

LIFELINE

Salt Lake City Central Office Newsletter

July 2010

Humbly asked . . .

Steps six and seven are sometimes referred to as the forgotten steps. They don't seem to get the same amount of discussion in topic meetings as the other steps in our program of recovery do. And yet, to me, these are the steps that distinguish it between a spiritual program of recovery and psychotherapy. In psychotherapy they try to figure out what is wrong (the fourth step) then they work for the rest of their lives trying to fix those character defects. In our program of recovery we work for the rest of our lives becoming willing to let them go!

My first thought when I saw these steps was, "Who would I be without my anger, my fears, etc.? I would end up being the hole in the doughnut, essentially nothing." What I've come to realize through working the principles of these steps in all areas of my life is that what I have become is the person God intended me to be to begin with! None of this work has ever resulted in loss of any kind, unless you want to count misery, pain, and isolation as loss!

Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings means two things to me. One is that I see that by let-

ting my character defects go I will only gain and that of and by myself I cannot change them, I cannot let them go. I need to rely on a Power Greater than myself, that same power that removed the obsession to drink. If He can do that for me He can remove my impatience, my anger, my fear, my self-centeredness.

I cannot solve a problem on the same level that caused the problem. That's why I need the help of something that's on a different level, a higher level.

My Higher Power continues to show me how I can be most useful to Him and to the people around me, by getting out of myself, by putting

Him first and you next. I am at peace with the world when I can do that!

That Power doesn't always remove those character defects, at least not all at once and not totally. That's His business, mine is simply to loosen the grip I have on them! That is what humility has come to mean to me: I can't, God can, **if** I let Him.

Humility

Perpetual quietness of heart.

It is to have no trouble.

It is never to be fretted or vexed, irritable or sore; to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me.

It is to be at rest when nobody praises me, and when I am blamed or despised, to have a blessed home in myself where I can go in and shut the door and kneel to my Father in secret and be at peace, as in a deep sea of calmness, when all around and about is seeming trouble.

- Inscription from a Plaque on Dr. Bob's desk

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The Monthly Newsletter of
Central Office of Salt Lake City, Inc.

We welcome your correspondence and will publish/ your material, space permitting, if it meets editorial criteria. **Share your experience, strength, and hope with another alcoholic.** For a free subscription or to submit articles, suggestions or contributions, contact Central Office of Salt Lake City:

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Central Office Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the Central Office is to provide the basic services listed, to include, but not limited to:

- To carry the A.A. message and help those individuals who suffer from alcoholism;
- to maintain a 24-hour Twelve-Step phone list; to answer phone inquiries as needed;
- to compile, update and print meeting lists;
- to maintain A.A. approved literature for sale to members and the public;
- and to print and distribute a newsletter.

Specifically excluded shall be the operation of any club, clubhouse or drying-out place, and acts in violation of the Twelve Traditions of A.A.

Groups Represented at the June 2010 Central Office Representatives Meeting

- 5:15 Happy Hour Meeting
- An AA Group
- Basic Young Peoples Group
- Bog Irish Big Book Study
- Bountiful Men's Group
- By the Book
- Chapter 5
- Draper Fireside Chat
- Foothill Group
- Grapevine
- Highland Group (Big Book Study)
- Honey's Breakfast Club
- Living in Sobriety
- Murray Group
- New Life (Highland Ridge)
- New Way
- No Nonsense
- Nomadic Lunch
- Off the Cuff
- Old Fashioned AA
- Salt Lake Group
- Serenity View
- Spiritual Quest (AA/Al-Anon)
- Sugarhouse Men's Study Group
- Tenth Step Group (Big Book Study)
- Thunderheart AA
- Tooele Beginners
- Up Group
- Valleyview Group
- Vision for You (Women)
- Welcome Home

Is your group represented?

The next C.O. Reps Meeting is the second Tuesday of the month at 6:30PM at Central Office, 80 West Louise Ave (2860 South)

Please observe a moment of silence
 In Loving Memory of our friends who recently passed on

Dick C.
 1931~2010

Kathie B.
 1957~2010

Linda H.
 1943~2010

Congratulations to our birthdays

Nomadic Lunch

Denny	30 Days
Clay	60 Days
Jeff	60 Days
Jenni	60 Days
Al	5 Years
Morris	11 Years
Eliza	13 Years
Myrna	26 Years

Bountiful Men's Group

Jeremy C.	18 Months
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Came to Believe Group

Kelly	30 Days
Rod B.	18 Months
Morris W.	11 Years
Dianne B.	22 Years
Mike F.	24 Years

We Care

Mal N.	27 Years
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No Nonsense

Jan	60 Days
Christina	60 Days
Jay	9 Months
Howard	1 Year
Brian N.	2 Years
Tony	3 Years

Living in Sobriety

Chandler	30 Days
Maren	30 Days
Kimberley	60 Days
Alex	90 Days
Chelsea	90 Days
Joseph	90 Days
Knighton	90 Days
Mark	90 Days
Eli	6 Months
Heather	6 Months
Haley	9 Months
Lee	9 Months
Caroline	1 Year
Chandler	1 Year
Jackie	1 Year
Lexy	18 Months
Brian	2 Years
Kami	2 Years
Kathy W.	6 Years

City @ 7:00

John	60 Days
Mikey	60 Days
Dex	90 Days
Chris	6 Months
Michael	9 Months
Tawnya	1 Year
Rick	1 Year
Christopher	2 Years
Christen	4 Years
Laura	5 Years

Anonymity and Social Networking Sites

In today's fast-paced, high tech world, A.A. members are accessing the Internet in ever-growing numbers and in ways that couldn't have been imagined even ten years ago. Chatting on line with members halfway around the globe has become more and more commonplace, and a tremendous amount of information about alcoholism and A.A. is often just a click of a mouse away. However, with the breadth and scope of the Internet have come challenges, and protecting A.A.'s Traditions online is an important subject to many in the Fellowship.

As with many topics of concern throughout A.A., G.S.O. has developed a set of A.A. Guidelines on the Internet (MG-18) based on the shared experience of A.A. members, groups and committees, covering many of the questions this new technology gives rise to. One such area of concern is the question of anonymity online, particularly as it relates to social networking Websites, a question which has prompted a more careful look at A.A.'s existing literature and how A.A.'s Traditions can best apply to this popular medium.

“What is the purpose of anonymity in Alcoholics Anonymous?” and “Why is it often referred to as the greatest single protection the Fellowship has to assure its continued existence and growth?”

These questions from the A.A. General Conference-approved pamphlet, “Understanding Anonymity,” lie at the heart of any discussion about A.A.'s Tradition of Anonymity, whether the discussion centers on a newspaper article or an Internet website featuring full names or full-face pictures of A.A. members.

“If we look at the history of A.A., from its beginnings in 1935 until now,” the pamphlet continues, “it is clear that anonymity serves two different yet equally vital functions: “At the personal level, anonymity provides protection for all members from identification as alcoholics, a safeguard often of special importance to newcomers.

“At the level of press, radio, TV, films, and new media technologies such as the Internet, anonymity stresses the equality in the Fellowship of all members by putting the

brake on those who might otherwise exploit their affiliation to achieve recognition, power, or personal gain.”

Regarding the specific question, “What about anonymity online?” the A.A. Guidelines on the Internet state: “An A.A. Web site is a public media, which has the potential for reaching the broadest possible audience and, therefore, requires the same safeguards that we use at the level of press, radio, and film.”

Nevertheless, G.S.O. has received numerous communications from concerned A.A. members regarding anonymity breaks online, inappropriate use of the A.A. name, and copyrighted/trademarked materials being improperly used on social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and others. These web sites offer individuals the chance to post a great deal of personal information about themselves (and others), and these web sites often allow users to create social networking “groups” and “events” for like-minded individuals. Some members do not post anything that is reflective of A.A. in their personal profiles or “status updates”, while others feel it is alright to do so, so long as A.A. is not specifically mentioned.

Says one A.A. member, however, “I typed ‘Alcoholics Anonymous’ in one of the social networking sites and a group came up with over 6,600 members. It assured ‘a safe place to discuss’ so I thought it was okay. Then I clicked to see who the members were and the page opened to show me first and last names, many with photos.”

From there, depending on people's privacy settings, one could easily see personal information about these people, their families and friends. “I was taught the importance of the Traditions,” the concerned A.A. member relates, “and about keeping the Fellowship the way we found it . . . This page is not what A.A. is about, in my opinion.”

After being alerted to an anonymity break G.S.O. normally forwards the matter to the delegate in the area where the matter resides, for the delegate to handle as he or she sees fit. (The area delegate usually sends a loving reminder to the member about the importance of the Eleventh Tradition.)

Regarding the Internet, the current method of handling anonymity breaks at the public level doesn't apply well on social networking web sites. Given the popularity achieved by the Internet and the vast numbers of people involved, the question of anonymity has become more and more relevant, and as shared experience within the Fellowship accrues on this rapidly evolving medium of communication, greater focus is being brought to what Bill W. described as "the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions."

As with most matters in A.A., regardless of how the Internet and new technology have opened up the kinds of connections on A.A. member and another can share, there is great benefit to be found in careful thought and prudent evaluation of a situation that causes concern for so many. Speaking to A.A. sponsors and friends about

how to apply A.A.'s Traditions online hopefully will provide individual members who are utilizing this technology with a greater understanding of how we present ourselves as A.A. members to anyone – be they A.A. members or non-A.A. member – who may "walk" unannounced into the rooms of the Internet's many social networking sites.

As presented in the pamphlet "Understanding Anonymity," regarding anonymity online, the collective conscience of the A.A. Fellowship, as expressed through its Conference-approved literature, suggests that "Publicly accessible aspects of the Internet such as web sites featuring text, graphics, audio and video ought to be considered another form of 'public media.' Thus they need to be treated in the same manner as press, radio, TV and films. This means that full names and faces should not be used. However, the level of anonymity in e-mail, online meetings and chat rooms would be a personal decision."

Intergroup/Central Offices: A.A.'s Front Line

Back in 1946 when only a handful of Intergroup/Central Offices were fully operative – including those in California, Colorado, Illinois, Maryland, New York and Ohio – A.A. cofounder Bill W. observed in the June issue of the Grapevine, "Heaven has surely reserved a special place for every one of them." Even as he was writing, service centers were opening in Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Wisconsin and – Canada's first – Alberta.

Both Bill and his fellow A.A. cofounder Dr. Bob early saw that "to save whole areas from turmoil, small offices had to be set up, telephones installed, and a few full time secretaries hired . . . If they were

ren't, the man coming in the door couldn't get a break." (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 161) The early service centers were plagued by a lack of money, space, help and an abundance of conflicting opinions, but still they persevered.

So when representatives from many of the 500 intergroup/central offices across the U.S. and Canada - together with trustees of A.A.'s General Service Board and directors and staff of A.A. World Services and the Grapevine – gather from October 4-9, 2007 at the 21st Annual Central Office/Intergroup/A.A. World Services Seminar at the Crown Plaza in Oklahoma City to share the spirit and sub-

stance of service, they will be mindful that the effectiveness of their own operations owes much to the trials, tribulations and collective sharing of their predecessors.

As Jan D., formerly manager of the Edmonton, Alberta, Central Service Office has pointed out, "Nothing in A.A. today is original. Everything we know and do to help the suffering alcoholic find sobriety came from our predecessors, whether the Oxford Group or intergroup/central office workers who came before and shared freely of their spiritual experiences and common sense gained the hard way."

Anonymity at the Level of Press, Radio, Films . . . and Facebook

An issue that gets brought up often surrounding the Traditions has to do with something that the Traditions don't even address: anonymity as it relates to the Internet. While I find the Traditions to be of the utmost importance for

the survival of AA as a whole, I also recognize that they were written in an era when methods of communication were fairly limited, which consequently left some holes for the AA of today to fill in. Specific to this discussion is the

11th Tradition, which states that “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.” I remember when I first started thinking about anonymity and the Internet. Turning to the pamphlet “Understanding Anonymity,” I looked for answers. The pamphlet states that websites should be considered public media, and therefore we shouldn’t use our full name or images on any public site. It goes on to say that “. . . the level of anonymity in e-mails, online meetings, and chat rooms would be a personal decision.”

At first glance, this seems pretty clear: no full names or pictures on any publicly accessible website, but chat rooms, online meetings, and e-mails, are acceptable places to break our own anonymity, if we wish to. The pamphlet is trying to set up a distinction between “private” and “public” internet. Unfortunately, it falls well short of comprehensively defining this distinction. One could easily say that breaking anonymity on a national news organization’s site is forbidden, but a break in an e-mail to a friend is acceptable. A personal blog that is publically searchable would fall into the “public” category.

But what about sites such as Facebook and MySpace? These widely-used “social networking” sites have their own security protocols, some of which are fairly customizable by the individual users. They have their own levels of public and private, further complicating the issue. For instance, I can set my personal Facebook page to be viewed by me “friends” only, preventing anyone else from seeing the information listed. Can I break my anonymity on this level, where only my friends can see? Wouldn’t this be merely the virtual equivalent of gathering all my friends in a room and telling them I am in AA?

Facebook has “groups” where likeminded people can “sign up” and post messages on discussion boards. There are many of these twelve step-related groups on both Facebook and MySpace. There are multiple unmoderated groups titled “Alcoholics Anonymous,” one with over 9,000 members. Any Facebook member can access this group and its member list, most of whom use their full names (as Facebook requires for all of its members). One could argue that this is a public break because it falls under the banner Alcoholics Anonymous. Interestingly, other Facebook groups by the same name appear to have been started as a joke, perhaps to poke fun at alcoholics,

but were quickly co-opted by actual AA members and are used for discussions about sobriety. But what about the “Friends of Bill W.” group that has over 12,000 members? It is public (to Facebook members), but specifically states that it is not affiliated with any organization.

I think that the solution here has more to do with Tradition 6 than with Tradition 11. Calling a Facebook group “Alcoholics Anonymous” implies affiliation, despite disclaimers to the contrary (as offered by one of the groups). If they all were titled something like “Friends of Bill W.” or “Alcoholics in Recovery,” then we would be killing two birds with one stone: ending affiliation with AA and allowing group members to not worry about breaking their anonymity at a public level for merely joining the group. Each individual would be responsible for maintain their own anonymity in these groups in group discussions.

A major issue here is that many of these groups are orphaned, meaning that they were set up by an individual and then abandoned, essentially leaving them unmoderated and making it impossible to change things like the name of the group and descriptive text on the main page.

In a recent edition of Box 459 an article was devoted entirely to this discussion. It ends up saying that shared experience will help bring about resolution. There is no consensus among AA members as to whether or not social networking sites are public or private. The “Guidelines” paper on the internet released by GSO provides some clarification. It says that while social networking sites require a user to sign up, the sites are essentially public beyond the initial registration. Therefore any disclosure of our AA membership in public groups, message boards, or on someone else’s “wall” should be avoided.

Many of us want AA to stay exactly the same as it was when it was founded, but this discussion brings out the shortcomings of this view. At the time the Traditions were published, this conversation about anonymity would be inconceivable. As our world changes and evolves, AA, too, must change and evolve. AA members must meet new challenges head-on, inside and outside of AA. Just as we tackle our own personal issues through shared experience, open-mindedness, and a willingness to change, we must meet new AA challenges the same way. AA must evolve with the times, or else it won’t be prepared to meet the “certain trials and low spots ahead.”

- Dave S.

