

2020 Area 09 FORO
Sunday, July 12
Hosted on Zoom by Districts 9 & 22

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Table 1: Anonymity (note that this was from an earlier agenda, so did not address La Viña):

What is the difference between the short and long forms of the 12th Tradition?

- The long form provides context to the 12th Tradition; so short form deals with Principles before Personalities, and long form provides details for what this means, particularly as it relates to anonymity.
- Humility is the basis of anonymity that applies to all Traditions. I should not take credit, and humility helps me do that. Humility is a unifying principle. The Long Form really puts flesh on the short form.
- This Traditions steers us away from cultish personalities, and the spirit of rotation is the best way to ensure that we minimize personalities in all levels of AA.

Problems with Technology and solutions for protecting anonymity:

- Older alcoholics are hesitant to use new technologies, but also lack of technology affects our Hispanic groups.
- The fear is not completely irrational, and personal anonymity is the way to deal with the fear. Those of us who have technological abilities should work with older alcoholics and others to provide the infrastructure (computers, WIFI, etc.) and opportunities to help dispel the fears associated with technology.

Table 2 The Newcomer

How do we welcome them?

- In our group he asks about the new one and for 29 days he is given a card every time he attends and he is made to feel comfortable.
- After asking who is new, some member comes up to be with him and feels confident, after the meeting he tries to carry on a conversation about how he is and makes himself available to help.
- When the new one is introduced he is made to feel like part of the group and is told that we are very fortunate that he is there and that he can feel comfortable.
- You are warmly welcomed by the members and they get in touch and are invited to serve from the beginning so that this will help you in your recovery.
- In our Zoom group we try to have a list with the phone numbers for new people who get to enter this they do it through chat.
- In our group he asks for someone new and is applauded to make him feel confident and welcomed, he is told about the third tradition and who could be an alcoholic and at the end of the meeting a member He approaches him to make himself available to help.

How was I treated at first?

- Not knowing that I was an alcoholic but since they sent me through the court I had to attend the meetings but they always made me feel welcome and I came to a group of women's meetings.
- I arrived without identifying myself with a new one at the suggestion of who sent me, but thanks to my superior power I was able to identify myself with an alcoholic and decided to be part of the conscience. In my group there is good treatment with the new ones and that makes it very attractive on the part of the veterans and I only try to follow their example.

Tough Love Perhaps?

- Brenda - In my group, newcomers are spoken to the truth and told what to do, and they are suggested not to share for 30 days, they are treated with rough love, and they are not very accommodating.
- Loara - It depends on the personality and character of each one, they received me with a soft tolerant love because when I arrived and I had low self-esteem and they were very tolerant of me and in that way they helped me to continue within double AA.

Table 3: Primary Purpose 3.17.01

What is the purpose of unity?

- Purpose of unity is alone we can't, together we can. Together we kill the disease in unity. Doing together what I can't do by myself.

What is the difference between an open A.A. meeting and a closed meeting?

- Closed meetings are for members only to share at a deeper level with the alcoholic problem and to share experiences. In order to help the other person. Open meetings are for anyone interested in getting more information about Alcoholism and whether they may be an alcoholic.

How do we deal with dually addicted persons?

- That if the person identifies as alcoholic and addict then they are welcome because they qualify if they identify a problem with alcohol. If they only identify as an addict we can direct them to an appropriate meeting as we only deal with alcohol.

Table 4: Sponsorship

Why is sponsorship so important? Do I have a sponsor?

- From the second session. It teaches the format of the program starting with Chapter Five and takes the person through the steps, to learn that you are powerless but that there is a Power Greater Than Yourself. Working with your sponsor Sponsorship is for steps, guidance and recover. Choose a sponsor who is gentle and is your friend.

How do you choose the right sponsor?

- The sponsor chose her. I needed one, it took a long time. Do they have what I want. Do they work well with others and can understand how to reach out to people. A member shared that he was in a position where everyone wanted to sponsor him and it didn't work. It was the opportunity to get into General Service and work with others that he learned what the program means.

What is a service sponsor?

Table 5: Information

How to handle misinformation of A.A. information?

- One person looks to the oldtimers and those who know the Big Book so we can be sure that what is being espoused is AA-endorsed rather than opinion.
- Some people unintentionally share misinformation, which may include information outside AA, that is not Conference-approved. Want to maintain integrity of the group and AA as a whole.
- One person found after leaving her original group that when she came back the group was voting to provide 7th Tradition money to a Native American entity that was collected during the AA meetings. So upholding Tradition 6 kept this group out of trouble.
- People's opinions are valid, and the Traditions keep us out of trouble, to identify opinions versus AA information.
- Need to be careful with newcomers so they do not feel chastised. One group said they would not contribute to GSO because they felt GSO did not need money. So, GSO should be contacted when there are discrepancies in information. Oldtimers should help uphold the Traditions. One oldtimer said that only the Big Book carried weight.
- Officers of the Area are responsible to transmit information from New York to all Districts asap. As General Servants at the District level (GSR, DCM, DCMC) are responsible for disseminating accurate information. We need to be the example to members at the group level. Whenever possible, be able to apply the words "Conference-approved" to the information being presented.

Table 6: Accessibility

How many make up the committee?

- Andrea – usually we have between 3- 6 people show with attendance being affected by the remote meetings

What functions do they have?

- What we do is to help people who have barriers to access the meetings. People with issues parking, elevators, homebound, people who are hard of hearing or ASL or. Vision impaired, elderly and have difficulty with transportation, people who are young and have difficulty with transportation.
- People with cultural challenges that make attending meeting difficult, such as Hispanic women. Parents or spouses who are not supportive for contact with A.A. or help engaging with the program. In District 17 a strong district level P.I. Committee that takes panels into high schools with success. Students are attentive and ask questions.
- Since meetings have moved online there are people who have difficulty accessing appropriate technology and connecting to meetings. Panel discussion on AA in the Time of Pandemic from District 17.

How far does the committee reach?

- As far as they are able. People affected by features mentioned earlier. Distinction between those who are hard of hearing – small 'd' vs. "D". Those members who are fluent in ASL and sign language but not necessarily strong in English or Spanish.

Table 7: The Conference

What is the Conference?

- Bill and Bob were not going to live forever, they wanted to ensure A.A. would continue to exist long after they were no longer here. Thus, the Conference was born.
- The Conference is an annual event that takes place to discuss topics (“Agenda Items”) Alcoholics Anonymous has identified as relevant and important. The Conference provides the opportunity for representatives to review these items and make decisions on behalf of Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Comments from newer members: New and excited to learn. Starting to read the Service Manual. Likes that this is how it happens. Glad to be their first FORO.

Who is in the Conference? How is it composed?

- From the Service Manual (S58 in English)
 - The Conference Membership includes area delegates (who make up at least two thirds of the Conference body), the directors and A.A. staff of A.A. World Services, Inc. and AA Grapevine, Inc., and the trustees. Each member has 1 vote.
 - The Conference may wish to invite visitors from other countries to attend as nonvoting observers.

What does the Conference do? How does it help/benefit A.A.?

- Acts on behalf of the body. Serves as a forum to communicate and share experience, strength and hope across the US & Canada.
- Act as the voice of AA. Ensure longevity. Makes sure needs of body are met.
- Represents the unity of A.A. Without the conference we would not have a way to bring our voices together in a way that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Since there is a spirit of rotation, there is no “head” of A.A. Higher, collective conscious. Provides us with a way to be part of the whole so the groups are not aimless, they are connected.
- Excited to know there is a Conference, there are alcoholics and non-alcoholics working together as a whole. Likes it at the bottom of the triangle and likes the top is one alcoholic with another alcoholic. Process is slow but it is slow for a reason – appreciates this. Everyone has a voice – happy this is the case. The more Sharebacks she hears and the more reading about the concepts the more excited she is about being a part of A.A. Never knew how much there is to do until she became involved in General Service.
- Conference is the way our voices are carried by our delegate and together with our Trustees the conference develops a higher conscious that promotes what is best for Alcoholics.

Table 8: Hospital & Institutions

Who can participate in an H&I Committees?

- There may be a sobriety time requirement to represent a group, but not usually with the institutions. Many institutions require background information and applications to be admitted.
- Southern California H&I includes many Group and District representatives. Only a desire to be sober may be all is needed, with others its six months. Corrections Chairs are parallel group in General Service that works with H&I.
- There is a difference between H&I panels versus H&I representatives, where panels conduct meetings inside institutions while H&I representatives generally represent groups and Districts as a part of General Service. There are generally H&I cans made available at the Group level for contributions, which are used to purchase literature that can be taken into the institutions.
- In General Service, Corrections and Treatment & Accessibilities serve the same niche as H&I, which originated in California and is therefore outside the General Service structure. These three committees serve in the spirit of cooperation, not affiliation.

What is the function of H&I?

- For Harbor Area H&I Committee (there are other committees in southern California) there are panel leaders and chairs that meet monthly. Individual H&I panel leaders are recommended to attend the monthly meetings. Before the committee meeting, there is an orientation for members new to H&I. During the committee meeting, panel chairs are asked to describe their panels, times and dates, and institutions they attend.
- Different committees still share similarities, and in our region, Southern California H&I is a great way to share information and inform all committees on what other committees are doing.
- Hispanic groups often have representatives at the Intergroup level.
- At the Area level, there are our 15 Standing Committees, and H&I is among the Coordinating Committees. There was a recent motion that passed where the alternate delegate has the new responsibility of serving as the liaison between Area 09 and So Cal H&I.

Table 9: Archives

- It was shared it is important to know where we came from and especially if it relates today whether it is new material or old.
- Someone shared Archives is preserving our history in AA.
- One-person shared Orange County central office has minutes from the 1960s and they are just sitting there. Would that be something you would want to preserve?
- It was shared by someone their Saturday morning big book study sent in a Group History Form.
- Another person shared they did not know anything about the group history project. Info was pasted that you can get the form on the Area09 website.
- We heard how a member had the most amazing archive presentation from Mitchell and Mary from the area 9 archives and it was the Women Pioneers in AA, also they told the story of a woman who got kicked out of AA in Los Angeles when there was no other meeting so she ended up getting drunk and committing suicide. That is one of the things that really hit her because we have a place to go today and our traditions.
- We also heard what a great opportunity of service to go out there and to get immersed in all the history of Area 09. I have had the opportunity to go archives on a working party couple Sunday mornings.
- One person shared how on a visit they read about an Old-timer and ended up hearing him as a speaker.
- It was shared the Archives Committee has a Chair. That is a 2-year commitment. Panel 70 Archives Chair is Dario. Districts and Groups can have an Archives Committee

Table 10: PRAASA

What is PRAASA?

- PRAASA is the Pacific Regional Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly. Held in the spring of every year in a rotating fashion, all over our region. The Pacific Region includes California, Oregon, Washington, Hawaii, Alaska, Utah, Idaho, Arizona, Nevada, and British Columbia, Canada.
- It was started because the western states did not feel “heard” in AA.
- It is a weekend event, a type of conference, where the focus is on being of service in AA, service positions, and the General Service Conference agenda items.
- It is well known to be one of the most spiritual events in AA and everyone comes away “changed” for the better.

Who can attend?

- Any member of AA who wants to learn, to listen, and to participate in service discussions is welcome to attend PRAASA.
- Most attendees are GSRs, DCMs, DCMCs, Committee Chairs, Delegates, and Trustees. Typically, attendees are from the Pacific Region, but we do invite others to join us. This year in Tucson, there were representatives from Japan and South America.
- AI-Anon participation is also available at PRAASA, so members of that fellowship are welcome.

What are the benefits of attending?

- It is exciting to be around so many AAs focused on service, and to feel the energy in the rooms.
- Break-out rooms offer us exposure to AAs from other areas and states, so we gain a wider knowledge and perspective. We see the “bigger picture”.
- We gain a new motivation and a new level of understanding service work.
- We learn how to do our job better in service.
- We can share problems and find solutions together.
- There is an emotional, spiritual connection that is felt and strengthened.
- Our commitment to AA and to service is strengthened and cemented once we attend PRAASA.
- There is always tons of energy and encouragement for us.
- When you go to your first PRAASA, it is tradition to “go to the mic” and announce that this is your first PRAASA. You will be met with a huge round of applause and it will bring you to tears.
- Something stirs in your spirit once you attend PRAASA, each time you attend PRAASA, year after year, and you will be changed.