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TRADITION
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*First
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Short Form:

“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.”



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Long Form:

“Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. We think A.A. ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as A.A. members ought not be broadcast, filmed, or publicly printed. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.”



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Overriding Idea of This Tradition:

Attraction Rather Than Promotion

Spiritual Principle of This Tradition:

ATTRACTION

SUMMARY

Attraction Rather Than Promotion

Bill W. once said, “We had no public relations policy except for a fear of public relations. Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.”

Good public relations are A.A. lifelines reaching out to the fellow alcoholic who still does not know us. For years to come, our growth is sure to depend upon the strength and number of these lifelines.



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SUMMARY

Attraction Rather Than Promotion

Conversely, think about this. Should we identify ourselves by our first and last name when we speak at closed meetings of A.A? Does this violate the eleventh tradition? Of course not. We are only anonymous at the level of press, radio, and films. The press has not attended any closed meetings I have spoken at, so I am free to use my whole name. The final paragraph on page 37 of the pamphlet "Frequently Asked Questions About A.A." states: "It should also be noted that within A.A., at A.A. meetings and amongst themselves, A.A. members are not anonymous."



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THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Bill W.'s
Grapevine Writings

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LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Eleven October 1948

Providence has been looking after the public relations of Alcoholics Anonymous. It can scarcely have been otherwise. Though we are more than a dozen years old, hardly a syllable of criticism or ridicule has ever been spoken of AA.

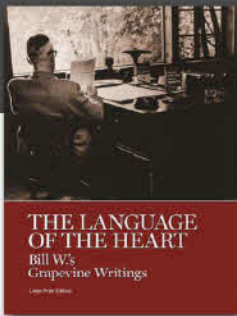
Somehow we have been spared all the pains of medical or religious controversy and we have good friends both wet and dry, right and left.



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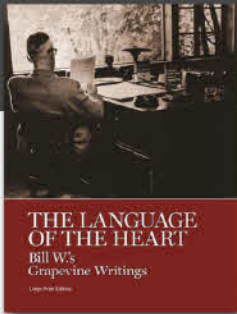
LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Eleven October 1948

Like most societies, we are sometimes scandalous—but never yet in public. From all over the world, naught comes but keen sympathy and downright admiration. Our friends of the press and radio have outdone themselves. Anyone can see that we are in a fair way to be spoiled. Our reputation is already so much better than our actual character!

Surely these phenomenal blessings must have a deep purpose. Who doubts that this purpose wishes to let every alcoholic in the world know that AA is truly for him, can he only want his liberation enough. Hence, our messages through public channels have never been seriously discolored, nor has the searing breath of prejudice ever issued from anywhere.

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Tradition Eleven October 1948

Good public relations are AA lifelines reaching out to the alcoholic who still does not know us. For years to come, our growth is sure to depend upon the strength and number of these lifelines. One serious public relations calamity could always turn thousands away from us to perish—a matter of life and death indeed!

The future poses no greater problem or challenge to AA than how best to preserve a friendly and vital relation to all the world about us. Success will rest heavily upon right principles, a wise vigilance, and the deepest personal responsibility on the part of every one of us. Nothing less will do. Else our brother may again turn his face to the wall because we did not care enough.

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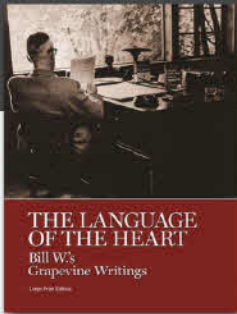


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Tradition Eleven October 1948

So the Eleventh Tradition stands sentinel over the lifelines, announcing that there is no need for self-praise, that it is better to let our friends recommend us, and that our whole public relations policy, contrary to usual customs, should be based upon the principle of attraction rather than promotion.

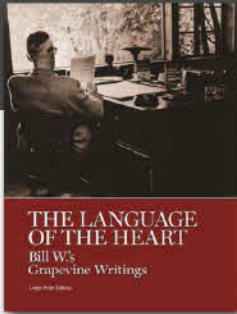
Shot-in-the-arm methods are not for us—no press agents, no promotional devices, no big names. The hazards are too great. Immediate results will always be illusive because easy shortcuts to notoriety can generate permanent and smothering liabilities.



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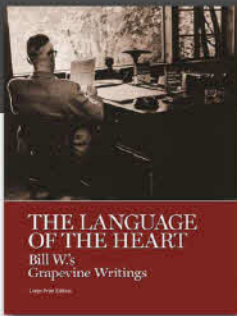


LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Eleven October 1948

More and more, therefore, are we emphasizing the principle of personal anonymity as it applies to our public relations. We ask of each other the highest degree of personal responsibility in this respect. As a movement we have been, before now, tempted to exploit the names of our well-known public characters.

We have rationalized that other societies, even the best, do the same. As individuals, we have sometimes believed that the public use of our names could demonstrate our personal courage in the face of stigma, so lending power and conviction to news stories and magazine articles.



LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Eleven October 1948

But these are not the allures they once were. Vividly, we are becoming aware that no member ought to describe himself in full view of the general public as an AA, even for the most worthy purpose, lest a perilous precedent be set which would tempt others to do likewise for purposes not so worthy.

We see that on breaking anonymity by press, radio, or pictures, any one of us could easily transfer the valuable name of Alcoholics Anonymous over onto any enterprise or into the midst of any controversy.

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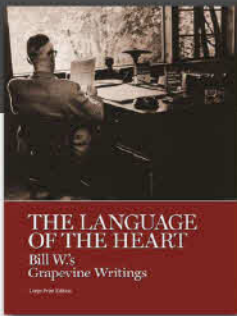
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Tradition Eleven October 1948

So it is becoming our code that there are things that no AA ever does, lest he divert AA from its sole purpose and injure our public relations. And thereby the chances of those sick ones yet to come.

To the million alcoholics who have not yet heard our AA story, we should ever say, "Greetings and welcome. Be assured that we shall never weaken the lifelines which we float out to you. In our public relations, we shall, God willing, keep the faith.

Core Message of Tradition 11

The core message of A.A.'s Tradition Eleven is about maintaining humility and protecting the Fellowship's integrity by avoiding personal promotion and public recognition.



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TRADITION 11



Why It Matters

A.A. grows through attraction, not promotion. The program's credibility comes from the changed lives of its members, not from flashy advertising, celebrity endorsements, or self-promotion. People are drawn to A.A. because they see recovery working—not because they're "sold" on it.

- **Anonymity preserves humility and unity.** By not identifying ourselves publicly as A.A. members, we protect both the individual and the Fellowship from the dangers of ego, controversy, and public failure. This ensures that A.A. remains about principles, not personalities.
- **Public relations, not publicity.** A.A. may inform the public about what it is and how it works, but it does so quietly and with dignity—sharing the message, not the messenger.

Attraction Rather Than Promotion - What Does it Really Mean?



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**At its heart, “attraction, not promotion”
means this: A.A. doesn’t sell itself.
It shows itself.**

(Recovery speaks loudest through example, not promotion—and humility is the shield that protects the Fellowship from pride and distortion.)

Attraction Rather Than Promotion - What Does it Really Mean?

Rather than advertising or convincing people to join, A.A. lets the changed lives of its members speak for themselves. The message isn't delivered through marketing tactics or persuasive speeches — it's carried through personal example: humility, serenity, and transformation.

People are drawn to A.A. not because of slogans, but because they see something in sober members that they want for themselves — peace, joy, freedom, and authenticity.



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What It Looks Like in Practice

- A.A. members don't recruit. There are no membership drives, sign-up tables, or "conversion efforts." If someone asks about A.A., they're welcomed — but never pressured.
- The program's power is shown, not sold. The beauty of recovery — sober living, spiritual growth, emotional balance — attracts others naturally.
- Personal humility replaces self-promotion. No one person is the "face" of A.A. We guard anonymity so that the focus stays on the message, not the messenger.



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Why It Matters Spiritually

This principle keeps A.A. grounded in humility and integrity. It says:

- Let God do the convincing through our example.
- Trust that genuine transformation draws people far better than self-promotion ever could.
- Remember that the messenger's ego can easily distort the message.

It's the difference between saying:

“You should join A.A.” and “Here's what A.A. did for me — and if you ever want that too, we're here.”

In Broader Terms

“Attraction, not promotion” isn’t just about A.A. — it’s a spiritual way of living.

It invites us to live so authentically that others see something beautiful and wonder where it came from. It’s evangelism without ego, service without self-seeking, and humility in motion.



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Tradition 11 in One Sentence

Tradition 11 reminds us that A.A. should be known by its message, not its members.

(Recovery speaks loudest through example, not promotion—and humility is the shield that protects the Fellowship from pride and distortion.)



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Short Form:

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



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Long Form:

“And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.”

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Overriding Idea of This Tradition:

Principles First – People Second

Spiritual Principle of This Tradition:

Principles B4 Personalities

SUMMARY

Principles First – People Second

Why are we repeatedly asked in the Traditions to give up ourselves for the greater good? The answer is because any relationship we have that does not involve sacrifice is a relationship that likely will not endure. Each tradition straightens out a disastrous attitude we had about relationships. The twelfth tradition teaches us that a spirit of sacrifice (often times through anonymity) is vital to good relationships.



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SUMMARY

Giving up the expectation of rewards for doing good is difficult for most of us. It's easy for us to give and then think, "Well, I'll get a reward, even if I don't get public recognition for what I did." To remove that reward symbol from the back of our minds for whatever good we do is part of practicing anonymity. The next time you hear a speaker in A.A. whose personality is exciting from the platform, see if you can hear the principles behind their words? To which step, tradition, or concept can you relate their pitch? Setting ourselves aside and focusing on the principles of our program is a crucial component in the foundation we need for studying the Traditions and learning how to be in healthier relationships with our fellow A.A.'s and with those in the world around us.



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THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Bill W.'s
Grapevine Writings

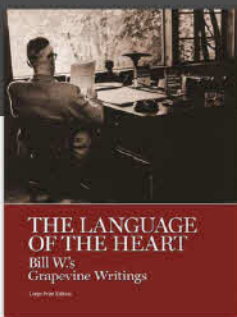
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LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Twelve November 1948

One may say that anonymity is the spiritual base, the sure key to all the rest of our Traditions. It has come to stand for prudence and, most importantly, for self-effacement. True consideration for the newcomer if he desires to be nameless; vital protection against misuse of the name Alcoholics Anonymous at the public level; and to each of us a constant reminder that principles come before personal interest—such is the wide scope of this all-embracing principle.

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LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Twelve November 1948

In it we see the cornerstone of our security as a movement; at a deeper spiritual level it points us to still greater self-renunciation.

A glance at the Twelve Traditions will instantly assure anyone that “giving up” is the essential idea of them all. In each Tradition, the individual or the group is asked to give up something for our general welfare. Tradition One asks us to place the common good ahead of personal desire. Tradition Two asks us to listen to God as he may speak in the group conscience. Tradition Three requires that we exclude no alcoholic from AA membership. Tradition Four implies that we abandon all idea of centralized human authority or government.

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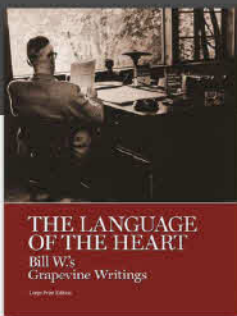
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LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Twelve November 1948

But each group is enjoined to consult widely in matters affecting us all. Tradition Five restricts the AA group to a single purpose, carrying our message to other alcoholics.

Tradition Six points at the corroding influence of money, property, and personal authority; it begs that we keep these influences at a minimum by separate incorporation and management of our special services. It also warns against the natural temptation to make alliances or give endorsements.

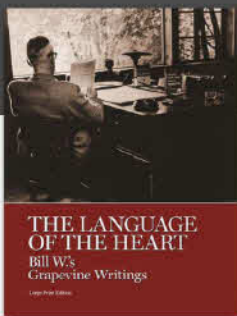


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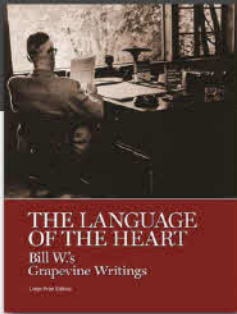
LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Twelve November 1948

Tradition Seven states that we had best pay our own bills; that large contributions or those carrying obligations ought not be received; that public solicitation using the name Alcoholics Anonymous is positively dangerous.

Tradition Eight forswears professionalizing our Twelfth Step work but it does guarantee our few paid service workers an unquestioned amateur status. Tradition Nine asks that we give up all idea of expensive organization; enough is needed to permit effective work by our special services—and no more.

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Tradition Twelve November 1948

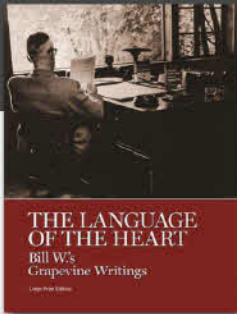
This Tradition breathes democracy; our leadership is one of service and it is rotating; our few titles never clothe their holders with arbitrary personal authority; they hold authorizations to serve, never to govern. Tradition Ten is an emphatic restraint of serious controversy; it implores each of us to take care against committing AA to the fires of reform, political or religious dissension.

Tradition Eleven asks, in our public relations, that we be alert against sensationalism and it declares there is never need to praise ourselves. Personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and film is urgently required, thus avoiding the pitfall of vanity, and the temptation through broken anonymity to link AA to other causes.

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Tradition Twelve November 1948

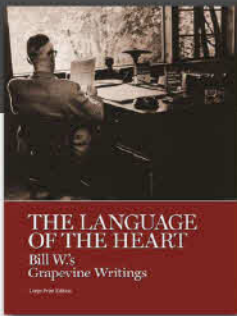
Tradition Twelve, in its mood of humble anonymity, plainly enough comprehends the preceding eleven. The Twelve Points of Tradition are little else than a specific application of the spirit of the Twelve Steps of recovery to our group life and to our relations with society in general.

The recovery steps would make each individual AA whole and one with God; the Twelve Points of Tradition would make us one with each other and whole with the world about us. Unity is our aim.

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LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Twelve November 1948

Our AA Traditions are, we trust, securely anchored in those wise precepts: charity, gratitude, and humility. Nor have we forgotten prudence.

May these virtues ever stand clear before us in our meditations; may Alcoholics Anonymous serve God in happy unison for so long as he may need us.

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Core Message of Tradition 12

Tradition Twelve teaches that humility is the spiritual foundation of A.A., expressed through our practice of anonymity. It reminds us that A.A. survives and thrives only when we place principles above personalities—when no member seeks personal credit, prestige, or power, and when we protect each other's privacy through confidentiality and respect. By keeping ego in check and focusing on the common welfare, Tradition Twelve preserves unity, safety, and equality within the Fellowship, ensuring that A.A. remains a place where anyone can recover without fear of judgment, gossip, or hero-worship.



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Why It Matters

Tradition Twelve matters because it protects the spiritual integrity, unity, and safety of Alcoholics Anonymous. By insisting that “Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities,” it keeps ego, ambition, conflict, and self-promotion from tearing the Fellowship apart.

Anonymity ensures that no member becomes the “face” of A.A., that no one claims personal authority over the program, and that sobriety is not used for status, prestige, or personal gain. It safeguards confidentiality, allowing members to speak honestly without fear of exposure or gossip.



TRADITION
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Why It Matters

It also reinforces humility—reminding us that we recover by practicing spiritual principles, not by elevating certain personalities.

Ultimately, Tradition Twelve matters because it preserves the equality of all A.A. members, protects the healing environment of meetings, and anchors the Fellowship to its primary purpose: helping alcoholics recover through love, service, and humility.



TRADITION
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TRADITION 12



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What It Looks Like in Practice

- **Keeping Ego Out of Service Work.** Members take commitments because they want to serve—not to be noticed, applauded, or admired. Chairs, GSRs, sponsors, and trusted servants do the work quietly and humbly, without using their position to control others or elevate themselves.
- **Confidentiality and Respect in Meetings.** What is shared in the room stays in the room. No gossip, no repeating someone's personal story, no talking about who was at a meeting, and no using someone's struggles as material elsewhere.



TRADITION 12



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What It Looks Like in Practice

- **No “Stars” or “Celebrities” in A.A.** Whether someone has 30 days or 30 years, whether they are a famous person or an everyday newcomer, they receive the same respect—and the same anonymity. Sobriety is never used for social advantage or career leverage.
- **Not Taking Others’ Inventories.** A Tradition Twelve mindset refuses to engage in criticism, character assassination, or personality judgments. Members focus on principles, not the flaws or quirks of the people practicing them.



TRADITION 12



What It Looks Like in Practice

- **Allowing Others to Be Human.** Members remember that everyone in A.A. is imperfect. When personalities clash, Tradition Twelve invites us to respond with patience, grace, and humility rather than anger or resentment.
- **Speaking for A.A. as a Whole With Humility.** If someone talks to the public or media, they do so anonymously—never as an “A.A. representative”—and always emphasizing the principles, not themselves.

What It Looks Like in Practice

- **Being Careful on Social Media.** Tradition Twelve in the digital age means not posting pictures from meetings, not naming other members, and respecting each person's anonymity online.
- **Avoiding Power Struggles.** In group decisions, members look for spiritual principles rather than trying to “win.” Humility, not dominance, is the goal.



TRADITION
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TRADITION 12



What It Looks Like in Practice

- **Treating Each Other With Kindness.** Tradition Twelve shows up in how we speak to one another—avoiding harshness, sarcasm, and ego-driven conflict. Love and tolerance guide the way.
- Tradition Twelve in practice often looks like the person who:
 - makes coffee every week
 - sets up chairs
 - answers the newcomer's call at midnight
 - sponsors quietly
 - shows up early and stays late
- They don't do it for recognition, but because service keeps them sober.



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What It Looks Like in Practice

In short:

Tradition Twelve in practice is humility made visible—through confidentiality, service, kindness, restraint of tongue, and keeping the focus on principles rather than personalities.





TRADITION 12



Why It Matters Spiritually

Tradition Twelve matters spiritually because it asks us to practice the kind of humility that opens the heart to grace. Anonymity is not just a privacy measure—it is a spiritual discipline that dissolves ego, pride, and the desire for special recognition.

When we stop seeking credit and stop elevating personalities (including our own), we create space for God to work through us. Tradition Twelve redirects our focus from self to spirit, from ambition to service, and from individual glory to collective healing.



TRADITION 12



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Why It Matters Spiritually

It teaches us that the power that keeps us sober does not come from any one person—it comes from spiritual principles lived out in community.

By choosing humility over ego, restraint over gossip, and love over judgment, we create the spiritual atmosphere where recovery becomes possible. In this way, Tradition Twelve protects not only the Fellowship, but the soul of each member who practices it—reminding us that the path to freedom is found in service, anonymity, and placing principles before personalities.