19 One acronym for faith is: Feeling - As - If - Trust - Heals. Taking these  
20 ideas on in many forms, helps us first notice, then adopt, new ideas. By  
21 trusting a loving, caring and forgiving God, we realize that we have been  
22 empowered to face life and recover. The fears that would paralyze us in  
23 the past are now small obstacles along our journey. They can be overcome  
24 with faith. By trusting our God, we surrender our old ideas and begin to  
25 change.

26 Our new way of living has sometimes been uncomfortable, however  
27 through practicing faith it is also very rewarding. Our old perceptions of  
28 life changed drastically. Our new perceptions include faith, hope,  
29 happiness and a positive attitude toward living. Through our belief that  
30 trust heals we found that God was doing for us what we never could do for  
31 ourselves.

1 As our faith in our Higher Power grew, we began to develop a new form  
2 of trust. We are able to reach out to the trusting hand of another addict.  
3 This was very hard for many of us and may have been a slow process. Yet,  
4 we kept reaching out and giving an addict a piece of our lives that was  
5 very personal and private. We came to believe that an addict who was  
6 recovering could also be trusted. We finally had faith and trust in other  
7 human beings. We finally had friends who loved us unconditionally. Faith  
8 in God leads us to faith in ourselves and others.

9 PRINCIPLE EIGHT  
10 **TOLERANCE**

11 *“Tolerance is knowing the other person has the same spirit in them as us*  
12 *and being curious about what that spirit is trying to do.”*

13 It is one thing to say you care about someone; it is another to sit down and  
14 take the time to listen to them. Listening is a powerful tool for helping.  
15 Imagining we are writing down what a person is saying is one way to  
16 actually hear their voice, and not our own expectation. An amazing  
17 number of people know what their answers are; they just don't have  
18 anyone who cares. This lack of attention and caring has been recognized  
19 as a killer of small children who are overlooked in orphanages or special  
20 situations where they don't get enough outside stimulation. Their death is  
21 expressed this way, "They fail to thrive." Being social creatures, our need  
22 for caring is biological. We need a simple touch or human contact.  
23 Spiritual growth cancels out the negative in us and fills us with the  
24 positive. Many addicts develop aversions that keep others at a distance.  
25 We want to be left alone, though we are lonely. When we begin to feel  
26 more secure about ourselves, our fear of others is lessened. It takes time to  
27 develop calm. We can withstand bad behavior in others without being  
28 drawn into their circle. We lose the fear of being like them. A bad idea is  
29 just a bad idea, not a total threat to our existence. Standing apart from old  
30 ways, literally as well as metaphorically, we can look at the world and  
31 other people in a more open and honest manner. Very often, we will find  
32 our missing parts lying on the ground around our feet. We couldn't find



1 them because we never slowed down enough to take a close look. Our  
2 pain makes us over-react to bad behavior in others.

3 In recovery we are constantly developing our ability to tolerate others. We  
4 learn part of this by developing a tolerance for our own inadequacies. In  
5 NA, we find the people who can share their pain and growth. We also find  
6 a lot of people who are going through almost exactly the same things we  
7 are at any given time. All we have to do is get to enough meetings and  
8 share honestly the nature of our pain. Someone may come up to us after a  
9 meeting or over coffee and check out what we meant when we were  
10 sharing in the meeting. By exploring the reality of others, we gain  
11 something in our own reality.

12 Tolerance, as a spiritual principle, does not force or require us to put up  
13 with wrongdoing or a dangerous, criminal or really insulting person. It  
14 simply frees us to decide what we want for ourselves. Often, tolerance  
15 seems like it would limit us or habituate us to merely not reacting to bad  
16 behavior in others. Not overreacting is spiritual tolerance. It means we  
17 have more say over our lives and how we live.

18 Some of our personal wrongdoing may consist of using others without  
19 their consent or knowledge for selfish gain. Our Fellowship is a great  
20 churning mass of such problems. It is probably one reason why NA works  
21 for us so well. It gives us a chance to see ourselves and the games we play  
22 in others. A real paradox is met head on when we attempt to be useful  
23 without being used.

24 In service, where all of our principles have application, wrongdoing  
25 consists of setting up elections, falsifying minutes, presenting misleading  
26 documents, biasing reports, especially on matters dealing with group  
27 conscience, stealing or misapplying funds, and any other actions that  
28 would betray or dispirit those who entrust us to serve them.

29 Where we see these things, we should act as if we are helping difficult  
30 children who, while we may love them dearly, are capable of great  
31 mischief. The loving spirit often provides us with interesting alternatives

1 in response to actual, verified wrongdoing. We don't savage them; we find  
2 ways to help. Tolerance is not just being passive though it is the principle  
3 that frees us from acting badly just because someone else is. The time we  
4 gain by this can be spent working towards real lasting solutions.

5 Our principle of tolerance in principle helps us make sure what we  
6 perceive is actually happening. If a real disorder is involved, others will  
7 see it also. We never have to be alone in NA. Most all problems are repeat  
8 performances of past events with new names and faces involved. As a  
9 Fellowship, we have withstood such an array of sabotage and disorder that  
10 in truth we have little to fear. As individuals, we avoid traps that may  
11 threaten or sour our recovery by praying, consulting other members and  
12 then acting on faith to help make things better.

13 Our tolerance level may be too great in some areas. It is well to remember  
14 our past and seek positive action than to drift into not caring. We care  
15 enough about each other to tell them the truth. Being honest is not  
16 intolerance. If you find yourself feeling defeated or alone, reach out to  
17 someone for help. You cut a fear in half when you share it with just one  
18 other person. If we politely let someone know how we feel, it may help  
19 them. They may be carrying on habits from active addiction without  
20 realizing how offensive they are.

21 Probably nothing has helped us work on our individual ability to tolerate  
22 others than our explosive growth. As the density of our meetings increases  
23 in any given area, the system of recovery shared out from those who have  
24 it to those who need it becomes increasingly complex and sensitive.  
25 Members must find ways to remain anonymous yet play key roles. This is  
26 dangerous if you see yourself as the doer and not your Higher Power.  
27 Manipulation of others to achieve our ends is invasive and dishonest.  
28 There was a time, not long ago, when NA as a whole, was glad to have  
29 just one more meeting in a whole state and just one more member in  
30 regular attendance. Tolerance is natural when you feel you need someone,  
31 or their recovery is important to you. When we are stronger in numbers,  
32 we may get weaker in tolerance. This is where individuals can play a big  
33 helpful role.

1 Today, in NA, we have so many people, so many ideas and varieties of  
2 experience that it can seem overwhelming! Even with the commonality of  
3 our desire for recovery, we have need of tolerance just to watch it all go  
4 by.

5 PRINCIPLE NINE  
6 **PATIENCE**

7 *"Patience is taking time for things to move into place without force or*  
8 *breakage."*

9 Patience is the practice of peace. We didn't get clean overnight and our  
10 Fellowship did not start growing overnight. Patience as a spiritual  
11 principle may also be called creative waiting. Life will force us into  
12 positions where the only good thing we can do is wait. This may not  
13 happen often however when it does, we should know that sometimes  
14 watchful waiting has to be enough.

15 Accepting the waiting, asking God to ready us for the time of action,  
16 spending our time well, these are all benefits of spiritual patience. We can  
17 all recall the many times we acted through sheer force of will, ignoring  
18 warnings from those we had some reason to trust. We use the maxim,  
19 "When in doubt, don't." Almost by definition, the person who fails to  
20 consider their resources acts without benefit of prayer and throws caution  
21 to the winds is setting the stage for disaster. It is not spiritual to commit to  
22 action without considering your resources and the depth of the need for  
23 what you're about to do.

24 By utilizing patience, we automatically reduce the pressure we place on  
25 ourselves to act, ready or not. We gain time to check our assumptions  
26 about a situation; time to hear from our sponsor and fellow members. All  
27 this reduces our sense of urgency to rush into quick fix techniques.

28 Some of the landmark events in the history of Narcotics Anonymous only  
29 came after a series of quick fix approaches failed to work. When enough

1 members agreed to commit themselves to a solution, solid discussion,  
2 planning and action became possible. This was true of our service  
3 structure, our world service office and our Basic Text, "Narcotics  
4 Anonymous."

5 Trust bonds formed among members committed for the duration who were  
6 patiently willing to search each other's hearts and minds to achieve at least  
7 a basic level of conscious agreement. This grew into spiritual unity and  
8 real results soon followed in most cases. Some of our struggles have been  
9 long and hard. Patience has proved itself indispensable.

10 Addicts continually resist all attempts by would be masters and do-  
11 gooders. This is because we have found that each one of us must wait,  
12 patiently or not, for the beginnings of an answer to arise from within. Until  
13 this has happened, we remain blind, deaf and dumb even to the most  
14 inspired appeals to better judgment.

15 The Twelve Steps guide us in these awakenings gently and steadily. So,  
16 our growth will be paced with the changes that must take place in our  
17 individual environments. We're often baffling to non-addicts and even  
18 sincere well-wishers. This is only a restatement of the need we have for  
19 other addicts who have a desire for recovery in NA. All rests on that  
20 desire.

21 Sometimes the patience we exercise is no reflection of a true lack of  
22 readiness on our part. It may be that having said or done what can be done,  
23 other people need time to make their adjustments as they see fit. "In God's  
24 time, not mine," is a phrase we have heard used repeatedly at meetings.  
25 Acceptance of this idea is patience. As addicts, we usually want what we  
26 want instantly. Our entire existence had centered on immediate  
27 gratification when we were using drugs. Many of us find that even in  
28 recovery, we seek the rush brought on by "quick fix" solutions.

29 We want to have five years clean before we get six months. We want  
30 people whom we've harmed many times in our addiction to believe that  
31 we have really changed and expect to receive their forgiveness overnight.

1 We may have come into Narcotics Anonymous financially destitute and  
2 deep in debt, yet after a short time clean we can't understand why we can't  
3 get a loan or a credit card. "Don't they know I'm clean now?" we've heard  
4 some members ask indignantly. Many times, they don't care and can't even  
5 imagine what being clean might mean. We must never forget that we  
6 enjoy a special environment constructed patiently by the love, goodwill  
7 and positive example of other clean addicts who care about us. They are  
8 paying back those who helped them the only way they can: by helping us.  
9 We in our turn, help those who are to come.

10 Eventually we learn to accept that because we live and recover "just for  
11 today," that doesn't mean we will get everything back in a day. If our lives  
12 to come are a puzzle, we get a piece of that puzzle on a daily basis. We put  
13 our best foot forward and do what needs to be done laying the groundwork  
14 for a brighter future. Asking our Higher Power for the patience to see our  
15 vision become a reality is part of the recovery process. "It's easy to have  
16 patience when things are going my way," said one member.

17 We agree, but the challenge of spiritual growth is to "practice these  
18 principles in *all* our affairs", not just the easy ones. We have come to  
19 realize that the discomfort felt when things aren't going our way or  
20 happening fast enough is simply our egos crying out for attention. The  
21 same egos that drove us into the depths of our disease drive us today.

22 Practicing patience takes a surrender of self-will. We come to believe that  
23 whatever the outcome, we will be taken care of. We look at our part to be  
24 sure that we've done all that we can today. We ask that our will be aligned  
25 with God's will and we let our fears go with love.

26 Our experience has shown that practicing patience doesn't dilute or  
27 postpone miracles; it enhances them. We are able to feel serene and be  
28 understanding in the most trying of circumstances. The freedom  
29 experienced from not having to be in control of the future feels like a great  
30 weight lifted from our souls. Patience is the practice of peace.

1 PRINCIPLE TEN  
2 **HUMILITY**

3 *"Humility is knowing the importance of doing our part well and being*  
4 *open to the many forms of help required for a full and abundant life."*

5 When we come to our own understanding of our higher power and turn  
6 our will and lives over to the care of a loving God, we are relieved of our  
7 burdens. Many concerns, ideas and habits are removed because we see  
8 them as defective. This may not happen overnight. As we continue to  
9 grow spiritually, an attentive calm may settle into our lives. We  
10 experience relaxed attention without desperation. We no longer need  
11 desperation to spur us to action. We seem to have more time, less fear, less  
12 guilt and a quiet sort of luck. In truth, we are blessed. We have to adjust to  
13 living in the grace of God.

14 Our mind becomes our servant and friend, ceasing its endless rambling.  
15 Our needs, our desires, and our wants seem to line up better. Control is  
16 less necessary because of our increased effectiveness. What used to be  
17 pressing concerns may suddenly seem absurd. Our growing wonderment  
18 at the power of a loving God and our experience in recovery leads us into  
19 a state of nearly permanent gratitude, interrupted only occasionally by our  
20 disease lashing out to hurt someone - including ourselves. That we can  
21 find a way to go on living after the pain of active addiction is miraculous  
22 in itself. That all this comes from such a simple process under the  
23 umbrella of anonymity changes our attitude towards labeling others  
24 unfairly as we ourselves have been labeled.

25 While we are experiencing some of these thoughts and feelings, our  
26 appearance to others is totally different from when our faces reflected  
27 desperation born of fear and guilt. This is when others may observe some  
28 patient, kind and gentle quality. Many of us experienced a change of  
29 expression so dramatic that some of our new friends may think that we are  
30 the brother or sister of the person they met when we were just getting  
31 clean. We look that different. This exciting peace is a reflection of our

1 new lives. It is a natural state that exists potentially in all people yet is  
2 rarely obvious in addicts.

3 A part of our individual humility is reflected in our collective ability to  
4 keep to ourselves. We do not dilute our effectiveness as a Fellowship by  
5 making public stands on outside issues. We do make it known that NA  
6 meetings exist. We do this through our public information services so that  
7 we will not fall into the traps associated with dealing with the media. We  
8 have service guidelines to help us. The purpose of these services is to get  
9 an addict to a meeting, not to challenge various treatment philosophies.  
10 We also are careful to address only the issues of recovery and getting to a  
11 meeting. We have no opinions on outside issues, especially when talking  
12 to a reporter.

13 Just as we avoid the labels of ‘addict’ in a world that lacks the knowledge  
14 that addicts can experience recovery, we also avoid labeling our program  
15 and Fellowship by taking public stands on outside issues. Within NA, we  
16 sometimes find it necessary to take stands on issues that directly affect our  
17 Fellowship and our members. Many NA's have found it easier to revert to  
18 old ways when dealing with issues other than to practice the principles of  
19 recovery. It is like they will risk lesser matters to spiritual principles and  
20 then take on major items with the justification, "This is serious!" They  
21 may not see that casting aside a spiritual principle and resuming old  
22 behavior often leads to relapse. It is important to see the relationship  
23 between casting aside a spiritual principle and relapse. Many of us don't  
24 get a second chance at recovery.

25 What we have found in NA is a series of paths through some of the  
26 hazards that allow us to maintain both our spiritual integrity and personal  
27 effectiveness. Historically, addicts in recovery have shown a tendency to  
28 “check out” every possible way of doing things and only settle for a  
29 simple solution after the dust settles. We also have a tendency to avoid  
30 change and innovation. It took us ten to twenty years to begin to evolve a  
31 service structure, another ten to set up a basic World Service Office and  
32 ten more years to have a Basic Text. These observations illustrate the  
33 difficulty we have had to overcome to achieve some of our progress. Our

1 difficulty seems to lie in our addiction and the inhibiting factor that makes  
2 us cling to the known and avoid risk.

3 Pressure for change comes from members who see an unaddressed need.  
4 These members contribute their time and resources to meet that need and  
5 begin to work out solutions. While they are doing this, members who have  
6 not studied the issues may criticize them. It is important that they keep  
7 going. Their critics may never understand or see the reason why. Just so,  
8 when we see others doing things we don't understand, we learn to ask  
9 questions and become informed before we criticize.

10 In all of this, individuals can and do play roles. Yet, the importance of  
11 their roles is more a function of our common welfare than who plays the  
12 role. What gets done is more important to us than who does it. Many  
13 blessings we share in NA had to wait long years before members became  
14 willing. Humility is simply doing our part to help.

#### 15 PRINCIPLE ELEVEN

### 16 UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

17 *"Unconditional love is given where we sense our spirit in another human*  
18 *being."*

19 Our unconditional love comes from our recognition of addictive pain and  
20 spiritual desire we find in one another. Like many of our terms,  
21 unconditional love takes on a special meaning for addicts recovering in  
22 NA. This principle lets us explore the hearts of one another. We increase  
23 our capacity to live by what we find there.

24 The spiritual growth we find leads to an elusive understanding that seems  
25 to come just when we need it. We realize that whatever form it takes, our  
26 disease continues to focus our attention on externals, misguided attempts  
27 to change others and avoid responsibility. Recovering our shattered selves  
28 with spirituality lets us grow anew from within. As our experience and  
29 knowledge of applied spirituality increases, we can more often see into the



1 heart of things. In many cases, we back off, knowing we're powerless. In  
2 many other cases, we are able to act on faith and play the roles of helpers,  
3 caring listeners, truth tellers, principled persons, selfless givers and  
4 occasionally take stands that are spiritually meaningful.

5 To do these things, we turn a portion of our attention inward and begin to  
6 ask questions about what we believe and why we do things. Along the  
7 way, our understanding passes a point where we realize the love,  
8 generosity and help we have received - yet were unable to recognize or  
9 acknowledge. After this realization, our attitude towards the needs and  
10 suffering of others is more generous. Realizing how much we've been  
11 helped makes us feel embarrassed not to pass on what others gave us. The  
12 idea of pride, arrogance or expectation of return becomes ridiculous where  
13 we can see ourselves as the holders of spiritual truths that came directly  
14 from the God of our understanding. We cannot personally claim God's  
15 grace.

16 Awareness of the loving nature of the reality that surrounds us doesn't  
17 blind us to the ignorance, cruelty and selfishness that go on with or  
18 without us. Our roles can reflect our new viewpoints and general  
19 awareness. We become able to see differently. Our insight enables us to  
20 make loving choices within our means and based on extending the kind of  
21 love and caring that helped us find the clean life.

22 The limitations of language obscure the sometimes-painful fact that even  
23 'unconditional love' is dependent on certain factors beyond our control.  
24 This love may be in our hearts yet unable to find expression. Receipt of  
25 this love usually depends on our openness.

26 One condition is that the person we would enjoy helping is open to our  
27 help. We are all too familiar as addicts with the pain of well-intended  
28 intrusion. Sometimes we feel like an exhibit at the zoo. To intrude on  
29 someone unasked is presumptuous and more likely to trigger retaliation  
30 than gratitude.

1 Another condition is that the time is right for sharing. A person doing  
2 things that are bound to have disastrous results from our view, may think  
3 they're in no need of help. Any effort on our part beyond a gentle  
4 comment may seem insulting and egotistical. If we wait until they're in  
5 pain and desperation, they may pass beyond all help. All we can do is  
6 share our experience, strength and hope. By praying to be ready and  
7 available, we are sometimes there at the exact moment when a person is  
8 open to help and asks for it.

9 Perhaps one more condition should be brought into this rare and inspiring  
10 form of love. It is that we do share from our own experience and not  
11 wander into the role of savior. Our spiritual condition is important: God  
12 works the miracles and gets the credit, not us. The trap here is that if we  
13 see ourselves as the doers, even if we really help someone, we will sustain  
14 an injury to our spirits. The love we give does not create indebtedness in  
15 those we help. It would be a case of our pushing God away from the  
16 controlling role in our lives, canceling out our Third Step of recovery. We  
17 will find ourselves seeking greater challenges, isolated and eventually in  
18 serious need of help ourselves.

19 Also, setting ourselves up as saviors makes us ideal targets for the disease  
20 in others to find fault with us. Our failure to be perfect can be used by the  
21 addictive trait to discredit our recovery! Our only perfection consists of  
22 honest and complete surrender. Then, if we are attacked, we can laugh at  
23 the strange turn of events and the foolishness that makes hard the best of  
24 intentions.

25 The gathering of spiritual knowledge leads eventually to a great and  
26 lasting simplicity. Our love may be a reflection of that simplicity. We may  
27 do the right thing just because it seems like the thing to do!

28 Love expands our life. Hatred restricts it. Through love, we can go more  
29 places, meet more people agreeably and do more things with them.  
30 Increasingly, hatred cuts us off from others, leads us to avoid certain  
31 places and limits our ability to succeed.

**SHARING AND CARING**

*"Sharing and caring is the active and passive forms of love that keeps us alive and allows God to use us as instruments. "*

The spiritual principle of sharing occurs when we provide an addict with what is needed. Each member shares in our signature way from the beginning of recovery. Sharing is the follow through that takes place after caring begins. It validates the NA promise: freedom from active addiction for any addict thoroughly applying these principles. Sharing takes place between addicts with a desire for recovery. Caring brings about incidents of sharing.

Anonymity from Step Twelve is the absence of labeling, possessing the beauty of acknowledging our Higher Power as the primary force in our lives. It creates the environment we need to recover. We can shed old labels that may no longer apply. However, our personality remains to dilute the experience with the idea of our "having to run the show." With ego set aside, the spirit within us is allowed to emerge untainted by personal desire. We can experience the miracle of personality change enhanced by anonymity.

Regardless of their condition, newcomers are welcomed. The only requirement for membership is their desire to stop using, remain clean and live a new way of life. Few of us are comfortable judging the newcomer's sincerity. Our terrific ability to mask who and what we are from intruding eyes is an ability we retain in recovery. It is part of our survival skills. Far too often, the assessment between one or two members has been crucial in a newcomer's recovery. Fortunately, it only takes one to carry our message. This is part of the awakening experience of our Twelfth Step, an element of the Step's maturation as we grow. Applications of principles are endless - our need for surrender, belief, inventory, confiding, letting go, and amends builds a healthy life. Our inability to live such principles is a measure of our illness.

1 Among all our principles, we find ideas like inclusiveness, openness, trust,  
2 helpfulness, selfless-giving, and caring help offset our addict's tendency to  
3 do the opposite. Our self-destructiveness opposes the principles that bring  
4 peace and happiness to the willing. These words are from the recovery  
5 language within NA. The currency of our program is a language born of  
6 deep, applied love and commitment that has endured great pain and  
7 hardship.

8 We become aware that our program results from a huge amount of  
9 deliberate, consistent effort on the part of all of our members. As the hours  
10 of scheduled meetings approaches, how many thousands of automobiles  
11 are started for the express purpose of attending an NA meeting? How  
12 many light switches are thrown, and chairs arranged to seat our multitude?  
13 In a day, how many hours do members share? Travel in the Fellowship is  
14 convincing because we hear the same principles working for other people,  
15 far from where we live. Change comes to members exposed to the greater  
16 NA beyond the boundaries of their local Fellowship.

17 Ultimately, we find out in our own way. Narcotics Anonymous is the  
18 gathering of addicts who desire to stay clean and grow spiritually. On a  
19 daily basis, many ideas, experiments, changes, conflicts, polarization and  
20 failures are filtered through tests of application that produce our Program.  
21 When they work, they extend our ability to apply the NA program. If not,  
22 we move on, leaving behind what does not work. With our emphasis on  
23 sharing and caring, we have a life. After our needs are met -- food, shelter,  
24 clothing and solvency -- crisis may siphon time from these things yet we  
25 discover we return to them to keep our house in order. Our loved ones  
26 needs, reasonable, come first. After living requirements are met, we have  
27 the opportunity to selflessly give by sharing. This sharing happens as the  
28 fruit of our existence, however restricted or marginal. Our sharing is not a  
29 benefit of the material world, it is a benefit of the spirit. Generosity is the  
30 nature of our loving God, as we share an opportunity to reflect divine calm  
31 and trust.

32 Spiritual principles can seem tenuous or wishy-washy to those who have  
33 little experience with them. It may be a fixation on reality that makes an

1 otherwise delusional person successful. In secret, this person may also be  
2 a great giver. Spiritual principles are more real than the rationales used to  
3 justify our active addiction. Many doors closed to us will only yield after  
4 we apply spiritual principles.

5 How often have we seen a member in the midst of a glowing recovery  
6 succumb to greed, lust, pride, avarice, envy, hatred or anger? However  
7 convincingly they justify their actions, they all run into impassable  
8 obstacles. Nor can they overcome obstacles by applying more force or  
9 arguing the correctness of their position. We share about remaining stuck  
10 until we surrender to our powerlessness. We share how the application of  
11 this principle works in all areas of our lives. Constantly living by spiritual  
12 principles exhibits as awakened spirit. During times of hardship we sit in  
13 silent wonder over the beauty in our lives and the company we share. We  
14 endure without making things worse, each time discovering an area  
15 wherein we lack surrender, discovering a truth in the situation and  
16 growing a little freer, aligning ourselves with the powerful force that  
17 works for us. It is neither defeat nor an end to our pursuit of happiness. It  
18 is the way to happiness. This is life on life's terms.

19 Spiritual reality does not apologize for its ways, without it, there would be  
20 no escape. The delusions of our disease produce defects that arrest growth.  
21 Most obstacles would have been simple were we not addicts. They  
22 prevented a timely, clear lesson. The marvel is that through recovery we  
23 regain what has been lost.

24 Through sharing and caring we gain the ability to do for others what was  
25 once done for us. We can each remember the patience and love that kept  
26 us coming back. Now, awakened and based in principles, we carry the  
27 message of hope and recovery. This is as crucial for someone working a  
28 Twelfth Step as studying and grasping the disease concept in the First  
29 Step. We cannot remain clean without it.

30 Personally seeking to make one's mark in NA entitles the member to a  
31 series of unnecessary mistakes. Caring and sharing suspends our personal  
32 agenda. Through loving service, caring and sharing, God allows us to

1 grow beyond ourselves into the wisdom of a clear, open spirit of goodwill  
2 and sensibility in the service of abiding in the spirit. Our Fellowship will  
3 endure.

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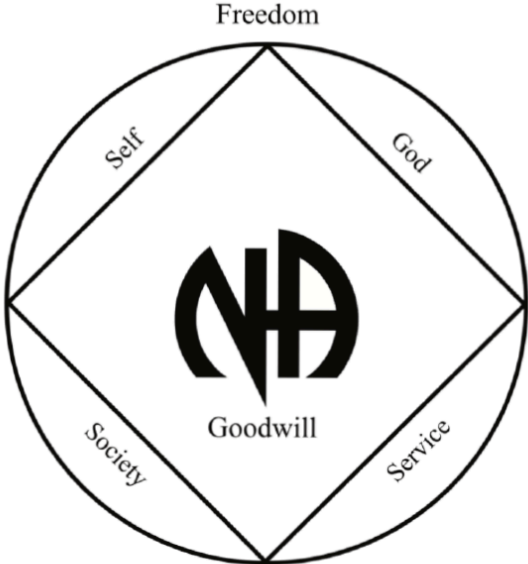
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