

TRADITION FIVE AND TOLERANCE OF OTHER MALADIES

Most emphatically, A. A. has but one single purpose: to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers. We can approach the sufferer as no one else can. Together we have found a substantial remedy for a terrible human destroying malady. Our experience says as a society we should not enter the field of education, research, neurosis, and the like. We know that theology is for clergymen and the practice of medicine is for doctors. However, we should cooperate never compete with these men of science and faith.

In early A. A. development there was a great deal of fear of alcoholics that were odd or different. In A. A.'s second year a man came to an A. A. group and said he was the victim of another addiction even worse stigmatized than alcoholism. Discussing if the sufferer was welcome or not, Dr. Bob the oldest member said "What are we really afraid of? Is it our reputation? He went on to state "What would the Master do?" With no other discussion the man was allowed to be a member. After all isn't fear the true basis of intolerance?

Today many professionals are sending their clients to A. A.. Many sufferers are showing up with a sincere desire for sobriety from all substances. Some come just to start trouble. There are those who just don't know what their problem is but somehow suspect that the answer is in the A.A. rooms. Remember HOPE is found here!

Something great happened within me and I called the district 800 hotline. I was not court ordered, not homeless, however I had drank away a business and a home almost payed for. I was terribly sick of the madness of having to drink and had started to use street drugs in the last years of hopeless alcoholism. The man that A. A. sent to my wreck of a home, set me down, talked to me and took me to my first meeting. There was great relief in saying Frank alcoholic, however I really did not know what an alcoholic is and what it meant to be one.

I was ashamed of myself and had no understanding of how the progressive destruction of alcoholism turned to drug abuse. I was given a Big Book and was told to read it and reread it.

There was more hope to find that the I was just an every day alcoholic. Drugs are mentioned in Bill's and Dr. Bob's story. The Big Book informs us "What about the real alcoholic?" ...at some stage of his drinking career he begins to lose all control of his liquor consumption. ... As matters gets worse, he begins to use a combination of high-powered sedatives and liquor. ... doctors gives him morphine or some sedative ... he begins to appear at hospitals and sanitariums". The pamphlet "A. A. member –medication & other drugs", warns us that our automatic response will be to turn to chemical relief for uncomfortable feelings and to take more then usual. The best safeguard against drug—related relapse is an active participation in the A. A. program of recovery. So apparently many real alcoholics have had a terrible time with drugs. I found when sponsoring, most had abused other substances, it was hard for them to admit their drug abuse because they did not get them off the street. As we dug deeper and got more honest surprisingly some admitted getting them illegally. For me it doesn't matter what the alcoholic misused, only if he gets honest for sobriety.

Today it appears that one of the biggest factors that disturbs the meetings is when the sufferer introduces themselves as an addict, in an open meeting. They might later share in the meeting about how many times they almost died or their drug is the worst. A responsible member may state lets keep our subject to alcoholism, perhaps you may want to go to a different twelve step program. Out numbering and out vocalizing the sober members who understand the steps and traditions, the newcomer shouts out the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking or you can't kick me out of AA or I can say and do anything I want to in AA, it is my right. The meeting becomes noneffective, maybe even damaging to both the newbie who doesn't understand and the sober alcoholic who means well.

The drug addict /alcoholic I am afraid is here to stay in the rooms of AA. How can we introduce the fifth tradition, and not run the duel addicted out? Lets look at our literature. Bill W, acknowledges, drug users and alcoholics happen to be first cousins of sort. A drug user who

has an alcoholic history can become a member. A nonalcoholic pill or drug user cannot be a member however that person can be brought as a visitor, for help and inspiration. Bill also states that there is no way of making a nonalcoholic addict into an AA member. Voice that in a meeting and see the meeting go to chaos and confusion. Newbies voice their personal opinions fueled with fear and little understanding, other members walk out, unkind cross-talk and if there is not a strong chair the meeting never gets turned around to our principles and solution.

In doing 12 step work, I experienced several times, needle addicts that wanted to stop the needle and did. They just went to a few meetings and declared alcohol is not a problem. Claimed they can drink lightly to steady their nerves and shockingly quick, turned into real alcoholics. I also experienced trying to work with a real alcoholic that was more interested in dating, then freedom from alcohol and died from drugs months later. My ex-wife, very much against drugs, drank with me, as much as me, stopped drinking when I did, worked no program and died from several years of Doctor prescribed pills. Does it matter with came first, alcoholism then the drugs or the drugs then alcoholism?

A new person enters into the meeting with other issues, who claim they are not an alcoholic, defiant, stubborn, does not care if they hurt the meeting or not. Selfish and self-centered just like the alcoholic. There are those who have a terrible drug past and never looked at their alcohol history. Denial, minimizing, you don't understand I suffered more than you, sounds just like an alcoholic mind. The newcomer alcoholic just like the addict, often says nonsense and disturbing things when they share, during the meeting. Quite often a person may talk in detail of their drug use, talking too long, too engulfed in grandiosity of their sad story, A responsible chair or home group member might state we all have similar miserable stories lets get to alcoholism and a solution. Perhaps the newbie walks out, approach the person outside and try to explain our program. Ask them key questions to consider that they may have alcoholic issues also. If they are too upset try to encourage them to come back with an open mind perhaps give them your

number. If they stay in the meeting approach them after the meeting and inform them about alcoholism, ask them questions to make them think, even though they are standoffish you may be making progress. Give them your number. We must be calm friendly with an attitude of wanting to be helpful. No one likes to be approached by someone that hates their issues. The Big Book calls it stupidity. Point out we have no defense from the first one. That the main problem is in the mind rather than the body. How do I get the power not to pick up that first one?

A member may state I cannot relate to the drug user and their needle or pipe. Consider this? Can I relate to the following? The relentless obsession, the insanity of not wanting to steal from the wife's purse but having to. Swearing I am not going to drive but driving anyway. Doctor saying my body and heart are worn out, you don't have long to live and having no impact because the obsession is so strong. I am helpless and hopeless. God help me but I can't get conscious contact because alcohol is my master. Can we relate to this?

In early times , Ed who did not want to hear about God and disturbed the meeting for a long time, came to believe, after a terrible relapse. Remember, John Barleycorn is the great persuader.

As individuals and groups grow and develop we follow the steps because we must or die . Then we follow the traditions because they are right, even though we resist some. Then finally we follow the steps and traditions because we really want them for ourselves and A. A. . We genuinely want to change to be free. Alcoholic Anonymous is a process. We must be firm in honoring our traditions ! Lets inform and be lenient for the newcomers sake. They don't know they don't know. Many come in the rooms resistant and to scoff, many do finally admit ,yes I am an alcoholic and remain to stay and pray.

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Frank G. Delegate Area 53 Panel 67