

# Welcoming All Members

## Small Group Discussion

*The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.*

### Excerpts from *It Works: How and Why, Tradition Three*

Desire is not a measurable commodity. It lives in the heart of each individual member. Because we can't judge the sole requirement for membership, we are encouraged to open wide the doors of our meetings to any addict who wishes to join. We are asked to extend to others the care and concern that helped each of us find a sense of belonging. The Third Tradition helps NA grow by encouraging us to welcome others.

Membership is a personal decision reached by each individual. We can do a lot to allow addicts the freedom to make that decision and reaffirm their commitment to recovery. We can help them feel comfortable in our groups by greeting them at the door, sharing with other addicts before or after the meeting, and exchanging telephone numbers. We try to make sure that any addict who attends our meeting is not turned away. To the extent that it's possible, we choose the most accessible location for our meetings. We may choose a format that reflects an invitational tone. Most of all, we encourage every addict to keep coming back.

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We look for ways to help instead of judge. Our task is to fan the flame of desire, not dampen it. Any addict who walks into a meeting, even a using addict, displays a level of willingness that cannot be discounted. While maintaining an emphasis on the importance of total abstinence, still-using addicts are welcomed into our meetings with special encouragement to

keep coming back. Many recovering addicts do not have access to regular meetings because of incarceration, geography, physical disability, or employment. These addicts are members in every respect as long as they have the desire to stop using, and they are entitled to the same consideration and support as any other member.

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The group is not the jury of desire. We cannot measure or arbitrate willingness. Any addict's willingness to come to a meeting ought to be a sufficient indication of desire. It may take a while for an addict to find the desire that will keep her or him in Narcotics Anonymous. No addict should be denied an opportunity to stay long enough to develop that desire. We can nurture that desire with loving acceptance.

The wording of the Third Tradition reflects the broad focus of our First Step. It's written simply enough to include addicts of all countries and cultures, no matter what drugs they used. Before finding recovery in NA, many addicts don't think that alcohol is a problem. Others abuse prescription medication, thinking that "legal" drugs are okay. Because of the wording of this tradition, we are able to attract and welcome addicts who might think they didn't use the "right" drugs to qualify for membership in NA. Each addict should be allowed to decide if NA is the answer for him or herself. We cannot make the decision for others.

