



HOW

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On the 11th Step...

"Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

Here, again, is reaffirmation of the freedom to worship according to one's own understanding of the spiritual, and it is the saving grace in a Step that otherwise might make many balk in the Plan of Recovery.

To pray and to meditate according to denominational and dogmatic definitions and restrictions would be extremely difficult for many, at least at the beginning of their efforts to rehabilitate themselves. For so long so many have been rejecting prayer and meditation and have had no consciousness of the spiritual in any respect. By the time anyone has come far enough along the road of alcoholism to want and need A.A., he usually has been out of touch with anything spiritual for a considerable time. For him suddenly to accept all that he has been rejecting would be nearly impossible.

Even where the individual has been "going to church" and perhaps even saying words in the name of prayer he usually has lost "conscious contact" with the Spiritual Power. He may still be "religious" yet not spiritual. He, too, has need of meditation and the improvement of his "conscious contact with God," *as he understands Him*, even if he returns to the church of his choice or, in fact, has never left it.

The principle of freedom embodied in the 11th Step opens the door to any individual seeking spiritual help by whatever path and through whatever concepts he himself prefers.

Fortunate, indeed, are those who have clung even to the mere framework of religion, and of a teaching with which they once agreed. Usually, though not always, theirs is a shorter journey back to the spiritual life.

But there are many who have saved no contact at all or who never had any in the beginning. For them in particular, the words "as we understood Him" are appealing. There is no dictation of teachings or concepts which they do not understand; no required acceptance of things they disbelieve.

Standing, then, on the privilege of exercising one's own understanding, we are invited to "improve our conscious contact with God" through prayer and meditation. Neither the prayer nor the meditation need be formal, or orthodox. The style or the stance are only the means, not the end, and how one reaches a "conscious contact with God" is not paramount, just so long as he does reach it. At least that is this writer's opinion.

Another way of expressing "conscious contact" might be "a working knowledge." It is an awareness or a feeling, and finally a conviction of the existence of the Higher Power and of It as a source of constant help. Once this conviction has been gained it is constant and the infinite help that it brings operates in the daily life. How to get that conviction is, of course, the cardinal question. But the answer is here in the 11th Step. Prayer and meditation yield the answer.

True, sometimes, the conscious contact is slow in developing. Yet, experience has proven for hundreds of members of A.A. that persistence in this direction, when combined with an open mind, inevitably produces that which is sought. The peace and the strength that are the rewards are infinitely worth whatever persistence is required.

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11 Eleven XI

STEP

**"Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God
as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us
and the power to carry that out."**

There is a direct linkage among self-examination, meditation and prayer. Taken separately, these practices can bring much relief and benefit. But when they are logically related and interwoven, the result is an unshakable foundation for life. Now and then we may be granted a glimpse of that ultimate reality which is God's kingdom. And we will be comforted and assured that our own destiny in that realm will be secure for so long as we try, however falteringly, to find and do the will of our own Creator.

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TRADITION

**"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."**

1. Do I sometimes promote AA so fanatically that I make it seem unattractive?
2. Am I always careful to keep the confidences reposed in me as an AA member?
3. Am I careful about throwing AA names around—even within the fellowship?
4. Am I ashamed of being a recovered, or recovering, alcoholic?
5. What would AA be like if we were not governed by the ideas in Tradition Eleven?
Where would I be?
6. Is my AA sobriety attractive enough that a sick drunk would want such a quality for himself?

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CONCEPT

While the Trustees hold final responsibility for A.A.'s world service administration, they should always have the assistance of the best possible standing committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Therefore the composition of these underlying committees and service boards, the personal qualifications of their members, the manner of their induction into service, the systems of their rotation, the way in which they are related to each other, the special rights and duties of our executives, staffs, and consultants, together with a proper basis for the financial compensation of these special workers, will always be matters for serious care and concern.

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TREATMENT: GROUP COMMITMENTS

ALCOHOPE

Meeting Open to AA Community
5925 37th St, Vero Beach, FL 32966
778-7215

CENTER FOR EMOTIONAL & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

CEBH - Meeting Closed to Public
1190 37th St, Vero Beach, FL 32960
563-4666

TUESDAYS

SATURDAYS

Midnight Oil	Nov 9	Barefoot Bay	Nov 13
New Awakening	Nov 16	Candlelight	Nov 20
Noontime Recovery	Nov 23	Discovery Women's	Nov 27
ODAAT	Nov 30	Early Risers	Dec 14
Royal Palm	Dec 7	Easy Does It	Dec 21
South Vero	Dec 14	Friday Young People	Dec 18
Candlelight	Dec 21	No Commitment	Dec 25
Early Risers	Dec 28	No Commitment	Jan 1
Easy Does It	Jan 4	Indian River Women	Jan 8
Free & Easy	Jan 11	King's Highway	Jan 15
Friday Young People	Jan 18	Midnight Oil	Jan 22
Indian River Men's	Jan 25	New Awakening	Jan 29

MONDAY

Indian River Thursday	Nov 8	Indian River Thursday	Dec 20
Indian River Women's	Nov 15	Indian River Women	Dec 27
Noontime Recovery	Nov 22	Noontime Recovery	Jan 3
Safe Harbor	Nov 29	Safe Harbor	Jan 10
South Vero	Dec 6	South Vero	Jan 17
Friday Young People	Dec 13	Friday Young People	Jan 24

Alchope and CEBH meetings are sponsored by the Treatment Committee of the Indian River Central Office of Alcoholics Anonymous and should be conducted in keeping with AA guidelines.

If your group would like to participate in the rotating commitment for carrying the AA message into these facilities, please contact the Treatment Committee Chair, Trish G., at 794-1972.

CEBH is a speaker/discussion meeting. Our format (as with Alchope) is for two people to go to the facility, a meeting leader and a speaker. Unlike Alchope, however, this is NOT a public meeting. A copy of the AA *Preamble* and *How It Works* are at the front desk. Please return them after the meeting. Once the leader opens the meeting in the usual way, the speaker will share his/her experience, strength and hope as it pertains to alcoholism., making sure to leave adequate time for questions and answers. The meeting is closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Group commitments are currently needed for the CEBH meeting on Mondays at 7PM.

NO FANFARE—NO FOOFARAW

Tradition 11—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 haven't made a good old-fashioned sweeping statement in a long time. I would like to make one now and say that nothing on earth could ever have promoted me out of drunkenness into sobriety. Not family, friends, or lovers. Not a jail, a mental institution, or a psychoanalyst. Not threats of violence, actual fistfights, or suicide attempts. There just never was enough reason or incentive in the sober life to win me over.

Never, that is, until I came to my first Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, in the summer of 1960.

I had my last drink in the fall of that year, and I owe my sobriety largely to the fact that AA members made sobriety very attractive. Subtly, without fanfare, they drew me into their midst. Never once did they pressure me or interrogate me. About the only questions I was ever asked in those days were whether I would like to help set up the meeting room and what meeting I was going to the next night. Or they might ask if I was feeling better. Come to think of it, aren't those the essentials in the AA way of life--service, fellowship (unity), and personal recovery?

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NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS



HAPPY AA BIRTHDAY!

To publish announcements of birthdays being celebrated by your Group's members each month, please bring list of names and numbers of years to Central Office and put in filing cabinet in folder labeled "HOW Editor," send via e-mail to *irhow@yahoo.com*, or use link from website at *indianriveraa.freemove.com*.

☆☆						
	BEACHSIDE BEGINNERS		BAREFOOT BAY		ODAAT	
★	Fred D.	12	Ben B.	1	<i>Celebrates Last Friday</i>	★
★	Boris G.	15	Teresa F.	5	Mike M.	3
★	Susan S.	18	Peter H.	17	Richard E.	5
★	Jim B.	22	Sue H.	17	Bob H.	17
★	Lise B.	23	Frank M.	24	Ivar M.	19
★			Ann L.	27	Carol Van B.	20
★			Ed V.	47	Jim B.	22
★	SOUTH VERO GROUP		INDIAN RIVER THURSDAY		John J.	29
★	<i>Celebrates Last Wednesday</i>		<i>Celebrates Last Thursday</i>		Chris E.	35
★	Shelley F.	1	Joel K.	5	Leo P.	36
★	Rhonda W.	2	Bob W.	10	<i>October:</i>	★
★	Bill D.	4			Lauren S.	1
★	Mike B.	5	MIDNIGHT OIL			★
★	Chuck F.	8	Tom S.	2	VERO 12 & 12	★
★	Doug C.	8			<i>Celebrates Last Thursday</i>	★
★	Doug C.	8			Mary S.	5
★	Honey M.	13	NOONTIME RECOVERY		Tom M.	11
★	Mary Z.	14	<i>Celebrates Last Friday</i>		Bill S.	20
★	Joe M.	25	Kevin F.	1		★
★	John M.	29	Darcene E.	3	ROYAL PALM GROUP	★
★			Noel W.	14	<i>Celebrates Last Monday</i>	★
★	INDIAN RIVER MEN'S		<i>October:</i>		Jim H.	7
★	Frank I.	4	Danielle M.	1	Pam C.	11
★	Jeff B.	8	Darlene L.	1	Bob S.	13
★	John K.	9	David C.	1	Bob S.	15
★	Kevin K.	12	Will H.	1	Rod M.	23
★	Bob B.	26	Ellen E.	6	George H.	31
★	<i>October:</i>		Elizabeth T.	9	Rollie R.	42
★	Richard C.	2	Jimmy C.	12		★
★	Roger B.	2	Terry K.	12		★
★	Al H.	14				★
★			INDIAN RIVER WOMEN'S			★
★	SURFSIDE		Kay H.	22		★
★	<i>Celebrates last Thursday</i>					★
★	Leo P.	36				★
★			I AM RESPONSIBLE			★
★	HIBISCUS MONDAY NIGHT		Bill E.	17		★
★	Bill G.	11				★
★	Boris G.	15	EASY DOES IT			★
★	Larry S.	15	Bill E.	17		★
★	Leo P.	36				★
★						★
☆☆						





Continued from page 3...

In the early days of AA, we were very much a secret society. Meetings were held in private homes and were hard to find. Our pioneers were understandably cautious, not only because of the stigma of alcoholism, but also because they did not know what kinds of people would seek them out. "Wrong" kinds, they feared, might ruin the fragile experiment.

In the AA film *Bill Discusses the Twelve Traditions*, our co-founder says of those early times that "if you posed the question of attraction versus promotion, the idea of attraction would be to sit on the front porch and wait for some drunks to come along asking for help."

As it turned out, the seeds of AA have been planted in many different ways. It was a psychiatrist who planted the seed in my imagining. Not only did he recommend AA, but he lent me a copy of the Big Book and put me in touch with a member who took me to my first meeting. It was a smooth, attractive action that he set in motion, and a desire for sobriety was kindled in me.

The power of example is perhaps the strongest attraction Alcoholics Anonymous has going for it. The public can hear how AA works and see it in action by attending any of our open meetings (in this area, three-speaker meetings). When I came in, open meetings were still being called the showcase of AA. Indeed, that was the original intention behind open speaker meetings. Non-AAs are specifically invited to the public information meeting, another source by which the public can view firsthand the attractions of sobriety. At this type of meeting, the AA talks may be followed by a question-and-answer session.

Speakers at those meetings at which the public is welcome usually honor the spirit of the Traditions by using only their first names. However, they are not in violation of Tradition Eleven if they choose to use their full names, since the meeting is not on radio, film, or TV. Reporters and all other non-AAs present are asked to respect our Tradition. The thrust of anonymity in Eleven is quite clearly a public relations policy.

Bill W., in a personal letter in 1961, said that although some principles in the Traditions are subject to interpretation, anonymity *at the public level* requires 100 percent compliance.

The question that faced me in the beginning had nothing to do with press, radio, or films. It was whether to tell my family and my boss. I blurted it out eventually and was fortunate to find acceptance with both. Many AAs think it a good idea to discuss the matter with their sponsors before disclosing their AA membership. As for the boss, he or she might not understand alcoholism, but it is a fact that business and industry do not argue with improved production.

As I understand it, the anonymity principle, as stated in this Tradition, was never intended as a concealment so that we AA members would not know one another. In my beginnings, however, my sense of shame could be assuaged only by the group's assurance that nobody--in or out of AA--would have to know my identity.

A part of the Tradition that still causes some argument is the meaning of "promotion." I have be-

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"Let us also remember to guard that erring member - the tongue, and if we must use it, let's use it with kindness and consideration and tolerance.

"And one more thing; none of us would be here today if somebody hadn't taken time to explain things to us, to give us a little pat on the back, to take us to a meeting or two, to have done numerous little kind and thoughtful acts in our behalf. So let us never get the degree of smug complacency so that we're not willing to extend or attempt to, that help which has been so beneficial to us, to our less fortunate brothers.

"Thank you very much."

Dr. Bob's brief remarks on Sunday, July 30, 1950, at the First International A.A. Convention, in Cleveland, Ohio.

He died at his Akron home the following November 16th on a Thursday.

At his side in addition to a private duty nurse were his son Bob, Jr., and daughter Susan.



Continued from page 6...

longed to AA groups where, periodically, a wave of discussion would rise questioning the extent to which the message was being carried into institutions. Some members contended that it was all right to go into those institutions where we already had meetings, but to take on any more institutions would constitute a promoting of AA. It was a confusion of terms and ideas and embodied the same fear felt by our pioneer members, that if we became *too* inclusive--if the AA message was shared with too many people--we would spread ourselves thin and run the risk of destroying ourselves from within.

The attractiveness of AA does not depend for its effectiveness upon members, geography, or climate. And the message is the same now as it was in the beginning. Whether it is given to a newcomer stumbling down the stairs of the local group, or to the newcomer caught up in the midst of a sprawling International Convention (see "Super Meeting," October 1980 Grapevine), it is the same, undiluted message for one person as it is for one million.

I had occasion to revamp my thinking about this Tradition in the summer of 1980 at our 45th Anniversary International Convention, in New Orleans. There we were, some 22,500 of us coming and going, with our badges that read Jim A., June B., or Bill H. The city was open to us; we went from hotel luncheon meetings to panel discussions at the Superdome, to the alkathons that ran day and night at hotels and civic centers, and back to the Superdome. The people of New Orleans were made aware every day through wide media coverage that the city was ours. Our badges meant only one thing: our AA membership.

I had to wrestle with the feeling that by wearing my badge on the street I was violating Traditions. So I asked myself: Was my picture, complete with badge, printed in the local paper or a national magazine? Did I appear, with my badge, on TV or videotape? Was I interviewed on radio, where I stated my full name and the fact of my AA membership? Those questions and others like them could be answered with only one word--no.

From a practical viewpoint, I should add that the heart of the city was deserted by many of its citizens over that holiday weekend. Of the New Orleans people I met, not one looked at my badge twice. Since I could easily have taken the badge off, I had to conclude that my problem was not with anonymity but rather with a resurgence of the old alcoholic guilt.

I have the Steps to help me deal with my feelings, but a thing I have to watch closely in myself is that I not use the anonymity Traditions (or any of the others) as weapons, and that I not parade them whenever I think I can impress a fellow AA. For instance, it takes no thinking at all for me to toss out an expression like "ought never be organized," "one ultimate authority," or "attraction rather than promotion."

It is equally improper of me to wave weapons at my non-AA friends. When I interject AA jargon and fragments of AA literature into my conversation with non-AAs, with no end in view other than self-promotion, I tend to do the very thing I want most not to do. I make a badge out of my anonymity. Non-AAs are not particularly interested in my way of life. They have their own ways of life.

Anonymity in this Tradition, as I understand it, applies only to "the level of press, radio, and films" and TV. In sharing with my fellow AAs, on the other hand, I don't want to withhold my identity--I want to celebrate it. Why not? Before AA, I had none. But I also want to be careful--exceptionally careful--to protect and cherish the anonymity of my fellow AAs who may be at different stages of recovery and may not yet feel the same way about openness.

Let us all put on badges of gratitude and celebrate the very real personal identities that stand firmly behind our public image of anonymity.



HOW



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PLACE
 STAMP
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