

Fellowship Development Workshop

Guiding Principles: The Spirit of Our Traditions

Duration: 1.5 hours

1. Introduction (10 min)

- Facilitator's Welcome:
 - Brief overview of the session objectives.
 - Ground rules: respect, openness, and active listening.
- Introduction to our book Guiding Principles

2. Large Group Icebreaker (15 min)

Ask members to share how they have used the book "Guiding Principles" in their recovery and service.

3. Small Group Discussion (45 min)

- Instructions:
 - Divide participants into small groups of 4-6 people.
 - Assign each group one of the Twelve Traditions to discuss.

How to Use the Flip Chart Effectively:

1. Assign a Note-Taker – One person records key points while the discussion flows.
2. Use Headings for Key Topics
3. Capture Direct Quotes & Personal Insights – Short phrases that reflect group experiences.
4. Summarize Solutions & Best Practices – What worked well in real-life situations?

4. Wrap-Up (20 min)

- Group Reflection
 - Invite participants to come back together as a large group.
 - Ask members to share insights or reflections from their small group discussions.
- Closing Quote
- Thank you

Tradition One

Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA unity

"The First Tradition makes clear that if we are to thrive as individual members, as groups, and as service committees, our common welfare—the good of NA as a whole—must be at the forefront of our consideration. Just as the description of our symbol in the Basic Text points out, there is room within our universal program "for all manifestations of the recovering person," there is room in Narcotics Anonymous for many different ways to live our principles, carry the message, and help NA grow and reach more addicts in more places. One size does not fit all, and unity does not equal uniformity. We don't have to do it like everyone else. Creative action of the spirit takes many shapes and forms throughout our Fellowship. Our personal recovery depends on NA unity. Our experience of unity in Narcotics Anonymous allows us to recover in an atmosphere of acceptance, freedom, and love. The freedom we gain as members of NA offers us courage to participate in the life and growth of our Fellowship."

Small Group Discussion

As you discuss these questions, share **specific personal experiences, successes, and best practices** that have helped you apply Tradition One in service and recovery.

1. Does our NA community work together in a spirit of unity?

Can you share a time when you **felt strong unity** in your home group or service committee? What made it work?

2. How does disunity in NA affect us as a service body? What do we do about it?

What are some **best practices** for resolving **conflict** in a way that **strengthens unity** rather than creating division? How can we **practice unity** even when we **strongly disagree** with others?

3. Do we do anything to acknowledge when we're doing well?

Have you ever been part of a group that **actively celebrated unity and teamwork**? What did they do?

"Unity is the key to our survival and the beginning of our miracle. Practicing unity can be as simple as a smile—but it can also be one of the most difficult things we do."

Tradition Two

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.

“The Second Tradition assures us that NA will be there for us no matter what. When we have a reservation in our Second Tradition, we don’t quite believe that all will be well. We fear that we have the ability to destroy Narcotics Anonymous. If something particular happens—if we take this action or pass that motion or even listen to a scary idea —NA will die. Our experience shows us that NA is strong enough to withstand our growing pains. Tradition Two tells us that we can trust a Power greater than ourselves. We learn to stand up for a principle without feeling like we’re fighting for our lives.”

Small Group Discussion

As you discuss these questions, share **specific personal experiences, successes, and best practices** that have helped you apply Tradition Two in service.

1. How do we consider different perspectives as we make decisions?

Can you recall a time when a perspective different from your own helped the group make a better decision? What are some practical ways to pause, reflect, and truly hear other viewpoints?

2. What does it mean to listen with an open mind and heart?

Have you ever **changed your mind** after truly listening to someone else in service? What was that like? Have you ever **let go of control in service** and seen something work out better than expected?

3. What does leadership mean in Narcotics Anonymous?

What's the qualities of a leader in NA? What best practices can we use to inspire and empower others in service rather than dictate?

“Seeing this Tradition at work in our groups offers a vision of hope. As we apply Tradition Two in our service—and in our lives—we begin to understand the power and grace available to us in surrender.”

Tradition Three

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

"There is only one requirement for membership, but membership will require much of us. Tradition Three swings the door to Narcotics Anonymous wide open and invites an opening in our own hearts. As long as we have a desire to stop using drugs, our right to membership in NA is unconditional. We may attend meetings for a long time before deciding to be members. When we make that decision, our lives begin to change."

"We don't need a title to make a difference in Narcotics Anonymous. Whether we are putting away chairs or distributing meeting lists, serving on a committee or giving an addict a ride to a meeting, there is always more to do. NA members all have an opportunity and a responsibility to serve, but that doesn't mean we serve in any position, any time. As members we are all equal, but that doesn't mean that we are all qualified or eligible for the same service positions at the same time. When we select trusted servants, our primary purpose, rather than favoritism, should be our guide. Our job is to do our best to ensure that the member is right for the position, and the position is right for the member."

Small Group Discussion

As you discuss these questions, share **specific personal experiences, successes, and best practices** that have helped you apply Tradition Three in service.

1. What is the relationship between this service body and the still-suffering addict?

In what ways does our relationship with the still-suffering addict shape the work we do in our service?

2. Who is missing from our meetings?

Can you think of any external factors—such as stigma, cultural barriers, or socioeconomic challenges—that have kept people from attending meetings in your region? How has your service body worked to address these issues?

3. How does our service body welcome new trusted servants, and what kind of support do we provide them?

What methods or practices have worked best for mentoring new servants in your group, area, or region? How do you ensure new members feel supported and confident as they step into service roles?

"Our Third Tradition offers relief from reservations we might have about membership and about each other. We have nothing to prove, no one to impress, nothing to lose but our needless suffering, and nothing to gain but our freedom."

Tradition Four

Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole.

"Our Tradition of autonomy ensures that every NA group is able to carry the message to the best of its ability. Each group makes decisions for itself and takes responsibility for those decisions. The result is that each of us is able to recover in complete creative freedom. We find ways to reach out that make sense to us, and our groups make decisions that best serve the needs of the addicts who attend."

"Tradition Four asks us to look for the limits to what we should do on our own, and to consider carefully when enthusiasm starts to give way to self-will. Group autonomy has made it possible for the NA program to transcend countless language and cultural barriers to help addicts find recovery. Our service bodies may be afforded trust by the groups they serve, allowing them to be flexible and adapt to the needs of each community, but that trust is not the same as autonomy."

Small Group Discussion

As you discuss these questions, share **specific personal experiences, successes, and best practices** that have helped you apply Tradition Four in service.

1. How does our service body learn what's important to the groups in our community?

How do we include our groups in planning for local services?
What methods have you found work best in gathering feedback from the groups you serve?

2. What part does effective communication play in our service efforts?

What works in our local NA community as effective communication, and what doesn't?

3. In what ways do we address issues that affect NA as a whole?

What are our responsibilities as part of a worldwide Fellowship?

"Autonomy—the ability to make decisions for ourselves—is part of what we aspire to in recovery. Understanding what autonomy means when we are part of a larger Fellowship can help us understand the relationships between our powerlessness and our responsibility, between our actions and the people around us, between our group and the Fellowship we all share."

Tradition Five

Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

“Our message is the heart of Narcotics Anonymous. Everything we do, everything that matters to us as a Fellowship, comes back to our simple message of hope and freedom: that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way of life. No one is too sick or too well, too rich or too poor, too far gone or too far away to qualify. It is available to us all.”

“NA service is varied and creative. We do all kinds of work to carry the message and support our groups. All of this and more goes to build our Fellowship. Keeping the connection in view between the service we do and the addict who walks in the door brings passion to our service, and keeps us focused on our purpose.”

“Our experience in service allows us to feel ownership of our Fellowship. It’s ours. Our lives depend on Narcotics Anonymous, and NA only exists through our shared efforts. Serving together builds mutual respect and deep love for our program. Whether or not we see service at the center of our recovery, everything we do to participate in NA serves to further our primary purpose, to strengthen and build Narcotics Anonymous for ourselves and the addict yet to come.”

Small Group Discussion

As you discuss these questions, share **specific personal experiences, successes, and best practices** that have helped you apply Tradition Five in service.

1. How does remembering our primary purpose focus our service priorities?

Can you share an example where keeping the primary purpose in mind helped prioritize a service effort?

2. How well are we carrying the message of recovery?

What limits are there in our efforts to carry the message? How much do we rely on facilities in our community to get addicts into our meetings? What are some creative ways you’ve found to overcome challenges in your efforts to carry the message?

3. What does our public image have to do with our primary purpose?

Why is it important to carry a consistent message from one community to the next, from one country to the next, and around the world?

“Each of us is a miracle. No matter how far we have come, opportunities for spiritual growth and freedom from addiction are still available to us. Our message is hope and the promise of freedom, and it’s true for us every day we choose to recover.”

Tradition Six

An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

“Tradition Six teaches us to be true to ourselves. The Sixth Tradition explains why the NA message must be clear. If we are to keep from being diverted, we must know what our purpose is. We can’t just sort of know; we must be certain. We have a message, and our purpose is to carry it. Anything else is a distraction or a diversion. Distraction steals our attention; diversion, our energy, and both take us away from what matters to us.”

“Much of what we do in NA puts us in contact with the world outside our Fellowship. We rent space for our meetings; we carry our message into institutions; often we are obliged to help big institutions, including governments, to understand what Narcotics Anonymous is, and that addicts do recover. In many places it has been illegal for addicts to meet at all. From our early history to our present-day service in new NA communities, making it possible for addicts to recover means demonstrating that addicts do recover. We are our best evidence.”

Small Group Discussion

As you discuss these questions, share **specific personal experiences, successes, and best practices** that have helped you apply Tradition Seven in service.

1. What is the reputation of NA in your community?

How do we serve that reputation, or compromise it? Have there been times when we’ve been tempted to justify or rationalize affiliation or endorsement if it seems to benefit NA in some way?

2. Under what circumstances would it be acceptable for an outside organization or facility to print the NA name on materials, such as flyers or a website?

When would it be inappropriate to do so? What should we do if a facility uses our name in an inappropriate manner?

3. When internal controversy diverts us from our primary purpose, how do we get back to unity?

What principles help us continue to serve our primary purpose, even when we disagree with each other?

“When we resist the impulse to get diverted, to wander off course, we are present for the miracle. The life we save might be our own.”

Tradition Seven

Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

“Our tradition of self-support keeps us alive and free. We can be creative in the ways that we gather resources and careful in how we use them. We must be very cautious in our relationships with those outside the Fellowship, continually checking our practices and motives to ensure that we are not accepting gifts or support that might compromise our integrity. Tradition Seven invites us to learn more about integrity and what it means to stick to principle without being rigid or ungrateful. When we practice Tradition Seven, we don’t just turn away the donations of others; we demand of ourselves that we step up and meet our responsibilities.

We learn that we can care for ourselves and meet our needs. We can thrive and grow as a Fellowship even when resources are really thin. Generosity is an antidote to fear, and when we give freely, our hearts are filled. The value of this Tradition may be hard to see when we are deciding not to ask for help from those outside NA who would gladly offer support, but Tradition Seven in our Basic Text reminds us that “Everything has its price.” Practicing self-support allows us richness beyond measure.”

Small Group Discussion

As you discuss these questions, share **specific personal experiences, successes, and best practices** that have helped you apply Tradition Seven in service.

1. Do our committees have the people, training, money, or other support they need to carry out their work?

How do we make sure that those who serve have the resources they need to succeed? What are some ways your service body supports the people who serve in these roles?

2. Are our service priorities reflected in how we use our resources?

How does your service body decide on priorities and allocate resources accordingly? Who gets involved in those conversations?

3. Do we communicate with those we serve in ways that are understandable and open?

How transparent are our accounting practices and reporting? Are there ways we could improve communication with those we serve, particularly when it comes to financial matters?

“When we support ourselves responsibly—as individuals, as groups, and as a Fellowship — we are rewarded in confidence, dignity, and freedom. We are responsible members of society today, and the reward for that is hope for the future.”

Tradition Eight

Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

"Many of our members are professionals in their own right, including some who work with addicts, but we do not hire people to carry our message. Reaching out from addict to addict is an application of anonymity: We leave our professional identities at the door. In meetings, we are present to one another as equals, as addicts seeking recovery and carrying a message of hope, regardless of our titles or our relationships outside."

"Our nonprofessional status frees us in many ways. We learn to show up, keep our commitments, and solve our differences. We learn how to learn. We don't need to worry whether we're good enough—we simply share our experience. NA can do what it does best and each of us can do what needs to be done. If we are honest, open-minded, and willing to ask for help, we can rise to any challenge. Like so many things in recovery, what matters is that we show up and do the work, to the best of our ability. The rest has a way of working itself out."

Small Group Discussion

As you discuss these questions, share **specific personal experiences, successes, and best practices** that have helped you apply Tradition Eight in service.

1. What does it mean that NA should remain "forever nonprofessional"?

How do we ensure that carrying the NA message remains a responsibility of members, not professionals?

2. When and why might an NA service body hire special workers?

What tasks can special workers do, and what must be done by NA members?

3. What tasks take too much specialization or time to ask volunteers to do?

How do we balance our service goals with the resources we have? If we can't hire outside help, what alternatives do we have?

"In spite of challenges or disagreements that arise, we know that we all serve for the same reason: We love Narcotics Anonymous, and have a desire to help the addict who still suffers. We need no degrees, certifications, or training to carry the NA message—all we need is our experience, strength, and hope."

Tradition Nine

NA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

"Our service efforts in Narcotics Anonymous help to make it possible for one addict to reach out to another. We began as a few addicts with hope, vision, and a willingness to serve. Today, NA meetings bring hope and help to addicts seeking recovery all over the world. What we have accomplished together is amazing."

"The relationship between our groups and NA services is much more than a two-way street; it's an elaborate web. Autonomous groups have relationships with each other, service boards and committees have relationships with the groups, and boards and committees are in relationship and communication with each other. The web is made up of many strands and connections, and making sure those threads remain strong begins when we ensure that there is a free flow of information, support, and goodwill."

"Tradition Nine helps us practice anonymity by keeping us from creating structures that would make us unequal. We practice mentorship and train our trusted servants in a spirit of rotation and continuity. Whatever our lives or circumstances are like, in Narcotics Anonymous we all have a voice in the process and an opportunity to serve."

Small Group Discussion

As you discuss these questions, share **specific personal experiences, successes, and best practices** that have helped you apply Tradition Nine in service.

1. How do we balance the need for organization with the spirit of NA service?

Have there been times when our services were not organized enough or became too structured? How do we find the right balance?

2. How do our needs change in times of rapid growth?

Are we growing now, or have we hit a plateau? How can our service efforts help us grow in ways that are sustainable for us?

3. How do we ensure our service bodies remain directly responsible to those they serve?

What does "direct responsibility" mean in our NA service efforts? How do we keep communication open between groups and service committees?

"NA is like the air we breathe; it surrounds us when we share recovery. It flows between us, constantly changing. We can no more keep recovery by holding it to ourselves than we could keep oxygen by holding our breath."

Tradition Ten

Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the NA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

"We don't take positions on outside issues, and we don't allow the NA name to be drawn into controversy. NA is a program of complete abstinence, and it works in the lives of countless addicts around the world. Recovery is possible for any addict who chooses to follow our way. Still, our way is not the only way, and we don't even have an opinion on whether it is the best way. The NA way is the only approach on which we have an opinion. We know it works for those who want what we have and are willing to make the effort to get it."

"We don't want to be so extreme that we act as if any engagement with another organization is affiliation, or that any involvement with the outside world is drawing us into controversy. We cooperate with other organizations so that addicts have a chance to hear our message, and we participate in the world because we are a part of it. We participate with a clear understanding of our purpose and the limits of what we can say or do. There are times when we are seen to represent the Fellowship even when we do not intend to."

"When outside issues seem to affect the atmosphere of recovery or the quality of our meetings, we are often more successful when we look for ways to strengthen the atmosphere from within, rather than trying to control things outside of NA. Service meetings and workshops can be vital places for discussion, brainstorming, sharing experience, and offering support to groups struggling with issues that affect our ability to carry the message. Just as in our personal recovery, we don't have to do it alone."

Small Group Discussion

As you discuss these questions, share **specific personal experiences, successes, and best practices** that have helped you apply Tradition Ten in service.

- 1. When asked for NA's opinion on outside issues, how do we respond?**
How might we use such an inquiry as an opportunity to build positive public relations?
- 2. Are there any outside issues currently affecting NA in any of our communities?** What are those issues, and how can we address them without taking a stance or forming an opinion on anything other than our message?
- 3. When do we seem most vulnerable to being drawn into controversy?**
What situations or emotions trigger us to get involved in outside issues?
What tools do we have to prepare for these situations before they arise?

"Because NA has no opinion on outside issues, each of us is free to think for ourselves as we recover."

Tradition Eleven

Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.

“Tradition Eleven tells us about our public relations policy. We engage with the world outside our meetings so that addicts can find us. We use the term public relations because we build and maintain ongoing relationships with people and organizations outside NA in order to reach addicts seeking recovery. Our goal in public relations work is always the same: We want addicts to come to a meeting and experience Narcotics Anonymous. Nothing we can say in a presentation, on a bus poster, or even in our literature can substitute for the identification we experience in the atmosphere of recovery found in an NA meeting.”

“Our anonymity is more often compromised through thoughtlessness than malice. Addressing these mishaps can be an opportunity to build understanding, or it can leave us feeling alone and attacked. Raising our concerns, and responding to the concerns of others in a spirit of love and unity, allows us to come to an understanding we can live with. Over and over, Tradition Eleven teaches us about the practical application of humility and goodwill.”

Small Group Discussion

As you discuss these questions, share **specific personal experiences, successes, and best practices** that have helped you apply Tradition Eleven in service.

1. **What is the difference between attraction and promotion?**
How does this difference influence the services we carry out?
2. **What is the role of public relations service in the growth of NA in our community?** Are our PR efforts planned and considered, or do they happen intermittently when someone gets interested?
3. **Why shouldn't any single member be a spokesperson for NA?**
What can we do to avoid situations where a member might be seen as a spokesperson for us?

“The NA message does not need to be promoted. The fact that our program continues to prove itself in the lives of many addicts is attractive in itself.”

Tradition Twelve

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

“Tradition Twelve describes, supports and explains our personal anonymity, but it’s bigger than that. Our spiritual foundation is not a question of whether we know each other’s last names; it’s that we accept each other regardless of who we are and what we have done. Anonymity is the beginning of equality; we allow each other to be members, to recover in dignity, and to carry the message to the best of our ability.”

“Personalities themselves don’t conflict with principles, but sometimes our actions do. We may have to check ourselves: Is this person actually out of line, or are we just frustrated by who they are? Is this member really the best one for the role, or are we voting for them because they are our friend, or because we want them to like us? Are we responding to their actions or their personalities? Are we asking some members to adhere more closely to guidelines than others? If an action is wrong, it’s wrong no matter who is doing it. If an action is right, it deserves our support no matter who is doing it. Walking that walk is what it means to have integrity. Serving in a spirit of anonymity can be amazingly freeing. We are able to focus on what is being said, not who is speaking.”

Small Group Discussion

As you discuss these questions, share **specific personal experiences, successes, and best practices** that have helped you apply Tradition Twelve in service.

1. Why is anonymity so important in service?

How does practicing this principle change how we approach our service efforts?

2. Discuss the connection between unity and anonymity. How does our practice of anonymity support unity?

3. What can we do to be more inclusive in our service efforts?

How can we attract and retain members in service? How do we balance our need for continuity with the practice of rotation?

“Each of us is founding NA, today, right where we are. Each of us is building hope for ourselves and for the addict yet to come. We know that the work we do in service has effects far past our ability to see or imagine. Allowing ourselves to be part of this work is a gift to ourselves even more than to those we serve.”