



TRADITION

1



*First
Thought
Wrong
Group*

A co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous tells how members recover and how the society functions.

TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
WORLD SERVICES, INC.

From the Foreword of the 12 & 12:

“A.A.’s Twelve Traditions apply to the life of the Fellowship itself. They outline the means by which A.A. maintains its unity and relates itself to the world about it, the way it lives and grows.”



My sponsor taught me...

“If you wanna learn how to be in a healthy and loving relationship with a Higher Power and yourself - **take the Steps.** If you wanna learn how to be in a healthy and loving relationship with those around you - **study and practice the Traditions.**”

- *Chris D., Oakton, VA*

In A.A. / At Home / At Work



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Short Form:

“Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.”

Long Form:

“Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.”



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Overriding Idea of T1:

“We Before Me”

Spiritual Principle:

“UNITY”

SUMMARY

WE BEFORE ME

Unity begins with an individual. Having unity within oneself and with one's Higher Power is vital to expressing unity in any other relationship. When one is following the guidance and will of a Higher Power, inner balance is achieved and then the ability to participate in a healthy relationship is greatly improved. Thus the relationship's unity is best serviced by each individual's unity with a Higher Power.

The Twelve Steps produce recovery and enable us to match calamity with serenity without taking the first drink. Recovery is the restoration of our relationship with God through sobriety. Our happiness, though, is incomplete unless we expand our loving relationship with God to our relationships with each other.



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SUMMARY

The Traditions show us how to love each other. The principles of the group apply to the individual. Through working the principles of the traditions we carry out the steps in the world.

We live in the solution, not the problem. We are united with each other in love. When we love, we want to serve.

The concepts of service then show us how to love each other through being of service to the world. Hence, A.A. has the three-word motto, "Recovery-Unity-Service", based on the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of Service.



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THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Bill W.'s
Grapevine Writings

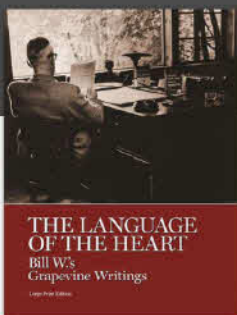
Large Print Edition

LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition One December 1947

"Our whole AA program is securely founded on the principle of humility—that is to say, perspective. Which implies, among other things, that we relate ourselves rightly to God and to our fellows; that we each see ourselves as we really are—"a small part of a great whole." Seeing our fellows thus, we shall enjoy group harmony.

That is why AA Tradition can confidently state, "Our common welfare comes first. "Does this mean," some will ask, "that in AA the individual doesn't count too much? Is he to be swallowed up, dominated by the group?"



LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

No, it doesn't seem to work out that way. Perhaps there is no society on earth more solicitous of personal welfare, more careful to grant the individual the greatest possible liberty of belief and action. Alcoholics Anonymous has no "musts." Few AA groups impose penalties on anyone for nonconformity.

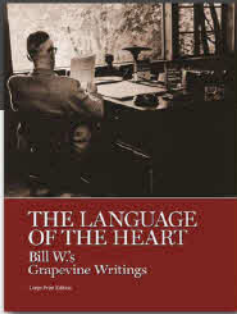
We do suggest, but we don't discipline. Instead, compliance or noncompliance with any principle of AA is a matter for the conscience of the individual; he is the judge of his own conduct. Those words of old time, "judge not," we observe most literally.

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LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

But, some will argue, if AA has no authority to govern its individual members or groups, how shall it ever be sure that the common welfare does come first?

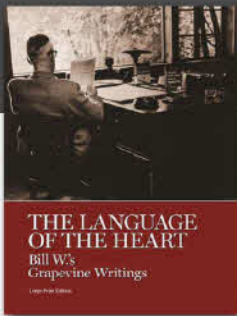
How is it possible to be governed without a government? If everyone can do as he pleases, how can you have aught but anarchy?

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LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

The answer seems to be that we AAs cannot really do as we please, though there is no constituted human authority to restrain us. Actually, our common welfare is protected by powerful safeguards.

The moment any action seriously threatens the common welfare, group opinion mobilizes to remind us; our conscience begins to complain. If one persists, he may become so disturbed as to get drunk; alcohol gives him a beating.

Group opinion shows him that he is off the beam, his own conscience tells him that he is dead wrong, and, if he goes too far, Barleycorn brings him real conviction.

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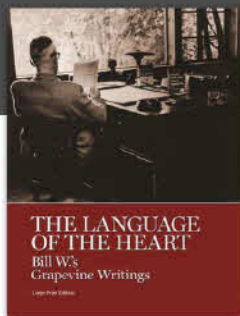


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LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

So it is we learn that in matters deeply affecting the group as a whole, “our common welfare comes first.” Rebellion ceases and cooperation begins because it must: we have disciplined ourselves.

Eventually, of course, we cooperate because we really wish to; we see that without substantial unity there can be no AA, and that without AA there can be little lasting recovery for anyone. We gladly set aside personal ambitions whenever these might harm AA. We humbly confess that we are but “a small part of a great whole.



Short Form:

“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.”

Long Form:

“For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.”

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TRADITION 2



*First
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Overriding Idea of T1:

“God Speaks Through His Kids”

Spiritual Principle:

“IDENTIFICATION”

SUMMARY

Life forces me to become an elder statesman or a bleeding deacon. The group conscience will correct me if I am out of line and I have a choice to complain like a bleeding deacon or lead by humble example like an elder statesman.

THANK GOD A.A. is SELF-CLEANING
(with God's help of course).



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TRADITION
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TRADITION

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Something to think about...

Elder Statesman vs. Bleeding Deacon

1. Looks for God in the Room
2. Talks Slow & Listens Fast
3. Embodies Humility
4. Leads by Example

1. Looks for Validation in the Room
2. Talks Fast & Listens Slow
3. Embodies Ego
4. Leads Through Intimidation





THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Bill W.'s
Grapevine Writings

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LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Two January 1948

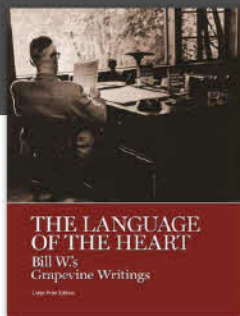
“Sooner or later, every AA comes to depend upon a Power greater than himself. He finds that the God of his understanding is not only a source of strength, but also a source of positive direction. Realizing that some fraction of that infinite resource is now available, his life takes on an entirely different complexion. He experiences a new inner security together with such a sense of destiny and purpose as he has never known before. As each day passes, our AA reviews his mistakes and vicissitudes. He learns from daily experience what his remaining character defects are and becomes ever more willing that they be removed. In this fashion he improves his conscious contact with God.



TRADITION 2



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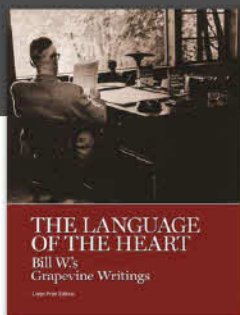
LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Every AA group follows this same cycle of development. We are coming to realize that each group, as well as each individual, is a special entity, not quite like any other. Though AA groups are basically the same, each group does have its own special atmosphere, its own peculiar state of development.

We believe that every AA group has a conscience. It is the collective conscience of its own membership. Daily experience informs and instructs this conscience.



TRADITION 2



LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

The group begins to recognize its own defects of character and, one by one, these are removed or lessened. As this process continues, the group becomes better able to receive right direction for its own affairs. Trial and error produces group experience, and out of corrected experience comes custom. When a customary way of doing things is definitely proved to be best, then that custom forms into AA Tradition. The Greater Power is then working through a clear group conscience.

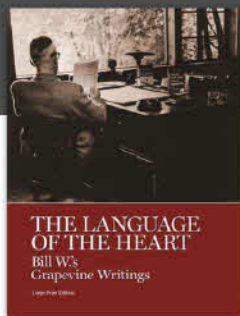
We humbly hope and believe that our growing AA Tradition will prove to be the will of God for us.



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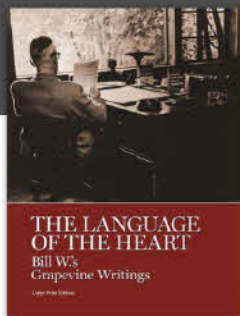
Many people are coming to think that Alcoholics Anonymous is, to some extent, a new form of human society. In our discussion of the First Tradition, it was emphasized that we have, in AA, no coercive human authority. Because each AA, of necessity, has a sensitive and responsive conscience, and because alcohol will discipline him severely if he backslides, we are finding we have little need for manmade rules or regulations. Despite the fact that we do veer off at times on tangents, we are becoming more able to depend absolutely on the long-term stability of the AA group itself. With respect to its own affairs, the collective conscience of the group will, given time, almost surely demonstrate its perfect dependability.



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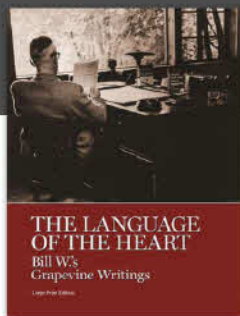
The group conscience will, in the end, prove a far more infallible guide for group affairs than the decision of any individual member, however good or wise he may be. This is a striking and almost unbelievable fact about Alcoholics Anonymous. Hence we can safely dispense with those exhortations and punishments seemingly so necessary to other societies. And we need not depend overmuch on inspired leaders. Because our active leadership of service can be truly rotating, we enjoy a kind of democracy rarely possible elsewhere. In this respect we may be, to a large degree, unique.



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LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Therefore we of Alcoholics Anonymous are certain that there is but one ultimate authority, "a loving God as he may express himself in our group conscience."