

## **A Workshop Guide to The Twelve Traditions of SLAA**

*"As the Twelve Steps of SLAA are our recipe for individual recovery, the Twelve Traditions of SLAA are our recipe for group unity."*

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## **Introduction:**

### **Alcoholics Anonymous (The Big Book, 4th Edition) p. xix**

The test that it faced was this: Could these large numbers of erstwhile erratic alcoholics (addicts) successfully meet and work together? Would there be quarrels over membership, leadership, and money? Would there be strivings for power and prestige? Would there be schisms which would split A.A. apart? Soon A.A. was beset by these very problems on every side and in every group. But out of this frightening and at first disrupting experience the conviction grew that A.A. 's had to hang together or die separately. We had to unify our Fellowship or pass off the scene.

As we discovered the principles by which the individual alcoholic (addict) could live, so we had to evolve principles by which the A.A. groups and A.A. as a whole could survive and function effectively. It was thought that no alcoholic man or woman could be excluded from our Society; that our leaders might serve but never govern; that each group was to be autonomous and there was to be no professional class of therapy. There were to be no fees or dues; our expenses were to be met by our own voluntary contributions. There was to be the least possible organization, even in our service centers. Our public relations were to be based upon attraction rather than promotion. It was decided that all members ought to be anonymous at the level of press, radio, TV and films. And in no circumstances should we give endorsements, make alliances, or enter public controversies.

This was the substance of A.A. 's Twelve Traditions, which are stated in full on page 561 of this book. Though none of these principles had the force of rules or laws, they had become so widely accepted by 1950 that they were confirmed by our (AA) first International Conference held at Cleveland. Today the remarkable unity of A.A. is one of the greatest assets that our Society has.

## **Clarifying Questions and Answers:**

**Q:** What test did we face? **A:** Could erstwhile erratic alcoholics (addicts) successfully meet and work together?

**Q:** What was the second question? **A:** Quarrels over membership, leadership, and money.

**Q:** What was the third question? **A:** Strivings for power and prestige.

**Q:** What was the fourth question? **A:** Schisms which would split A.A. apart.

**Q:** Were these concerns valid? **A:** Yes.

**Q:** What conviction came from this period? **A:** A.A. 's had to hang together or die separately.

**Q:** What did they realize they must do? **A:** Hang together or die separately.

**Q:** What did the principles, for which they were searching, produce? **A:** Unify our Fellowship.

**Q:** Where in this book do we find these lifesaving principles? **A:** p. 561 - 4th Ed. A.A.

**Q:** Did these prove to be laws? **A:** No.

**Q:** Did the Fellowship approve of them? **A:** Yes, in 1950 at the First A.A. International Conference.

**Q:** What is one of our greatest assets? **A:** Unity.

## **THE A.A. TRADITION**

### **Alcoholics Anonymous (The Big Book, 4th Edition) p. 561**

To those now in its fold, Alcoholics Anonymous has made the difference between misery and sobriety, and often the difference between life and death. A.A. can, of course, mean just as much to uncounted alcoholics not yet reached. Therefore, no society of men and women ever had a more urgent need for continuous effectiveness and permanent unity. We alcoholics see that we must work together and hang together; else most of us will finally die alone. The "12 Traditions" of Alcoholics Anonymous are, we A.A. 's believe, the best answers that our experience has yet given to those ever-urgent questions, "How can A.A. best function?" and, "How can A.A. best stay whole and so survive?" On the next page, A.A. 's "12 Traditions" are seen in their so-called "short form," the form in general use today. This is a condensed version of the original "long form" A.A. Traditions as first printed in 1946. Because the "long form" is more explicit and of possible historic value, it is also reproduced.

### **Suggested Readings:**

#### **Twelve Steps Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous p. 129**

No A.A. can compel another to do anything; nobody can be punished or expelled. Our Twelve Steps to recovery are suggestions; the Twelve Traditions which guarantee A.A.'s unity contain not a single "Don't." They repeatedly say, "We ought.." but never "You must!"

### **Clarifying Questions and Answers:**

**Q:** What does the Program of Sex, Love Addicts Anonymous mean to members of the Fellowship of SLAA ? **A:** The difference between misery and sobriety - between life and death.

**Q:** SLAA can, of course, mean what to whom? **A:** Much to uncounted sex and love addicts.

**Q:** Therefore, no society of men and women ever had a more urgent need for what? **A:** Continuous effectiveness and permanent unity.

**Q:** What do we recovered addicts see we must do and Why is that so? **A:** Work together and hang together; else most of us will finally die alone.

**Q:** The "12 Traditions" of SLAA are what? **A:** Best answers that our experience has yet given to those ever-urgent questions,

**Q:** What are those two urgent questions? **A:** How can SLAA best function? How can SLAA best stay whole and so survive?

**Q:** What is the "short form" considered to be? **A:** The form in general use today.

**Q:** Why is the "long form" reproduced in the book, Alcoholics Anonymous? **A:** More explicit and of possible historic value.

**Tradition One (Short):** Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SLAA unity.

**Tradition One (Long Version):** Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward. (A.A.12&12:189)

**Suggested Readings:**

**A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 130**

"...he finds he cannot keep this priceless gift unless he carries the A.A. message...the moment this Twelfth Step work forms a group, another discovery is made—that most individuals cannot recover unless there is a group. Realization dawns that he is but a small part of a great whole; that no personal sacrifice is too great for preservation of the Fellowship. He learns that the clamour of desires and ambitions within him must be silenced whenever these could damage the group. It becomes plain that the group survive or the individual will not."

**Clarifying Questions and Answers:**

**Q:** What is each member of SLAA ? **A:** A small part of a great whole.

**Q:** What must SLAA continue to do? **A:** Live or most of us will surely die.

**Q:** What must come first? **A:** Common welfare comes first.

**Q:** What follows? **A:** Individual welfare follows close afterward.

**Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:**

1. Do I refrain from talking about people behind their backs? Do I walk away when others begin to gossip?
2. Do I focus on my own program of recovery?
3. Am I patient and tolerant of those who offend me?
4. Do I encourage and support harmony within the group?
5. Do I withhold negative remarks about other groups or fellowships? Do I show others the same respect I want for myself?
6. When I attend meetings, do I participate by reading, sharing, and helping others?
7. Am I willing to share all aspects of my experience, strength, and hope at SLAA meetings?
8. Do I attempt to change my behaviour when I notice it conflicts with the traditions?
9. Do I maintain a feeling of gratitude for being a recovered addict?

**Tradition Two (Short):** For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority -- a loving God as this Power may be expressed through our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

**Tradition Two (Long):** For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. (A.A. 12&12:189)

**Suggested Readings:**

**A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 135**

Does AA have any real leadership?" Most emphatically the answer is "Yes, notwithstanding the apparent lack of it." Let's turn again to the deposed founder and his friends. What becomes of them? As their grief and anxiety wear away, a subtle change begins. Ultimately they divide into two classes known in AA slang as "elder statesmen" and "bleeding deacons." The elder statesman is the one who sees the wisdom of the group's decision, who holds no resentment over his reduced status, whose judgment, fortified by considerable experience, is sound, and who is willing to sit quietly on the sidelines patiently waiting developments. The bleeding deacon is one just as surely convinced that the group cannot get along without him, who constantly connives for reelection to office, and who continues to be consumed with self-pity. Some hemorrhage so badly that—drained of all AA spirit and principle—they get drunk. At times the AA landscape seems to be littered with bleeding forms. Nearly every old-timer in our society has gone through this process in some degree. Happily, most of them survive and live to become elder statesmen. They become the real and permanent leadership of AA. Theirs is the quiet opinion, the sure knowledge and humble example that resolves a crisis. When sorely perplexed, the group inevitably turns to them for advice. They become the voice of the group conscience; in fact, these are the sure voice of Alcoholics Anonymous. They do not drive by mandate, they lead by example. Such is the experience which has led us to the conclusion that our group conscience, well-advised by its elders, will be in the long run wiser than any single leader. **A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 134**

"...the group now has a so called rotating committee, very sharply limited in its authority. In no sense whatever can its members govern or direct the group. They are servants. Theirs is the sometimes thankless privilege of doing the group's chores...The committee gives no spiritual advice, judges no one's conduct, issues no orders. Every one of them may be promptly eliminated at the next election if they try this. And so they make the belated discovery that they are really servants, not senators. These are universal experiences. Thus throughout AA does the group conscience decree the terms upon which its leaders shall serve."

**Clarifying Questions and Answers:**

**Q:** For each group there is only one what? **A:** One ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.

**Q:** How may this ultimate authority express itself? **A:** In our group conscience.

**Q:** What are our leaders to be? **A:** Trusted Servants.

**Q:** What must our leaders not do? **A:** Govern.

**Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:**

1. Do I practice rotating leadership, stepping out of office regardless if we believe others are not available, not willing and not qualified or do I remain frozen in office?
2. Do I trust the group process, including group conscience, sharing, decisions, voting, elections, etc.?
3. Am I willing to do SLAA service work? Am I able to support a majority decision opposed to my own?
4. Do I accept responsibility for my 12-step work and my SLAA commitments?
5. Do I ever perform service work anonymously?
6. Do I feel the group conscience is informed?
7. Do I refrain from sounding off on subjects about which I know nothing?
8. Am I able to perform SLAA service work without seeking personal reward?

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**Tradition Three (Short):** The only requirement for SLAA membership is a desire to stop living out a pattern of sex and love addiction. Any two or more persons gathered together for mutual aid in recovering from sex and love addiction may call themselves an SLAA group, provided that as a group they have no other affiliation.

**Tradition Three (Long):** Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism (addiction). Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation. (A.A. 12&12:189)

### **Suggested Readings:**

#### **The SLAA Conference Service Manual (Revised January 2020) p. 11**

General Member: “Any person who has a desire to stop living out a pattern of sex and love addiction” as defined in Article III, Section 2 of the By-Laws.

#### **A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 141**

"...that we would neither punish nor deprive any A.A. of membership, that we must never compel anyone to pay anything, believe anything, or conform to anything...The answer, now seen in Tradition Three, was simplicity itself. At last experience taught us that to take away any alcoholic's full chance was sometimes to pronounce his death sentence, and often to condemn him to endless misery. Who dared to be judge, jury, and executioner of his own sick brother?"

### **Clarifying Questions and Answers:**

**Q:** Who should our membership include? **A:** All who suffer from sex and love addiction.

**Q:** Who may we refuse membership? **A:** None who wish to recover.

**Q:** What ought we not depend on? **A:** Money or conformity.

**Q:** How many members are required before there can be an SLAA group? **A:** Two or more who gather for mutual aid in recovering from sex and love addiction.

**Q:** Provided they do not do what? **A:** No other affiliation.

### **Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:**

1. Do I accept newcomers to SLAA unconditionally?
2. Am I tolerant of a newcomer's inexperience at sharing?
3. Am I able to carry a SLAA message to any addict, despite race, religion, education, age, gender, sexual orientation, or social standing?
4. Am I able to welcome all newcomers alike, no matter their status or profession?
5. Do I understand that a newcomer's desire to be sober need not be sincere or honest?
6. Do I help make newcomers feel welcome by doing such things as
  - ... remembering their names and saying hello?
  - ... starting a conversation with them after the meeting?
  - ... giving them my telephone number?
  - ... offering them a ride to a meeting?
  - ... introducing them to other addicts?
  - ... inviting them out for coffee, etc., after the meeting?

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**Tradition Four (Short):** Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or SLAA as a whole.

**Tradition Four (Long):** With respect to its own affairs, each A.A. group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighbouring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect A.A. as a whole without conferring with the Trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.

**Suggested Readings:**

<https://slaafws.org/trquestion/howmethodandtraditions>

Each Group is autonomous. They are free to create parameters for their meeting that creates a specialized meeting as long as there is no other affiliation per Tradition 2 “Any two or more persons gathered together for mutual aid in recovering from sex and love addiction may call themselves an SLAA group, provided that as a group they have no other affiliation.”

<https://slaafws.org/trquestion/literature-on-the-traditions>

However, groups may still conduct Traditions study meetings using the AA 12 & 12 or even the 12 & 12 of Al Anon. Although these are not Conference Approved materials, groups are able to use these resources by group conscience. Tradition 4 tells us that each group is autonomous, which means that they can choose to follow whatever format they choose to use and to employ the resources of other 12 Step recovery programs if we are lacking in material on the subject. You may certainly change references to AA to SLAA as the members are reading in order to gain more understanding of the reasons behind the 12 Traditions.

**The Language of the Heart: Bill W's Grapevine Writings. pp. 80-81**

**Bill Wilson on Tradition Four:** "With these concepts in mind, let us look more closely at Tradition 4. The first sentence of Tradition 4 guarantees each A.A. group local autonomy. **With respect to its own affairs, the group may make any decisions, adopt any attitudes that it likes. No over-all or intergroup authority should challenge this primary privilege.** We feel this ought to be so, even though the group might sometimes act with complete indifference to our tradition. For example, an A.A. group could, if it wished, hire a paid preacher and support him out of the proceeds of a group night club. Though such an absurd procedure would be miles outside our tradition, the group's "right to be wrong" would be held inviolate. We are sure that each group can be granted, and safely granted, these most extreme privileges. We know that our familiar process of trial and error would summarily eliminate both the preacher and the night club. Those severe growing pains which invariably follow any radical departure from A.A. tradition can be absolutely relied upon to bring an erring group back into line. An A.A. group need not be coerced by any human government over and above its own members. Their own experience, plus A.A. opinion in surrounding groups, plus God's prompting in their group

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conscience would be sufficient. Much travail has already taught us this. **Hence we may confidently say to each group, "You should be responsible to no other authority than your own conscience."**

**Clarifying Questions and Answers:**

**Q:** Who is each group responsible to so far as its business and practices are concerned? **A:** each SLAA group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience.

**Q:** If other groups might be affected, what should be done? **A:** when its plans concern the welfare of neighbouring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted.

**Q:** No group nor any SLAA service entity should ever do what? **A:** Take any action that might greatly affect SLAA as a whole.

**Q:** Without first doing what? **A:** Conferring with the Board of Trustees.

**Q:** What is paramount? **A:** Our common welfare.

**Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:**

1. When making autonomous decisions, does my group consider other SLAA groups and Sex Love Addicts Anonymous as a whole?

2. Do I make an effort to familiarize myself with other SLAA groups and open the lines of communication?

3. Do I understand that there are many ways to look at an issue? Do I understand that there are many ways of doing things?

4. Do I realize that to some non-members who know I am in the fellowship, my actions and behaviour may represent Sex Love Addicts Anonymous as a whole?

**Tradition Five (Short):** Each group has but one primary purpose -- to carry its message to the sex and love addict who still suffers.

**Tradition Five (Long):** Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity *having but one primary purpose*—that of carrying its message to the alcoholic (addict) who still suffers.

**Suggested Readings:**

**A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 150**

"Shoemaker, stick to thy last!"...better do one thing supremely well than many badly. That is the central theme of this tradition. Around it our Society gathers in unity. The very life our Fellowship requires the preservation of this principle.

**Clarifying Questions and Answers:**

**Q:** What should each group be? **A:** A spiritual entity.

**Q:** Having how many purposes? **A:** One primary purpose.

**Q:** What is that purpose? **A:** To carry its message to the addict who still suffers.

**Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:**

1. Do I believe I have something to offer another addict?
2. Am I willing to explain firmly to a newcomer the limitations of SLAA help? Do I help my group in every way possible to fulfill its primary purpose?
3. Am I mindful that SLAA old-timers can also be addicts who still suffer? Do I try to help them as well as learn from them? Am I willing to do 12-step work regardless of what is in it for me?
4. Do I share my knowledge of SLAA tools with others?
5. Do I make certain to carry the SLAA message and not just my own opinion?

**Tradition Six (Short):** A SLAA group or SLAA as a whole ought never endorse, finance, or lend the SLAA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

**Tradition Six (Long):** Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to A.A. should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. An A.A. group, as such, should never go into business. Secondary aids to A.A., such as clubs or hospitals which require much property or administration, ought to be incorporated and so set apart that, if necessary, they can be freely discarded by the groups. Hence such facilities ought not to use the A.A. name. Their management should be the sole responsibility of those people who financially support them. For clubs, A.A. managers are usually preferred. But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside A.A. —and medically supervised. While an A.A. group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied. An A.A. group can bind itself to no one.

### **Clarifying Questions and Answers:**

- Q:** What will divert us from our primary spiritual aim? **A:** Problems of money, property and prestige.
- Q:** What do we think should be done with property of considerable value? **A:** Separately incorporated and managed.
- Q:** What is being divided by doing so? **A:** The material from the spiritual.
- Q:** What should a SLAA group never do? **A:** Go into business.
- Q:** What would be secondary aids? **A:** Clubs and hospitals.
- Q:** How should secondary aids be organized? **A:** Incorporated and so set apart.
- Q:** What distinct advantage does this offer? **A:** Can be freely discarded by the groups.
- Q:** What should such facilities not do? **A:** Use the SLAA name.
- Q:** Who should manage such facilities? **A:** Management should be the sole responsibility of those people who financially support them.
- Q:** Who will make a good manager for a SLAA club? **A:** SLAA managers are usually preferred.
- Q:** What about various health facilities? **A:** Be well outside SLAA —and medically supervised.
- Q:** While a SLAA group may do what? **A:** Cooperate with anyone.
- Q:** Such cooperation ought never go so far as what? **A:** Affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied.
- Q:** Who can a SLAA group bind itself to? **A:** No one.

### **Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:**

1. Do I understand that doing anything that does not fulfill our primary purpose may harm the group?
2. Am I aware that non-SLAA fundraising functions/activities divert us from our primary purpose?
3. Am I aware that endorsing or financing a clubhouse or related facility may imply affiliation and can harm SLAA as a whole?
4. Am I aware that lending the SLAA name to any outside business or enterprise can take the focus off Sex Love Addicts Anonymous?

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**Tradition Seven (Short):** Every SLAA group ought to be self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

**Tradition Seven (Long):** The A.A. groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members. We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous, whether by groups, clubs, hospitals, or other outside agencies; that acceptance of large gifts from any source, or of contributions carrying any obligation whatever, is unwise. Then too, we view with much concern those A.A. treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated A.A. purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.

**Clarifying Questions and Answers:**

**Q:** Who should fully support a SLAA group? **A:** The Group's own members.

**Q:** By what kinds of contributions? **A:** Voluntary.

**Q:** Do we think this should take a long time? **A:** Soon not later.

**Q:** How about asking the general public for contributions? **A:** Highly dangerous.

**Q:** How about large gifts or obligatory contributions? **A:** Unwise.

**Q:** What about keeping funds in excess of the prudent reserve? **Comment:** An informed Group conscience (Tradition Two) determines what the prudent reserve should be. **A:** Much concern.

**Q:** Of what has experience forewarned us? **A:** Can destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.

**Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:**

1. Do I contribute all I can to help maintain the group's ability to support itself?
2. Have I ever put extra money into the basket because I knew a newcomer could not contribute?
3. Do I take an interest in the treasurer's report?
4. Do I realize that service work for the group helps SLAA remain self-supporting?

**Tradition Eight (Short):** SLAA as such, should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centres may employ special workers.

**Tradition Eight (Long):** Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional. We define professionalism as the occupation of counselling alcoholics for fees or hire. But we may employ alcoholics where they are going to perform those services for which we might otherwise have to engage nonalcoholics. Such special services may be well recompensed. But our usual A.A. “12 Step” work is never to be paid for.

**Suggested Readings:**

**A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 166**

Alcoholics Anonymous will never have a professional class. We have gained some understanding of the ancient words "Freely ye have received, freely give." We have discovered that at the point of professionalism, money and spirituality do not mix. Almost no recovery from alcoholism has ever been brought about by the world's best professionals, whether medical or religious. We do not decry professionalism in other fields, but we accept the sober fact that it does not work for us. Every time we have tried to professionalize our Twelfth Step, the result has been exactly the same: Our single purpose has been defeated (Tradition Five). Alcoholics simply will not listen to a paid twelfth-stepper...The money motive compromises him and everything he says and does for this prospect.

**Clarifying Questions and Answers:**

**Q:** How should SLAA forever remain? **A:** Non-professional.

**Q:** How do we define professionalism? **A:** The occupation of counselling addicts for fees or hire.

**Q:** Where may we employ addicts? **A:** Services for which we might otherwise have to engage non-addicts.

**Q:** How should such services be compensated? **A:** Well recompensed.

**Q:** What is never to be paid for? **A:** Twelve Step work.

**Q:** What does not mix? **A:** Money and spirituality.

**Q:** What happens when we try to professionalize our Twelve Step Work? **A:** Our single purpose has been defeated (Tradition Five).

**Q:** What will addicts not listen to? **A:** A paid twelfth-stepper.

**Q:** What does the money motive do? **A:** Compromises everything we say and do for this prospect.

**Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:**

1. Do I remember when I share that I am not an expert on recovery, addiction, medicine, sociology, psychology, relationships, or God?
2. Am I aware of the differences between SLAA step work and that which is done by professional counsellors, doctors, and clergy?

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**Tradition Nine (Short):** SLAA , as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

**Tradition Nine (Long):** Each A.A. group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best. The small group may elect its secretary, the large group its rotating committee, and the groups of a large metropolitan area their central or intergroup committee, which often employs a full-time secretary. The trustees of the General Service Board are, in effect, our A.A. General Service Committee. They are the custodians of our A.A. Tradition and the receivers of voluntary A.A. contributions by which we maintain our A.A. General Service Office at New York. They are authorized by the groups to handle our over-all public relations and they guarantee the integrity of our principal newspaper, the A.A. Grapevine. All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of service, for true leaders in A.A. are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority from their titles; they do not govern. Universal respect is the key to their usefulness.

### **Suggested Readings:**

#### **A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 173**

You might think A.A.'s headquarters in New York would be an exception. Surely, the people there would have to have some authority. But long ago, trustees and staff members alike found they could do no more than make suggestions, and very mild ones at that. They even had to coin a couple of sentences which still go into half the letters they write: "Of course, you are at perfect liberty to handle this matter any way you please.

#### **A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 174**

It is clear now that we ought never to name boards to govern us, but it is equally clear that we shall always need to authorize workers to serve us. It is the difference between the spirit of vested authority and the spirit of service, two concepts which are sometimes poles apart. It is in the spirit of service that we elect the A.A. group's informal rotating committee, the intergroup association for the area, and the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous for A.A. as a whole.

### **Clarifying Questions and Answers:**

**Q:** What is it SLAA needs very little of? **A:** Least possible organization.

**Q:** What kind of leadership is best? **A:** Rotating leadership.

**Q:** A small group may elect a what? **A:** Secretary.

**Q:** A large group may need what? **A:** A rotating committee.

**Q:** Large cities may find it desirable to have what? **A:** A District or Area Service Committee.

**Q:** What would be required for the central committee? **A:** Suggested 10 or more groups.

**Q:** The trustees of the SLAA are what? **A:** Fellowship-Wide Services Committee.

**Q:** Of what are they custodians? **A:** Our 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts.

**Q:** What do they receive? **A:** Voluntary contributions from Groups and Intergroups.

**Q:** What do our contributions maintain? **A:** Fellowship-Wide Services Office in Los Angeles.

**Q:** What have the groups authorized them to do? **A:** Handle our over-all public relations.

**Q:** They guarantee the integrity of what? **A:** The integrity of our newsletter, "the Journal."

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**Q:** All representatives are to be guided by what? **A:** The spirit of service.

**Q:** Our true leaders are what? **A:** Trusted and experienced servants.

**Q:** They derive no what? **A:** Real authority.

**Q:** What do they not do? **A:** Govern.

**Q:** Universal respect is what? **A:** The key to their usefulness.

**Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:**

1. Am I willing to give up control of my SLAA group and those around me?
2. Do I exercise patience and humility when performing service work in SLAA?
3. When performing service work, do I view the people I serve as individual members of SLAA?
4. Am I aware of the importance of the spirit of rotation?
5. Am I able to end my term of service and exit gracefully?

**Tradition Ten (Short):** SLAA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SLAA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

**Tradition Ten (Long):** No A.A. group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate A.A., express any opinion on outside controversial issues—particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever.

### **Suggested Readings:**

#### **A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 178**

"The Washingtonian Society, a movement among alcoholics which started in Baltimore a century ago, almost discovered the answer to alcoholism. At first, the society was composed entirely of alcoholics trying to help one another. The early members foresaw that they should dedicate themselves to this sole aim...Their membership passed the hundred thousand mark... Instead, the Washingtonians permitted politicians and reformers, both alcoholic and nonalcoholic, to use the society for their own purposes...Soon, Washingtonian speakers violently and publicly took sides on this question...it didn't have a chance from the moment it determined to reform America's drinking habits. When the Washingtonians became temperance crusaders, within a very few years they had completely lost their effectiveness in helping alcoholics. The lesson to be learned from the Washingtonians was not overlooked by Alcoholics Anonymous. As we surveyed the wreck of that movement, early A.A. members resolved to keep our Society out of public controversy."

### **Clarifying Questions and Answers:**

**Q:** What should no SLAA Group or individual member do? **A:** No opinion on outside issues.

**Q:** This applies particularly to what? **A:** Controversial issues—particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, sex and gender issues or sectarian religion.

**Q:** Who does SLAA oppose? **A:** No one.

**Q:** Aside from our Program of Recovery, our Traditions and our Concepts, on what may we express our views? **A:** None.

### **Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:**

1. Am I ever mindful that SLAA has no opinion on outside issues, especially when I share my personal experiences concerning treatment centers, churches, hospitals, jails, and my opinions about such topics as alcohol, legalizing marijuana, religion, etc.?
2. Do I understand that if SLAA expressed any opinions on outside issues, it could create exclusion and controversy?
3. Do I make every effort not to breach this tradition, even in the slightest way?
4. Do I continually remind myself that I cannot control anyone's thinking or beliefs, especially other addicts, sponsees, etc.?
5. At the group level, do I refrain from expressing my opinions on outside issues?

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**Tradition Eleven (Short):** Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, film, and other public media. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all fellow SLAA members.

**Tradition Eleven (Long):** Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. We think A.A. ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as A.A. members ought not be broadcast, filmed, or publicly printed. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never a need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.

**Suggested Readings:**

**A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 183**

This, in brief, is the process by which A.A.'s Tradition Eleven was constructed. To us, however, it represents far more than a sound public relations policy. It is more than a denial of self-seeking. This Tradition is a constant and practical reminder that personal ambition has no place in A.A. In it, each member becomes an active guardian of our Fellowship.

**Clarifying Questions and Answers:**

**Q:** How should our relations with the general public be characterized? **A:** Personal anonymity.

**Q:** What should SLAA avoid? **A:** Sensational advertising.

**Q:** As SLAA members, how should our names and pictures be treated? **A:** Not broadcasted, filmed or publicly printed.

**Q:** What principle should guide our public relations? **A:** Attraction rather than promotion.

**Q:** What do we never need to do? **A:** Praise ourselves.

**Q:** If we don't, who will? **A:** We let our friends recommend us.

**Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:**

1. Are the qualities of my sobriety and recovery program attractive to other addicts?
2. Do I understand the importance of personal anonymity when dealing with the media? social media?

**Tradition Twelve (Short):** Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

**Tradition Twelve (Long):** And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.

**Suggested Readings:**

**A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 184**

THE spiritual substance of anonymity is sacrifice. Because A.A.'s Twelve Traditions repeatedly ask us to give up personal desires for the common good, we realize that the sacrificial spirit—well symbolized by anonymity—is the foundation of them all. It is A.A.'s proved willingness to make these sacrifices that gives people their high confidence in our future.

**A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, P. 187**

The promoter instinct in us might be our undoing. If even one publicly got drunk, or was lured into using A.A.'s name for his own purposes, the damage might be irreparable. At this altitude (press, radio, films, and television), anonymity— 100 percent anonymity—was the only possible answer. Here, principles would have to come before personalities, without exception. These experiences taught us that anonymity is real humility at work. It is an all-pervading spiritual quality which today keynotes A.A. life everywhere. Moved by the spirit of anonymity, we try to give up our natural desires for personal distinction as A.A. members both among fellow alcoholics and before the general public. As we lay aside these very human aspirations, we believe that each of us takes part in the weaving of a protective mantle which covers our whole Society and under which we may grow and work in unity. We are sure that humility, expressed by anonymity, is the greatest safeguard that Alcoholics Anonymous can ever have.

**Clarifying Questions and Answers:**

**Q:** Members of SLAA believe what? **A:** Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions.

**Q:** It reminds us to do what? **A:** Place principles before personalities.

**Q:** What are we to practice? **A:** Genuine humility.

**Q:** That what may never spoil us? **A:** Our great blessings.

**Q:** That we shall forever do what? **A:** Live in thankful contemplation.

**Traditions Group Inventory Discussion Questions:**

1. Do I anonymously help others and perform service work seeking no recognition?
2. Do I respect the anonymity of an addict who shares a confidence with me?
3. Do I refrain from complaining about other members' negative behaviour?
4. When it will help another addict, am I willing to share that I am a member of SLAA?
5. Do I refrain from fanatically promoting SLAA?

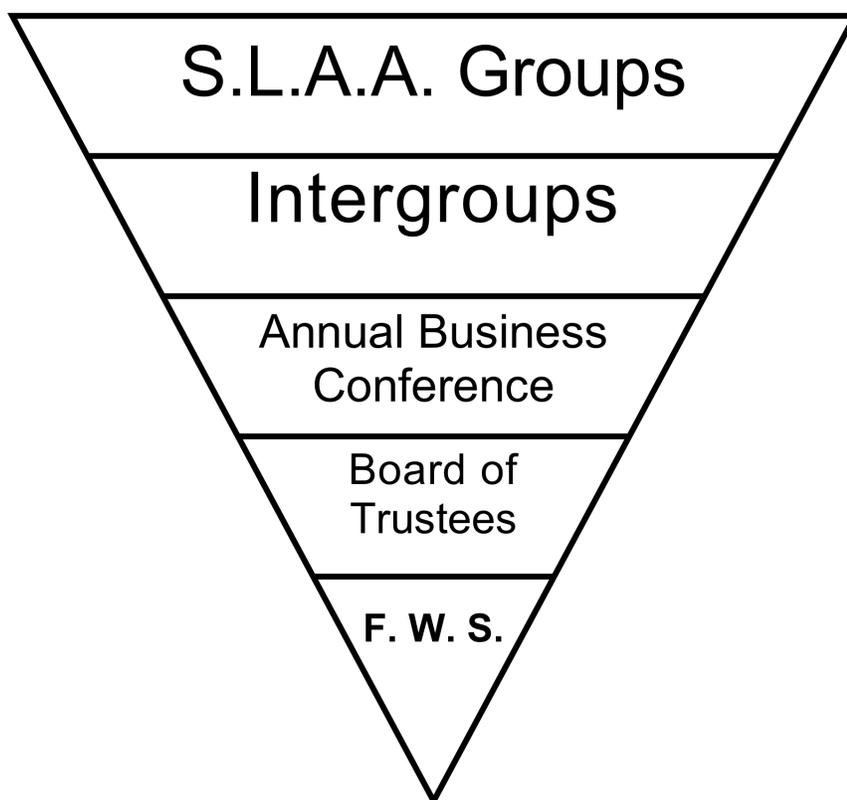
## Appendix I

### Service and Responsibility in SLAA

At all levels of service in SLAA , we work together to achieve our primary purpose to help the sex and love addict who still suffers. Concept One states that “Ultimate responsibility and authority for SLAA world services always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.” The image of an inverted triangle illustrates the service structure of SLAA that begins with SLAA Groups. Service entities of Fellowship-Wide Services and the Board of Trustees are responsible to the Conference, Intergroups, Groups, and members as well as the public asking for information.

### Annual Business Conference Structure

The following Conference Service Organizational Chart details the service structure of the inverted triangle. Individuals gather to form an SLAA Group. An SLAA Group may or may not elect to participate in a regional/local Intergroup, or function as an Intergroup. An Intergroup or a Group functioning as an Intergroup (see By-Laws Article IV, Section 1b) may choose to select a Delegate to attend the Annual Business Conference/Meeting. The Conference creates Conference Committees to accomplish much of the Fellowship’s work throughout the Conference Year. The Conference also elects the Board of Trustees to manage the legal and business affairs of the Fellowship, as well as oversight of the F.W.S. Office.



## **Appendix II - Group Service Representative (IR)**

### **GROUP SERVANTS**

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern. (OUR SECOND TRADITION)

SLAA groups may create such service positions, as they deem necessary to carry on the group functions with such job duties and sobriety requirements, as they feel appropriate. Such positions by way of illustration might include: Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Literature, Coffeemaker/Hospitality, Greeter, etc. The suggested business positions of groups are:

### **INTERGROUP REPRESENTATIVE (IR)**

Suggested sober time: One year. Term: One year

The IR position is a very important service position for which a member can be elected. Great care should be taken with this choice; the quality of the Intergroup Services and ultimately Fellowship-Wide Services can only be as good as those choices the individual Groups make. As with the Secretaries, IR candidates should only accept positions for those Groups that they regularly attend (50% of the time). They are the ones who will carry the information back to the Group as to what is going on in our Fellowship on an Intergroup level as well as the World level.

It should be understood that a IR does not require Group approval to vote on matters affecting the Group or SLAA as a whole, although it is the IR responsibility to vote mindful of the group conscience. (See Concept 3). A good IR is familiar with the SLAA Conference Service Manual and the Twelve Concepts of Fellowship-Wide Services. If the IR cannot attend, an Alternate should attend. The person elected IR should be trusted with the Group vote. Before accepting a nomination for IR, the nominee must consider the level of commitment as well as the sacrifice of time involved.

Duties and Responsibilities:

1. Sees that the Traditions are followed within the Group.
2. Attends all appropriate business meetings.
3. Conducts communication between the Group, Intergroup.
4. Reads/reviews communications from the Intergroup and F.W.S.

**ALTERNATE IR:** The purpose and responsibility of the Alternate IR is to assist the IR and to assume the responsibilities of the IR when necessary. Suggested requirements and qualifications are the same as those for IR.

### **Appendix III - A Facilitators Guide for Grievance Resolutions Suggested Group Business Meeting Format**

Open with a prayer (Serenity Prayer).

Read the 12 Traditions, followed by: “Traditions are to the group what the steps are to the individual”.

Read: "Therefore, no society of men and women ever had a more urgent need for continuous effectiveness and permanent unity. We addicts see that we must work together and hang together, else most of us will finally die alone. The '12 Traditions' of SLAA are, we SLAA 's believe, the best answers that our experience has yet given to those ever-urgent questions, 'How can SLAA best function?' and 'How can SLAA best stay whole and so survive?'"

Read Tradition One: (Short Form) Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SLAA unity. (Long Form) Each member of SLAA is but a small part of a great whole. SLAA must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.

#### **Set Parameters for Initial Discussion:**

Read Tradition Twelve: (Long Version) "We of SLAA believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.

- State the problem or conflict that has arisen
- Ask what steps have been taken so far to solve the problem on a group level. If this is a continuation of a previously tabled discussion, then the minutes of the last meeting ought to be read.
- Open the discussion by allowing members to voice their perspective on the matter.

#### **Remember the Facilitator's role is to:**

- Ask clarifying questions
- Reiterate the Twelve Traditions
- Facilitate resolutions from the group —Not to dictate answers
- Listen for finger-pointing, blame, accusations
- Listen for answers and resolutions

#### **After the initial discussion, ask the group:**

- To what length are the group members willing to cooperate and come to a consensus on a solution?
- Implement the solution OR table discussion until the next business meeting.

Close with a prayer (Serenity Prayer).

## **Appendix IV - Case Studies**

### **Case Study (May 2021)**

Conference Steps, Traditions, and Concepts Committee: Questions from the Fellowship

The CSTCC welcomes Questions from the Fellowship concerning the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts. Our responses are individual, and neither binding nor authoritative. We do not speak for the whole of SLAA

#### **Question from the Fellowship (Committee Reference #2021-2):**

*There is another fellowship group that calls themselves an SLAA meeting and is in a city outside the area that is not a part of our local intergroup. This group/meeting is also not listed on the FWS website. They practice an assertive method of recovery based on the AA big book and utilize a 4-hour/1 month method for working the Steps. Members of that group have been coming to our local Zoom meetings to recruit members for their Zoom meetings.*

*My concerns are two-fold. First, they are not officially an SLAA-FWS group since they are not a part of their local Augustine SLAA-FWS intergroup or registered with FWS. Second, they are misrepresenting themselves in our local Zoom meetings as a SLAA-FWS member when they are not actually one. They are a separate SLAA fellowship of it's own.*

*How do the Steps, Traditions and Concepts apply to this situation?*

#### **Response #1:**

There is no such thing as an "official" SLAA or SLAA-FWS meeting. The Tradition is

clear "Any two or more persons gathered together for mutual aid in recovering from sex and love addiction may call themselves an SLAA group." We do not control who is in or who is out. A SLAA group is a group if it says it is, no matter if it is listed on any roster or meeting list, no matter if it contributes money or it doesn't.

We are not organized. Our service bodies -- including FWS, including Intergroups -- are not governing bodies. We do not give orders. We do not set these kinds of boundaries. We make Step Twelve work possible through our service bodies; we do not determine who is part of the Fellowship and who isn't. The spirit of the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts are embodied in the idea that "our membership ought to include all who suffer from our disease."

From an individual perspective any person who has a desire to stop acting out or acting in can declare themselves a member of our Fellowship. There is no vetting, no membership application, nor any requirement other than the desire to stop.

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We are asked to look for the similarities not the differences.

The idea that some members are "ours" and a rival group is trying to "recruit" them for a separate fellowship is terrifically flawed. If there is a program -- no matter how wacky it may seem -- that is based on the Twelve Steps and can lead an addict to sobriety, a program that can help maintain sobriety, then please let's be free to announce it at our meetings. If it's attractive and works then all the better. Our meeting, our program, will be all the stronger for being open to diverse ideas.

Let's be open-minded -- avoiding the attempt to control the activities of others. Let's be

honest and humble admitting we do not have all the answers; we do not have the only truth. Let's be willing to try new ideas and also willing to continue practicing what has worked for us on a daily basis. Let's attend to our issues and not attempt to govern others. Let's trust our Higher Power and acknowledge that our fear of others' behavior is a shortcoming we would like to have removed.

## **Response #2:**

My interpretation of the traditions includes each group's right to get it wrong. And this kind of spiritual anarchy works, in my opinion, because we can vote with our feet--if a meeting is working for people, it will thrive, and if it's not working, its numbers will dwindle and it will change or die, or it will continue to attract people for whom it works. Much like sponsorship, there are many ways to sponsor and that is as it should be--different sponsees need different sponsorship and it is the dignity of their journey to find that fitting relationship for themselves. This is how the ONLY authority, a loving higher power, shows the way.

That being said, I've heard that meetings get "swarmed" by members of this group and that they cross-talk in meetings, which is disruptive and not in the spirit of our traditions, in my opinion. My belief is that the reason we discourage cross-talk in meetings is because that sacred space that opens up when we speak our truth is GOD's space--and cross-talking steps on GOD's time, GOD's message, and GOD's space. So, while there is nothing to be done on a fellowship-wide level, I'd like to suggest that individual meetings can hold a group conscience and vote to empower their trusted servants, secretaries or hosts to mute cross-talkers, or to define and address cross talk in the format. Maybe to read a statement on cross talk something to the effect of: "The members of this meeting have voted to refrain from cross-talk during shares. In our group conscience, cross-talk interferes with God's gentle guidance so we ask that you leave room for God by listening silently during shares." or something like that. Each meeting is autonomous and has the option to handle this the way their group conscience sees fit. Within the guidelines of the traditions, which I interpret as gentle, loving, inclusive, forgiving, patient and kind. What is the gentlest possible way to restore our meeting to order (i.e. our agreed upon format) while welcoming all SLAA members to participate freely and safely? How do we preserve the culture of our meeting without compromising our values, and still welcoming members whose meeting practices are different? How do we lovingly remind visitors to please respect and abide by the

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culture of our meeting even though it is different from theirs? Can we acknowledge that variety in meeting practices is a beautiful thing, and that it is in divine order for it to exist?

Conversely, ought we be more open to mixing it up in our meetings? Perhaps a group conscience can be taken to invite members to state at the beginning of their share if they would welcome cross-talk during their share! Each PERSON is autonomous! It can be addressed on a share-by-share basis--why

not? Who knows? Maybe next time I share I will invite people to holler during my share if they feel the spirit!! This is a real spiritual opportunity for us to look at our own triggers as a resource and to thank these teachers for inviting us to have conversations about meeting culture and to question the wisdom around all these precedents--leading to really rich, relevant dialogue and profound spiritual work.

### **Response #3:**

This issue has been in my mind for weeks. I am on a meeting service committee and we've been discussing them. It's easy to just sing "kumbaya" and just let them be. In the Zoom era many fellowships from all over the world have crossed paths. I've personally had exposure to London, New York, Toronto and heard speakers from even more locations including Australia. It is a blessing of Zoom. However, ever since I heard two speakers from this group be passive aggressive and directly criticize other fellowship member's concept of sponsorship, dating plans and working the steps, I began to wonder if they are crossing a line. For me the issue is not the existence of the group. Tradition 5 is clear - "carry its message." The beauty of humanity is our own unique and varied ways of approaching life, and in this case recovery. While I'm about to take a shot off this controversial group's bow, I will preface it by saying I've recommended their meetings, and some of their fellows for sponsorship. I've seen people who couldn't get their recovery together radically changed in the short term. I've seen others spend some time with them, but then expand on it with other work in a transformative way. Yes, for me this group is firmly in line with Tradition Five.

However, their message is often, "you're doing it wrong, we are doing it right. Here's our WhatsApp group let's get you a sponsor." Their message is often divisive, in that in some meetings one of them shows up to lead share and Tradition One feels threatened. The unity of the group gets thrown askew, if only for that day. So, no, my response is not to sing kumbaya and call for us all to hold hands and pretend one of the hands isn't pinching me or trying to pull me, or the person next to me out of the circle - throwing into question Tradition One.

For me the applicable tradition here is Tradition Four. "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or SLAA as a whole." Given that each group is autonomous, each meeting has the ability to call a group conscious and enact changes and protocols to effectively censure, or push back on the controversial message. A group can vote to only discuss and read SLAA FWS literature. It can vote to only invite speakers who work the steps using

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SLAA FWS approved literature. I personally started a meeting where the speaker reads a preamble before they start their pitch. It contains the words "We do not gossip or criticize. We discuss here strictly the disease as it manifests in each of our own lives; The way our behavior is this day; The way we react to people, places and things, looking inwardly for what our part is, on our side of the street." This is the capability of the autonomous group. If one of these speakers starts criticizing or blasting a hundred "you" statements they will be stopped mid share and asked to redirect per our group ratified format. Of course, my above suggestions would cause collateral damage. The Big Book is referenced, and even read in many SLAA meetings. There are anorexia documents that aren't FWS approved.

Lastly, Tradition Five applies because this matter IS affecting other groups. So, I am not personally appalled or disturbed by the question. People are talking about it so kudos to the fellow who brought this to us. As it pertains to Tradition Five, I've thought about (we know how precarious thoughts can be) bringing a motion to our local intergroup that we only list meetings on our website that use SLAA FWS approved literature. Probably not a good idea, but it's a thought. We will be back in physical meetings soon enough. This too shall pass.

#### **Response #4:**

Tradition Four provides sound guidance in this situation. Each meeting is autonomous, unless it affects another meeting or the fellowship as a whole. Utilizing an AA big book / 4 hour step process would not seem to affect another group or the fellowship, and so it appears the meeting is keeping with this tradition.

Tradition Three gives us clarity on what makes a group. Any two or more persons gathered together for mutual aid in recovery may call themselves an SLAA group. This meeting appears to be gathering to help each other with the addiction, so they would meet that qualification.

While I understand it can sometimes be difficult to accept another groups way of working the program when it is quite different from ours, Tradition Two provides good direction on how to find peace with it. Our ultimate authority is a loving God as expressed through our group conscience. I find it helpful to turn to my Higher Power in prayer when I struggle with acceptance of another person or group's way of doing things.

## **Appendix V - THE TWELVE CONCEPTS of SLAA**

1. Ultimate responsibility and authority for SLAA world services always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.
2. The Annual Business Conference, by delegation, is the voice and conscience for our world services and of SLAA as a whole.
3. To insure effective leadership, each element of SLAA - the Conference, the Board of Trustees, staff, and committees - all possess the "Right of Decision."
4. The "Right of Participation" is maintained by allowing members the opportunity to cast one vote up to the level at which they are trusted servants.
5. The "Right of Appeal" prevails so that minority opinion is heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.
6. The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the Board of Trustees.
7. The Articles of Incorporation and the By-Laws of the Fellowship are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. Although the Conference Charter is a legal document; it also relies on tradition and the power of the SLAA purse for final effectiveness.
8. The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, including their ability to hire staff.
9. Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are at all levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety. The primary world service leadership must be assumed by the Board of Trustees.
10. Every service responsibility is matched by equal service authority – the scope of this authority is always well defined whether by tradition, by resolution, by specific job description or by appropriate charters and by-laws.
11. The trustees need the best possible committees, staff, and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, systems of rotation, and rights and duties are always matters of serious concern.
12. The Conference observes the spirit of SLAA Tradition,
  - a) taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power;
  - b) that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle;
  - c) that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others;
  - d) that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity;
  - e) that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy;
  - f) that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Fellowship it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

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