



News Sheet

Understanding Anonymity

“Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities ?”

Anonymity on a person-to-person basis

From its earliest days, A.A. has promised personal anonymity to all who attend its meetings. Because its founders and first members were recovering alcoholics themselves, they knew from their own experience how ashamed most alcoholics are about their drinking, how fearful they are of public exposure. The social stigma of alcoholism was great, and those early A.A. members recognized that a firm assurance of confidentiality was imperative if they were to succeed in attracting and helping other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

Over the years, anonymity has proved one of the greatest gifts that A.A. offers the suffering alcoholic. Without it, many would never attend their first meeting. Although the stigma has lessened to some degree, most newcomers still find admission of their alcoholism so painful that it is possible only in a protected environment. Anonymity is essential for this atmosphere of trust and openness.

As valuable as privacy is to new members, it is noteworthy that most of them are eager to share the good news of their A.A. affiliation with their families. Such a disclosure, however, is always their own choice: A.A. as a whole seeks to ensure that individual members stay as private and protected as they wish, or as open as they wish, about belonging to the Fellowship; but always with the understanding that anonymity at the level of the press, radio, TV, films and other media technologies such as the Internet is crucial to our continuing sobriety and growth — at both the personal and group levels.

This News Sheet is intended as an aid to Service in AA.

The views and opinions expressed in the News Sheet are not necessarily those of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland.

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PREAMBLE ©

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

(Extracts from AAWS pamphlet — *Understanding Anonymity*
Available to purchase from GSO and CSO

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Anonymity at the media level

After its first few years of success, the Fellowship attracted much favourable attention in the press. Articles praising A.A. appeared in magazines and

newspapers across the country. With each new article, the ranks of A.A. grew. In those days, everyone still feared the consequences of public disclosure; and so the first press coverage guarded members' anonymity for safety's sake.

Some questions and answers about anonymity

A.A. members as well as many people outside the program are sometimes puzzled about how to put the principle of anonymity into practice. Some of the most frequently asked questions about both personal anonymity and anonymity at the public level include:

Personal anonymity

Q. After I tell my loved ones about my A.A. membership, should I ask them not to disclose this information to anyone else?

A. This is entirely a personal matter, but it is usually best for all concerned to let the A.A. member decide who shall be told and when.

Q. If relatives, friends, and business associates comment on my improved appearance and functioning after I become sober, should I tell them I'm in A.A.?

A. Members of the immediate family and close friends are usually pleased to learn about an alcoholic's membership in A.A. As for business associates, it might be best simply to say that you've stopped drinking and postpone decision about disclosing your membership until after you have been in the Fellowship for several months.

Q. What should I do if I meet old acquaintances at A.A. meetings?

A. You need not ask them to protect your anonymity; they are there for the same, or similar, reasons. They will generally respect your privacy and you, in turn, should respect theirs.

Q. What should I tell my loved ones about protecting the anonymity of the A.A. members they may meet?

A. Explain that anonymity is extremely important to A.A. members. Each A.A. member decides if and when to share aspects of his or her recovery, and with whom. Accordingly, it is hoped that family members and other friends of A.A. members protect the anonymity of their loved ones who are in A.A., and that they protect the anonymity of other A.A. members whom they may meet. This includes not disclosing to others the fact that a person is an A.A. member. In addition, let loved ones know that when an A.A. member dies, it is important not to identify an A.A. sponsor or A.A. friends, as such, in the obituary, in the media, or online.

Q. What if I see public figures at a meeting?

A. Like everyone else, public figures should have the protection of anonymity to the extent that they desire it.

Q. I know that I should not reveal the names of members that I hear in A.A. meetings, but what about other personal information?

A. It is understood by A.A. members that personal disclosures made in A.A. meetings are to be treated as confidential. For example, if friends outside the program are acquainted with some of your A.A. friends and know of their membership, you should be careful not to violate confidences picked up at meetings, however harmless they may appear at the time.

The Man on the Bed

This full colour painting first appeared as a Grapevine centre spread in the December 1955 issue. It proved so popular that four colour prints were made available separately. The artist, Robert M., was a volunteer illustrator for the Grapevine, and in 1956 he presented the painting to AA co founder Bill W. In his thank you letter Bill wrote: "Your representation of 'The Man on the Bed' hangs in my studio at Bedford Hills.... The whole heart and essence of AA can be seen by just looking at it."



TRADITIONS CHECKLIST—TRADITION 5

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

These questions were originally published in the AA Grapevine in conjunction with a series on the Twelve Traditions that began in November 1969 and ran through September 1971. While they were originally intended primarily for individual use, many AA groups have since used them as a basis for wider discussion. THE AA GRAPEVINE INC., PO BOX 1980, GRAND CENTRAL STATION, NEW YORK, NY 10163-1980

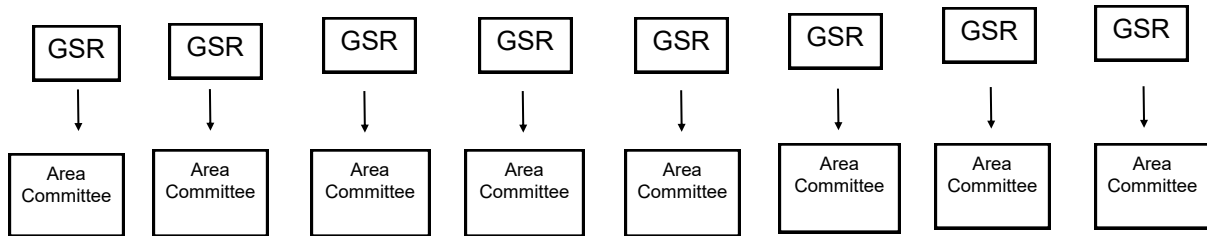
1. Do I ever cop out by saying, "I'm not a group, so this or that Tradition doesn't apply to me?"
2. Am I willing to explain firmly to a newcomer the limitations of AA help, even if he gets mad at me for not giving him a loan?
3. Have I today imposed on any AA member for a special favour or consideration simply because I am a fellow alcoholic?
4. Am I willing to twelfth-step the next newcomer without regard to who or what is in it for me?
5. Do I help my group in every way I can to fulfil our primary purpose?
6. Do I remember that AA old-timers, too, can be alcoholics who still suffer? Do I try both to help them and to learn from them?

STRUCTURE OF THE FELLOWSHIP

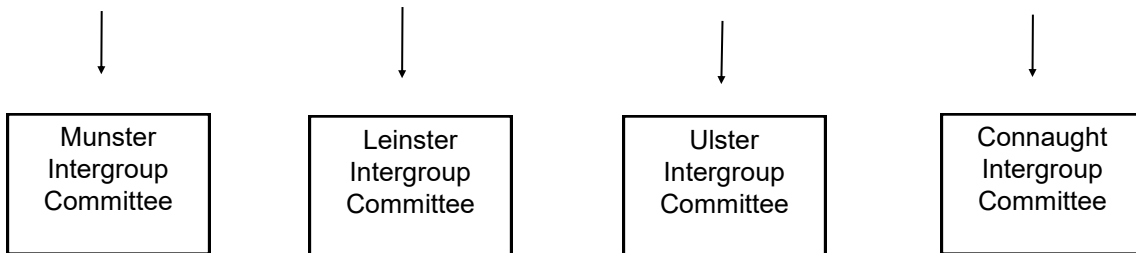
AA GROUPS (G)



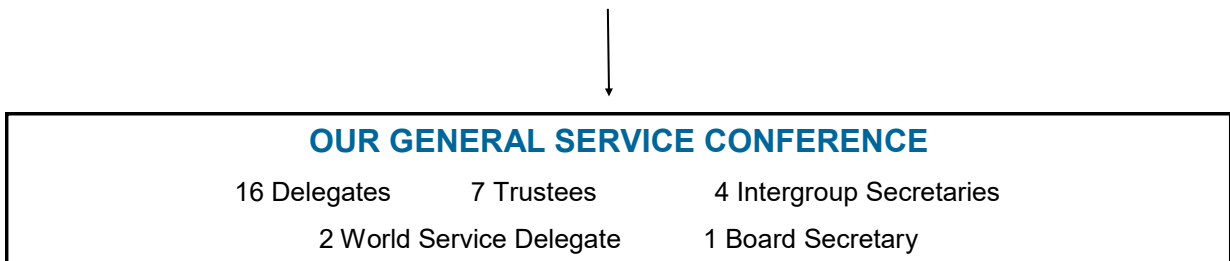
TWO GSR's FROM EACH GROUP FORM AREA COMMITTEE



FOUR MEMBERS FROM EACH AREA COMMITTEE FORM PROVINCIAL INTERGROUP COMMITTEES



FOUR DELEGATES FROM EACH PROVINCIAL INTERGROUP TO GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE



All Ireland Convention 2020
Friday 17th to Sunday 19th April 2020
Bloomfield House Hotel, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath

See our website www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie
for a full list of forthcoming events in Ireland and abroad.