



## Twelve Concepts for NA Service

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### Introduction

Narcotics Anonymous, as a fellowship, is defined by its principles. Our Twelve Steps detail our program for personal recovery. Our Twelve Traditions relate experience that can help NA groups maintain their unity. And our Twelve Concepts are guiding principles for our service structure. The concepts summarize the hard-won experience of our fellowship's first forty years with such things as responsibility, authority, delegation, leadership, accountability, spiritual guidance, participation, communication, open-mindedness, fairness, and finances. The Twelve Concepts, together, help ensure that our fellowship's service structure remains forever devoted to *service, not government*.

The Twelve Concepts for NA Service are a relatively recent addition to our fellowship's body of guiding principles. Since NA's inception in the early 1950s, we have used the Twelve Steps as guidance in our personal recovery and the Twelve Traditions to steer our groups. The traditions empower the groups to create a service structure, directly responsible to them. The traditions also offer fundamental ideals to guide all our collective efforts. Our common welfare and unity, the ultimate authority of a loving God, leadership as service instead of government, group autonomy, our fellowship's primary purpose, cooperation without affiliation, self-support, the employment of special workers, attraction rather than promotion, public anonymity—without a doubt, the principles of our Twelve Traditions offer guidance for everything we do as a fellowship. Yet the Twelve Traditions themselves were designed especially to guide the NA *groups*; they were never intended to provide our *service structure* with the specific direction it needs to serve by. The Twelve Concepts for NA Service were created to meet that need.

Beginning with Concept One, they describe the creation of the service structure by the groups, the groups' final responsibility and authority for NA services, and the practical authority delegated by the groups to our fellowship's boards and committees for the development and maintenance of services on behalf of NA as a whole. The concepts recognize that service authority must be delegated with care, highlighting the qualities to be considered in selecting responsible NA leaders and emphasizing the importance of regular, open communication throughout our service structure in maintaining service accountability. To minimize confusion in assigning, fulfilling, and answering for NA services, the concepts recommend that each service responsibility be clearly defined right from the start. In addressing the decision-making processes used in our services, the concepts recall our spiritual foundation as well as the practical and ethical wisdom of inclusiveness and open-mindedness. To guard against the misuse of delegated authority, individual trusted servants are provided with a grievance process. The responsible management of NA funds, often a sore spot in service discussions, is dealt with directly. And finally, just as the traditions conclude by summarizing all twelve in a single word, *anonymity*, so the Twelfth Concept offers a fundamental ideal that underlies all the concepts: "our structure should always be one of service, never of government."

Now, the Twelve Concepts for NA Service are *yours*, the NA Fellowship's. The concepts offer practical guidance for the conduct of our services, from the group all the way to world level. How "valid" are the Twelve Concepts? Your experience in applying them will determine their validity. They are *valid* only to the extent that they prove *helpful*. However, just as the steps

relate our collective experience in recovery, and the traditions our experience in group unity, the Twelve Concepts summarize a vast amount of experience in NA service, experience we would all do well to consider and apply wherever appropriate.

## **Twelve Concepts for NA Service**

The Twelve Traditions of NA have guided our groups well in the conduct of their individual affairs, and they are the foundation for NA services. They have steered us away from many pitfalls that could have meant our collapse. Our various service units *serve*, for example, they do not govern; we stay out of public debate; we neither endorse nor oppose any of the many causes that our members may feel strongly about; our approach to addiction is a non-professional one; we are fully self-supporting. The traditions have provided our fellowship with essential guidance throughout its development, and they continue to be indispensable.

The Twelve Concepts for NA Service described here are intended to be practically applied to our service structure at every level. The spiritual ideals of our steps and traditions provide the basis for these concepts, which are tailored to the specific needs of our fellowship's service structure. The concepts encourage our groups to more readily achieve our traditions' ideals, and our service structure to function effectively and responsibly.

These concepts have been crafted from our experience. They are not intended to be taken as the "law" for NA service, but simply as guiding principles. We find that our services are stabilized when we conscientiously apply these concepts, much as our steps have stabilized our lives and our traditions have stabilized and unified our groups. The Twelve Concepts guide our services and help ensure that the message of Narcotics Anonymous is available to all addicts who have a desire to stop using and begin practicing our way of life.

1. To fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose, the NA groups have joined together to create a structure which develops, coordinates, and maintains services on behalf of NA as a whole.
2. The final responsibility and authority for NA services rests with the NA groups.
3. The NA groups delegate to the service structure the authority necessary to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to it.
4. Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.
5. For each responsibility assigned to the service structure, a single point of decision and accountability should be clearly defined.
6. Group conscience is the spiritual means by which we invite a loving God to influence our decisions.
7. All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body's decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in its decision-making processes.
8. Our service structure depends on the integrity and effectiveness of our communications.
9. All elements of our service structure have the responsibility to carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.
10. Any member of a service body can petition that body for the redress of a personal grievance, without fear of reprisal.
11. NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly.
12. In keeping with the spiritual nature of Narcotics Anonymous, our structure should always be one of service, never of government.

## **First Concept**

*To fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose, the NA groups have joined together to create a structure which develops, coordinates, and maintains services on behalf of NA as a whole.*

Our fellowship's primary purpose is to carry the message "that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live." One of the primary means by which that message is carried, addict to addict, is in our meetings. These recovery meetings, conducted thousands of times each day by NA groups around the world, are the most important service offered by our fellowship.

However, while recovery meetings are NA's most important service, they are not the only means we have of fulfilling our fellowship's primary purpose. Other NA services attract the still-suffering addict to our meetings, carry our message to addicts in institutions, make recovery literature available, and provide opportunities for groups to share their experience with one another. No one of these services, by itself, comes close to matching the value of group recovery meetings in carrying our message; each, however, plays its own indispensable part in the overall program devised by the NA Fellowship to fulfill its primary purpose.

We can do together what we cannot accomplish separately. This is true in our personal recovery, and is equally true in our services. In new NA communities, groups often perform basic services in addition to their meetings. But fulfillment of the full range of NA services—phonelines, H&I panels, public information work, outreach, and the rest—usually requires more people and more money than a single group can muster on its own. The degree of organization necessary to carry out such responsibilities would divert most groups from carrying the NA message in their meetings. And the lack of coordination among groups delivering various services on their own could result in duplication, confusion, and wasted resources. For these reasons, most groups do not take such responsibilities on themselves.

How, then, can NA's groups ensure the fulfillment of these services? They do so by combining their resources, joining together to create a structure which develops, coordinates, and maintains those services for them, leaving the groups free to carry out their own primary responsibility.

## **Second Concept**

*The final responsibility and authority for NA services rests with the NA groups.*

The NA service structure has been created by the groups to serve the common needs of the groups. Our fellowship's service boards and committees exist to help groups share their experience with one another, provide tools which help groups function better, attract new members to group recovery meetings, and carry the NA message further than any single group could carry it alone. Because the groups have created the service structure, they have final authority over all its affairs. By the same token, the groups also have the final responsibility for the support of all its activities. The two go hand in hand.

Ideally, responsibility and authority are flip sides of the same coin; the exercise of one is also an exercise of the other. When our groups provide the resources—conscience and ideas, people, money—needed to fulfill NA services, they also provide direction to the service structure. Let's take a look at a few examples of how this principle works.

The most important resource contributed to the service structure by an NA group is almost exclusively spiritual: its ideas and its conscience. Without the voice of the groups, the service structure may not know what kinds of services are needed, or whether the services it provides are ones the groups want. The groups provide the ideas and direction needed to guide the service structure in fulfilling its responsibilities. By voicing their needs and concerns, the groups also exercise their authority for the service structure they have created.

The people who give their time to service work are a vital resource; without them, our service boards and committees would not exist, much less be able to serve. The group's responsibility to the service structure is to elect a group service representative who will serve the best interests of the group and the entire NA Fellowship. By carefully selecting its GSR, then providing that person with regular support and guidance, the group exercises its ability to impact NA services, both directly and indirectly. In choosing a qualified GSR, then sending him or her out to serve on the group's behalf, the group fulfills a large part of both its responsibility and authority for NA services.

Money is required to fulfill NA services. Without it, our phonedlines would be closed down, our meeting lists would not be printed, there would be no NA literature to distribute, our H&I panels would go without pamphlets, and our public information workers would be unable to provide printed materials about our fellowship to the community. In the Eleventh Concept, more will be said of the use of money in fulfilling our primary purpose. The message of the Second Concept in regard to money, however, is simple: Since the groups have created the service structure to perform certain tasks, the groups are also responsible to provide the necessary funds.

So far, we've looked at what the Second Concept says to the NA group. This concept also speaks to the service structure. The groups have, directly or indirectly, created every one of our service boards and committees. The NA groups have, directly or indirectly, provided the resources used by those service boards and committees. The groups have established the service structure as a medium through which, together, they can better fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose. Therefore, in all the affairs of all its elements, the service structure must carefully consider the needs and desires of the groups. The Second Concept can be seen as the groups' way of saying to the NA service structure, "Be responsible with the spiritual, personal, and financial resources we have provided you. Seek our advice; do not ignore our direction."

The NA groups bear the final authority in all our fellowship's service affairs, and should be routinely consulted in all matters directly affecting them. For example, proposals to change NA's Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, name, nature, or purpose should be approved directly by the groups. Conversely, if something goes wrong in the service structure, NA groups are responsible to take constructive steps to help correct the problem. Our experience shows that radical action, taken in haste, serves neither the groups nor our services well. Since change rarely occurs overnight, patience and acceptance may be called for. Nonetheless, the exercise of final authority for NA services, a vital part of the system of service established by our fellowship, is both the right and the responsibility of the groups.

### **Third Concept**

*The NA groups delegate to the service structure the authority necessary to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to it.*

The NA groups maintain final responsibility and authority for the service structure they have created. Yet if they must involve themselves directly in making decisions for all of our service boards and committees, the groups will have little time or energy left to carry the recovery message in their meetings. For this reason, the groups entrust the service structure with the authority to make necessary decisions in carrying out the tasks assigned to it.

The delegation of authority can do much to free up both our groups and our services. Service decisions not directly affecting the groups can be made expeditiously; our phonedlines, H&I panels, public information efforts, and literature development projects can move forward at full speed to serve NA's primary purpose. And our groups, not required to ratify every decision made on their behalf at every level of service, are freed to devote their full attention to carrying the NA message in their meetings.

We often use motions and guidelines to help us apply the Third Concept. We clearly describe each task we want accomplished, and the kind of authority we are delegating to those who will fulfill the task. However, even the most exhaustive set of guidelines cannot account for every eventuality. Our trusted servants will serve us best when we grant them the freedom to exercise their best judgment in fulfilling the responsibilities we've assigned them. Our services must remain directly accountable to those they serve, yet they must also be given a reasonable degree of discretion in fulfilling their duties. A group, service board, or committee should consult its collective conscience in arriving at its own understanding of the best way to apply this concept.

Sometimes we fear that delegation will mean a loss of control over our services. Together, Concepts One, Two, and Three have been designed to help us maintain responsibility for our service structure without tying our trusted servants' hands. The Third Concept encourages our groups to focus on their own responsibilities, while assuring that the service structure is given the authority it needs to fulfill other necessary NA services. Our Twelve Concepts do not ask our groups to abdicate their authority, allowing the service structure to do whatever it pleases. The groups, after all, have established the service structure to act on their behalf, at their direction. And when the groups need to exercise final authority in service matters, they are encouraged to do so. However, in day-to-day matters, the groups have given our service boards and committees the practical authority necessary to do the jobs assigned them.

Delegating authority can be a risky business unless we do so responsibly. To make Concept Three work, other concepts must also be applied consistently. Most importantly, we must give careful attention to the selection of trustworthy trusted servants. We cannot responsibly delegate authority either to those who are fundamentally incapable of administering that authority or to those who are not willing to account fully for their actions. However, if we select our leaders carefully, choosing those who can be trusted to responsibly exercise delegated authority in fulfilling the tasks we've given them, we can feel much more comfortable with the concept of delegation.

When we give our trusted servants a job, we must adequately describe to them the job we want done, and we must provide them with the support they need to complete their job. Then, once we've given them instructions and support, we must delegate to them the authority necessary to make decisions related to the task they've been assigned. When our groups delegate sufficient authority to our service structure, our groups need not be overcome with the demands of making every service decision at every level of service, and our fellowship's primary purpose can be served to the fullest. With the Third Concept squarely in place, our groups are free to conduct recovery meetings and carry the NA message directly to the addict who still suffers, confident that the service structure they have created has the authority it needs to make the decisions involved in fulfilling its responsibilities.

## **Fourth Concept**

*Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.*

The trust necessary to confidently delegate service authority is founded on the careful selection of trusted servants. In the following paragraphs, we highlight a number of the qualities to be considered when choosing our trusted servants. No leader will exemplify all these qualities; they are the ideals of effective leadership to which every trusted servant aspires. The more we consider these qualities when selecting NA leaders, the better our services will be.

Personal background and professional or educational qualifications, though helpful, do not necessarily make for effective leadership. When selecting trusted servants, after all, it is the whole person we trust, not just their skills. And one of the first things we look for when selecting trusted servants is humility. Being asked to lead, to serve, to accept responsibility, is a humbling experience for a recovering addict. Through continuing to work the Twelve Steps,

our trusted servants have come to know not only their assets but their defects and their limitations. Knowing that, they have agreed to serve our fellowship to the best of their ability, with God's help. Good NA leaders do not think they have to do everything themselves; they ask for help, advice, and direction on a regular basis. Our fellowship's leaders ought not be dictators or order-givers; they are our servants. Able leadership in the spirit of service does not drive by arrogant mandate, demanding conformity; it leads by example, inviting respect. And nothing invites us to respect our trusted servants more than clear evidence of their humility.

Capable NA leadership exhibits the full range of personal characteristics associated with a spiritual awakening. We depend on those who serve us to report on their activities completely and truthfully. Our leaders must have the integrity needed to hear others well, yet still be able to stand fast on sound principle; to compromise, and to disagree without being disagreeable; to demonstrate the courage of their convictions, and to surrender. We seek trusted servants who are willing to expend their time and energy in the diligent service of others, studying available resource materials, consulting those with greater experience in their field of responsibility, and carefully fulfilling the tasks we've given them as completely as possible. Honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness, indispensable in recovery, are also essential to leadership.

Any NA member can be a leader, and every NA member has the right to serve the fellowship. Effective NA leadership knows not only how to serve, but when it will serve best to step aside and allow others to take over. An entrenched bureaucracy inhibits our fellowship's growth, while a regular influx of new leadership, balanced by continuity, inspires NA growth. The effective leader also knows that, in order to maintain the distinction in service between principles and personalities, it is important to observe the practice of rotation.

In some positions, trusted servants need specific skills in order to act as effective leaders. The ability to communicate well can help our trusted servants share information and ideas, both in committee work and in reporting to those they serve. Organizational skills help trusted servants keep small service responsibilities simple, and make straightforward even the fulfillment of complex tasks. Leaders capable of discerning where today's actions will take us, and of offering us the guidance we need to prepare for the demands of tomorrow, serve Narcotics Anonymous well. Certain educational, business, personal, and service experiences may suit a recovering addict more to one type of service commitment than another. We do ourselves, our fellowship, and our trusted servants a disservice when we ask our members to perform tasks they are incapable of fulfilling.

When we carefully consider the leadership qualities of those we ask to serve, we can confidently give them the room they need to exercise those qualities on our behalf. We can allow effective leaders freedom to serve, especially when they demonstrate their accountability to us, reporting regularly on their work and asking, when necessary, for additional direction. True, our leaders are but trusted servants, not governors; yet we also expect our trusted servants to lead us. If we select them carefully, we can confidently allow them to do so.

Effective leadership is highly valued in NA, and the Fourth Concept speaks of the qualities we should consider when selecting leaders for ourselves. However, we should remember that the fulfillment of many service responsibilities requires nothing more than the willingness to serve. Other responsibilities, while requiring certain specific skills, depend for their fulfillment far more heavily on the trusted servant's spiritual maturity and personal integrity. Willingness, spiritual depth, and trustworthiness are strong demonstrations of the kind of leadership valued most highly in Narcotics Anonymous.

We should also remember that NA's leaders are not only those we vote into office. Opportunities for selfless service arise wherever we turn in Narcotics Anonymous. NA members exercise personal leadership by helping clean up after a meeting, taking extra care to welcome newcomers to our fellowship, and in countless other ways. As recovering addicts, any of us can fulfill a leadership role, providing a sound example, by serving our fellowship. This

modest spirit of service to others forms the foundation of our Fourth Concept, and of NA leadership itself.

## **Fifth Concept**

*For each responsibility assigned to the service structure,  
a single point of decision and accountability should be clearly defined.*

The key to applying the Fifth Concept is in defining the task that needs to be done, and the easiest way to apply it is right from the start. When we first create a service task, we should consider what kind of authority we must delegate in order for that task to be accomplished, and what kind of accountability we should require of those to whom we are giving that task. Then, one particular trusted servant, service board, or committee should be designated as the single point of decision and accountability for that assignment. This simple principle applies to all the services provided in Narcotics Anonymous, from the group to our world services.

When we decide a certain service task should be done, and clearly say which trusted servant, service board, or committee has the authority to accomplish the task, we avoid unnecessary confusion. We don't have two committees trying to do the same job, duplicating efforts or squabbling over authority. Project reports come straight from the single point of decision for the project, offering the best information available. An assigned service responsibility can be fulfilled swiftly and directly, because there is no question of whose responsibility it is. And if problems in a project arise, we know exactly where to go in order to correct them. We do well when we clearly specify to whom authority is being given for each service responsibility.

The single point of decision we define for each service responsibility is also a single point of accountability. As we've already seen in the Fourth Concept, and as we shall see further in Concept Eight, accountability is a central feature of the NA way of service. When we give our trusted servants responsibility for a particular service task, we hold them accountable for the authority we've delegated them. We expect them to remain accessible, consistently providing us with reports of their progress and consulting with us about their responsibilities.

*Accountability* does not mean that we delegate authority only to take it right back. It simply means that we want to be informed of decisions our trusted servants are considering as they go about the tasks we've assigned them. We want to have the opportunity to impact those decisions, especially if they directly affect us. And we want to be kept up-to-date on each responsibility we've assigned to the service structure so that, if something goes wrong, we can take part in making it right.

The Fifth Concept helps us responsibly delegate our authority for NA services. In exercising the Fifth Concept, we make a simple, straightforward contract with our trusted servants. Right from the start, they know what we are asking of them, what decisions they are expected to make themselves, and to what degree we will hold them accountable for the service work they do on our behalf. Exercise of Concept Five is not a task to be taken lightly. It calls for us to carefully consider the service work we want done; to clearly designate who should do that work; to delegate the authority to do it; and to maintain accountability for those duties. It takes effort to conscientiously apply Concept Five, but the results are worth the effort.

## **Sixth Concept**

*Group conscience is the spiritual means by which we invite  
a loving God to influence our decisions.*

Conscience is an essentially spiritual faculty. It is our innate sense of right and wrong, an internal compass that each of us may consult in our personal reflections about the best course to take. Our Basic Text refers to conscience as one of those "higher mental and emotional functions" which was "sharply affected by our use of drugs." By applying our steps, we seek to

revive it and learn how to exercise it. As we steadily apply spiritual principles in our lives, our decisions and actions increasingly become less motivated by self-interest, and more motivated by what our conscience tells us is good and right.

When addicts whose individual consciences have been awakened in the course of working the steps come together to consider service-related questions, either in their NA group or in a service committee meeting, they are prepared to take part in the development of a group conscience. The exercise of group conscience is the act by which our members bring the spiritual awakening of our Twelve Steps directly to bear in resolving issues affecting NA. As such, it is a subject which must command our most intent consideration.

The development of a group conscience is an indispensable part of the decision-making process in Narcotics Anonymous; however, group conscience is not *itself* a decision-making mechanism. To clarify the difference between the two, let's look at our personal lives. People living spiritually oriented lives usually pray and meditate before making major decisions. First, we look to our source of spiritual strength and wisdom; then, we look forward and chart our course. If we automatically claim that God has guided us every time we make a decision, whether or not we've actually invited God to influence us prior to making that decision, we fool only ourselves. The same applies to group conscience and collective decision making.

Developing a collective conscience provides us with the spiritual guidance we need for making service decisions. We pray or meditate together, we share with one another, we consider our traditions, and we seek direction from a Higher Power. Our groups, service boards, and committees often use the vote as a rough tool for translating that spiritual guidance into clear, decisive terms. Sometimes, however, no vote is needed; following thoughtful, attentive discussion, it is perfectly apparent what our collective conscience would have us do in a given service situation. Just as we seek the strongest possible spiritual unity in Narcotics Anonymous, so in our decision making we seek unanimity, not merely a majority vote. The more care we take in our considerations, the more likely we are to arrive at unanimity, and no vote will be needed to help us translate our group conscience into a collective decision.

When making specific service decisions, voting or consensus may be the measure of our group conscience. However, group conscience can be seen in all our fellowship's affairs, not merely in our decision-making process. The group inventory process is a good example of this. When members of an NA group gather together to examine their group's effectiveness in fulfilling its primary purpose, they each consult their own conscience concerning their individual role in the life of the group. They consider the concerns of the group as a whole in the same light. Such a group inventory session might produce no specific service decisions whatsoever. It will, however, produce among group members a heightened spiritual sensitivity, both to the needs of the still-suffering addict and to the needs of fellow group members.

Another example of group conscience being developed without producing a service-related decision, one each of us can identify with, can be found every day of the week in our recovery meetings. Many are the times when we go to an NA meeting with a personal problem, seeking comfort, support, and guidance in the experience of other recovering addicts. Our members, each with their individual personalities, backgrounds, and needs, speak to one another—and to us—of the spiritual awakening they've found in applying the Twelve Steps in their lives. From the diversity of the group a common message arises, a message we can apply to our own lives: the message of recovery. In this message we find "the therapeutic value of one addict helping another." We also find in this message the group conscience, applied not to a service issue but to our own spiritual growth.

Group conscience is the means by which we collectively invite the ongoing guidance of a Higher Power in making decisions. We apply the Sixth Concept when we pursue our own personal recovery with vigor, seeking that ongoing spiritual awakening which makes it possible for us to apply the principles of the program in all our affairs, including our service affairs. We apply the Sixth Concept when we listen not just to the words our fellow members speak, but to



the spirit behind their words. We apply the Sixth Concept when we seek to do God's will, not our own, and to serve others, not ourselves, in our service decisions. We apply the Sixth Concept in our groups, service boards, and committees when we invite a loving God to influence us before making service-related decisions.

## **Seventh Concept**

*All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body's decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in its decision-making processes.*

The Seventh Concept is one way of putting the principle of group conscience to work in the service environment. This concept suggests that each service body should encourage all its members to participate in its decision-making process. By bringing their different perspectives together, we give our service bodies the opportunity to develop a fully informed, balanced group conscience leading to sound, sensitive service decisions.

Our service boards and committees represent a cross-section of NA perspective and experience. Each participant's contribution to the decision-making process is important. Determining participation at the group level is fairly simple: if you're a group member, you may fully participate in the group's decision-making process. Determining participation in the decision-making processes of most service boards and committees is a little more involved, yet the same basic principles still apply. Freely expressed individual conscience is the essential element in group conscience at any level.

NA service is a team effort. Our service representatives are responsible to the NA Fellowship as a whole rather than any special constituency; so are all the other trusted servants on the team. The full participation of each member of the team is of great value as we seek to express the collective conscience of the whole.

There is no firm rule about how to apply the concept of participation to every situation. In an atmosphere of love, mutual respect, and frank, open discussion, each service body decides these things for itself. In significant matters affecting the groups, a service body will want to ask for guidance directly from the groups. In the vast majority of cases, however, the service body will exercise its delegated authority in fulfilling the responsibilities the groups have assigned to it, disposing of the matters in the normal course of its service meetings.

NA's principle of spiritual anonymity is the foundation for the Seventh Concept. This principle points our fellowship toward a leveling of the individual's relative importance as a participant in NA service. The Seventh Concept, with its emphasis on equalizing the relative weight of each voice on the team, puts the spiritual principle of anonymity into practice. Though we may not all participate in every decision made in our fellowship, we all have the right to participate fully and equally in the decision-making processes in the service bodies in which we are members.

## **Eighth Concept**

*Our service structure depends on the integrity and effectiveness of our communications.*

Our fellowship's service structure is founded on the unity of our groups; to maintain that union, we must have regular communications throughout Narcotics Anonymous. Together, our groups have created a service structure to meet their common needs and to help them fulfill their common purpose. The effectiveness of the service structure depends on the continued unity of the NA groups, and on their continued support and direction. These things can only be maintained in an atmosphere of honest, open, and straightforward communication among all parties concerned.

Regular communication plays a large part in the fulfillment of our groups' final responsibility and authority for NA services. Through their GSRs, the groups regularly report their strengths, needs, ideas, and conscience to the service structure. Taken together, these group reports give our service boards and committees clear guidance in their efforts to serve NA as a whole. When the groups are regularly given full and accurate information from all elements of the service structure, they become familiar with the structure's normal patterns of activity. The groups are then able to recognize when something goes wrong with one of our service boards and committees, and are in a better position to know how to help correct the problem. And, knowing what kinds of resources are needed to fulfill service tasks, our groups are also more likely to provide the service structure with adequate support.

Clear, frequent two-way communication is an important prerequisite for delegation. When our groups ask the service structure to fulfill certain responsibilities on our behalf, we delegate to the structure the authority needed to make decisions related to those responsibilities. We need to be able to trust our trusted servants before we can confidently delegate them that degree of authority. That kind of trust depends in large part on continuing communication. So long as our service boards and committees regularly issue complete, candid reports of their activities, we can be confident that we have delegated our authority wisely.

Open and frank communication is a critical ingredient of effective leadership. To better know the ideas, wishes, needs, and conscience of those they serve, trusted servants must listen carefully to their fellowship. To give the NA groups the information they need to guide and support our services, NA leaders regularly distribute full, unequivocal reports. We do not want our trusted servants to constantly inundate us with every fact and figure possible, though we do expect them to provide us with complete information on all their activities and discussions if we ask for it. In communicating with those they serve, trusted servants demonstrate an open attitude, one that is inclusive, inviting, and clearly influenceable. Such openness and forthrightness may be uncomfortable, but is essential in maintaining the integrity of our services.

Finally, full and frequent communication is essential in the development of group conscience, the spiritual means by which we invite the influence of a loving God in making our collective decisions. To develop group conscience, communications must be honest and direct. Without the full picture, seen from all sides, our groups, service boards, and committees cannot develop an informed group conscience. When we gather together to consider service issues, we openly share ideas and information with one another, frankly speaking our minds and hearts on the matter at hand. We listen closely to one another, considering carefully the information and insights we've heard; we consult our individual consciences on the matter; then, we make a decision. A conscience fed on ignorance is an ineffective conscience, incapable of providing reliable guidance. An effective conscience can develop only in an atmosphere of regular, open communication among all parties concerned.

The purpose of our services is to help our fellowship fulfill its primary purpose: to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. Honest, open, straightforward communication is essential to both the integrity and the effectiveness of the NA service structure. Unity, group responsibility and authority, delegation, leadership, accountability, group conscience, participation—all depend on good communication among the various elements of the NA Fellowship. With regular two-way communication, our groups and our services are well positioned to uphold the ideals and fulfill the responsibilities described in our Twelve Concepts.

## **Ninth Concept**

*All elements of our service structure have the responsibility to carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.*

It's easy to discuss things with those who agree with us. But in recovery we've learned that our own best thinking may not necessarily offer us the best possible guidance. We have been taught that, before making significant decisions, we should check our judgment against the ideas of others. Our experience has shown us that the ideas of those who disagree with us are often the ones we need most to hear. The Ninth Concept puts this aspect of our recovery experience to work in the service environment. When making a decision, our groups, service boards, and committees should actively seek out all available viewpoints.

An effective group conscience is a fully informed group conscience. The Ninth Concept is one tool we use to help ensure that our group conscience is as well-informed as it can possibly be. In any discussion, it is tempting to ignore dissenting members, especially if the vast majority of members think alike. Yet it is often the lone voice, offering new information or a unique perspective on things, that saves us from hasty or misinformed decisions. In Narcotics Anonymous, we are encouraged to respect that lone voice, to protect it, even to seek it out, for without it our service decisions would undoubtedly suffer.

Concept Nine also encourages us, individually, to frankly speak our minds in discussions of service issues, even when most other members think differently. No, this concept is not telling us to become perpetual nay-sayers, objecting to anything agreed to by the majority. It does say, however, that we are responsible to share our thoughts and our conscience with our fellow members, carefully explaining our position and listening with equal care to the positions of others. When we show the courage necessary to speak our mind, while also showing respect for one another, we can be confident that we act in the best interests of the NA Fellowship. By insisting on thorough discussion of important issues, the worst we can do is take a little of each other's time; at best, we protect the fellowship from the consequences of a hasty or misinformed decision.

When a service body is in the process of making a decision, the Ninth Concept can be exercised in a variety of ways. If you are a member of that service body, all you need do is raise your hand and speak. If the point you wish to make is complex, you may wish to put it in writing, so that other members of the board or committee can study it more carefully.

If you are not a member of the service body in question but, as an NA member, still have something to say about a service matter, there are a variety of avenues you can take to express your position. By sharing your views at your group's business meeting, you ensure that your ideas will be included in the mix of group conscience that guides your GSR when she or he participates in service discussions. Many service boards or committees set aside a portion of their agenda for open forums, when you can speak your own mind on issues before the body. Fellowship newsletters and journals, from the local to the world level, often offer space where NA members can share their viewpoints on service matters at hand. Whether or not you are a member of a service body, there are a variety of ways in which you can personally exercise the Ninth Concept.

Our decision-making process is not perfect. Many groups, service boards, and committees acknowledge this, and the value of the minority's position, with every decision they make. Whenever a motion is approved by something less than unanimous consent, these service bodies often ask those who voted against the measure to state their reasons for doing so, either out loud or in writing. If the decision needs to be revised at a later date, such minority opinions may prove invaluable in helping chart a new service course.

Concept Nine encourages us to continue to consult group conscience, even after a decision has already been made. If discussions are raised about a question already decided, the body is bound to hear those discussions. It may be that, based on such discussion, a service body will alter its earlier decision. However, if a past decision is questioned, discussion is well heard, and the decision still stands, the time comes for everyone to accept that decision and to cooperate wholeheartedly in its implementation. Half-hearted support of, or outright resistance to, such a decision runs contrary to our principles of surrender and acceptance. Once a decision has been

made, reconsidered, and confirmed, we need to respect it, and go on about the business of serving our fellowship.

The expression of the individual conscience to the group is the foundation of group conscience. Without it, we block the guidance of a loving God, our ultimate authority. When a position supported by many of us is challenged by a few of us, our service boards and committees should always treat such input with great respect and careful consideration. The information and insights offered by the few may save us from dangerous mistakes; they may even lead us to new, previously undreamt-of horizons of service, where we might fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose more effectively than ever. For the sake of our fellowship, and for the sake of our members yet to come, our groups, service boards, and committees must always carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.

## **Tenth Concept**

*Any member of a service body can petition that body for the redress of a personal grievance, without fear of reprisal.*

The Tenth Concept is our fellowship's guarantee of respect for the individual trusted servant. This concept may seem self-evident, but our belief in the principle involved is so strong that we want to say it loudly and clearly. Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual society, with high ideals for how we treat each other. Our members, however, are only human, and we sometimes mistreat one another. The Tenth Concept is our spiritual society's promise that if one of us is wronged in the service environment, the aggrieved trusted servant may ask that the wrong be made right.

A variety of circumstances may require application of the Tenth Concept. In one case we know of, a member was nominated for office on his area service committee. The member left the room, allowing the committee to discuss his qualifications. During that discussion, certain ASC members groundlessly slandered the candidate's personal reputation; as a result, the member was defeated. This man found out about the discussion of his personal life, and its effect on the election, a few days later. Feeling hurt and angry, he decided to talk with his sponsor, inventory his own part in the matter, and pray for guidance. After taking these steps, he felt confident that he was entitled to petition the ASC for redress. He wrote a letter stating that he believed he had been wronged by the ASC, asking for a new ballot. The following month, his letter was read and discussed during the committee's sharing session. After having a chance to examine their consciences, the ASC members admitted that what they'd done had been wrong and agreed to conduct the discredited election over again.

The Tenth Concept's guarantee of the right to appeal for redress of a personal grievance is designed, in part, to protect those who exercise their Ninth Concept responsibility to speak their mind in service discussions. Together, the Ninth and Tenth Concepts support an atmosphere in which our members feel free to express themselves frankly on matters at hand. This open atmosphere is essential in developing an effective group conscience. If, after having demonstrated the courage of their convictions, individuals become the subject of reprisals initiated by those who have disagreed with them, the Tenth Concept allows them to petition the appropriate service body for redress of their grievance. Thus, the respect of our service structure for the rights of the individual NA member is guaranteed. In a fellowship such as ours, whose success is based upon mutual support and cooperation, that kind of respect for the individual is indispensable.

One such case involved a subcommittee member who exercised the responsibilities described in Concept Nine, speaking against a project proposed by the subcommittee chairperson. In the following months, the subcommittee chairperson stopped sending committee minutes and bulletins to the member, even neglecting to inform the member of the times and locations of future subcommittee meetings. The member contacted the subcommittee chairperson, asking

that the problem be corrected. The chairperson refused. The subcommittee member decided to appeal to the area service committee for redress of a personal grievance against the chairperson.

The Tenth Concept is our fellowship's guarantee of respect for the individual trusted servant. If you think you've been wronged in the course of your participation in an NA service body and wish to apply Concept Ten, talk to your sponsor about it, inventory your own involvement in the matter, pray, and meditate. If, upon reflection, you still believe you have been personally aggrieved and that you should petition for redress, write a letter explaining the situation to your service body, or share your problem in the body's sharing session. The service body then needs to address the matter and, if it agrees that you have been wronged, how to make amends. Hopefully, the Tenth Concept will need to be applied only rarely in NA service. Should the need arise, however, it is here, ready to put our spiritual fellowship's ideals into action.

## **Eleventh Concept**

*NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly.*

NA members around the world contribute money to help our fellowship fulfill its primary purpose. It is incumbent upon every element of our service structure to use those funds to carry the NA recovery message as far as possible. To do that, our service bodies must manage those funds responsibly, accounting fully and accurately for its use to those who have provided it.

Narcotics Anonymous funds should always be used to further our primary purpose. Money is used to pay the expenses involved in running NA recovery meetings, to inform the public about NA, and to reach addicts who can't get to meetings. It is used to develop, produce, translate, and distribute our message in written form, and to bring our members together in a service community committed to the vision of spreading our message around the world to those in need. All of this is done in support of NA's spiritual aim: to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

Service funds aren't easy to come by. To fulfill our primary purpose, we need all of the financial resources at our fellowship's disposal. Our groups, service boards, and committees must make prudent use of the money we give them, refusing to spend money frivolously or self-indulgently. With NA's primary purpose in mind, our services will avoid wasting money, using the funds they've been given to carry our message as effectively as possible.

One way we apply Concept Eleven is by establishing clear spending priorities and measuring each proposed expenditure against that priority list. Many groups, service boards, and committees have more items on their priority lists than their budgets will allow. In such cases, only the highest priorities can be funded.

Money is only one of the resources we must responsibly prioritize. While the Eleventh Concept applies directly to the management of funds, it also has implications for the management of all our service resources. Most projects depend as much on ideas, information, conscience, and members' time and willingness as they do on money. If we have the funds needed to carry out a project but lack the time or the ideas, we'd best wait until we've gathered *all* the needed resources before proceeding. If we don't, we will have wasted NA service funds. In responsibly planning and prioritizing our service efforts, we must consider the total resource picture, not just our finances.

In setting priorities, we may be tempted to look only at our own needs, tightly holding on to funds, spending money only on our own projects, and neglecting our role in providing needed funds to all levels of service. That kind of thinking is contrary to the Eleventh Concept. High on our list of priorities should be a commitment to further the goals of NA as a whole. For NA to deliver the services necessary to keep growing and fulfilling our primary purpose around the world, the flow of funds must not bottleneck at any point in our structure.

While groups are responsible to fund our services, they are also responsible to carefully manage their service contributions. When contributing money, groups should ask themselves

what that money will do once it leaves their hands. Will it aid in the delivery of useful services to the groups? Will it help carry our message to the addict who still suffers? Will the service board or committee use it wisely? Our groups are free to decide for themselves how much they will contribute to the different levels of our service structure. We encourage them to do so, and to do so responsibly.

This is not to suggest that groups earmark contributions for any particular subcommittees. The groups have created the service structure not only to deliver services on their behalf, but to *coordinate* those services. In delegating to the service structure the authority necessary to fulfill its responsibilities, the groups have also delegated the authority to coordinate the allocation of service resources at each level of service. That way, the needs and goals of all fields of service can be effectively balanced against the total resources of the coordinating service body.

Clear, frank communication from our service structure is the best way to help our groups contribute their funds in a responsible way. When the groups receive full, regular reports on the activities of their service boards and committees, they begin to see the total service picture. The groups should also receive information on how much those activities cost. That kind of communication helps assure our groups that their contributions are being handled responsibly.

Direct group contributions to our service structure encourage responsible management of service funds and help our services maintain their focus on NA's primary purpose. It is our experience that, when we make a commitment to fund the work of each level of the service structure exclusively through group contributions, we find it easier to maintain a strong link between our groups and our other service units. Our groups tend to be more aware of the work being done on their behalf and of their responsibility to provide their boards and committees with the necessary financial resources. When all levels of our service structure receive direct financial support from the groups, the bonds of mutual responsibility are strengthened between them. Additionally, by freeing our service boards and committees from the need to engage in fundraising activities, we make it possible for those service units to devote their full energies to the fulfillment of NA's primary purpose.

Accountability is an essential aspect of responsible NA financial management. When the members of Narcotics Anonymous provide groups, committees, offices, and conventions with funds, our service structure is responsible to account for how those funds are used. Regular financial reports, open books, and periodic audits of NA accounts, as described in the various guides developed for NA treasurers, help our members be sure their contributions are being used well, and help our services remain financially accountable to those they serve. Treasurers' reports help us see how well our actual service spending matches up with the priorities we've established. Consistent financial records help us make realistic spending plans for future service activities. Regular financial reporting and auditing also help deter the theft of NA service funds; and if funds are stolen, regular audits ensure that such thefts cannot go long unnoticed.

When NA members contribute service funds, they expect their money to be used carefully, and to be used for the sole purpose of furthering our primary purpose. By accepting those contributions, our groups, service boards, and committees make a commitment to use those funds to carry the NA message, and to manage them responsibly.

## **Twelfth Concept**

*In keeping with the spiritual nature of Narcotics Anonymous,  
our structure should always be one of service, never of government.*

Selfless service is an essentially spiritual endeavor. Our Twelfth Step says, in part, that "having had a spiritual awakening," we individually "tried to carry this message to addicts." Our collective service efforts arise from that same spiritual foundation. Having experienced the results of this program in our own lives, we join together to carry the recovery message farther

than we could individually. NA service is not about forcing our will or our ideas on others; rather, it is about humbly serving them, without expectation of reward.

This principle underlies all we do in our groups, service boards, and committees. The Twelfth Concept reminds us that we ourselves have experienced recovery only because others put this selfless principle into action before us, taking the time and the care to carry the NA message to us when we were still suffering from active addiction. In service, we express our gratitude for the recovery others have shared with us by carrying ours to others. Nothing could be further from the drive to rule or direct than this spirit of selfless service.

Our groups were created because we found that, alone, we could not “stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live.” In the same way, our groups have joined together to create a service structure, a cooperative effort designed to help them carry the message further than they could carry it separately. The service structure has not been created as a way for some groups to force others to do their bidding. Rather, it has been developed to combine the strength of our groups to better fulfill necessary services which usually cannot be fulfilled well, if at all, by individual groups: developing and distributing materials that share our message in print, providing information about NA to the general public, transmitting our message to addicts who cannot attend meetings, and supporting new groups and new NA communities. NA service is the cooperative effort of trusted servants receiving guidance from the groups, not a rule enforced by a governing body.

The process of joining together to create the service structure is an expression of our groups’ humility. Separately, they can do far, far less to fulfill our fellowship’s primary purpose than they can do together. In the same way, the various elements of our service structure each play their own particular role in the broader Narcotics Anonymous service plan. All the elements depend on all the others for their effectiveness; when any one element attempts to act as an agency of government, rather than a vehicle for service, it strains the ties that bind us all together, threatening our fellowship’s overall effectiveness in fulfilling its primary purpose. Humility is an essential attribute of nongoverning service in Narcotics Anonymous.

In order to serve well, each element of our service structure must make an earnest effort at effective communication. As groups, as trusted servants, as service boards and committees, we must share fully with others, and listen carefully and respectfully to their words to us. Others may use language to divide the strength of their opponents, so that they may rule them; in NA service, we share with one another so that we may combine our strength, the better to fulfill our fellowship’s primary purpose. To maintain our accountability to those we serve, we are bound to inform them in a complete, accurate, and concise fashion of our activities. The nongoverning nature of our service structure dictates that we seek others’ advice in our own decisions, their consent in decisions affecting them, and their cooperation in decisions affecting us all. Open, honest, and straightforward communication nurtures the spirit of service in our fellowship, and poisons the impulse to govern.

The kind of authority that our groups have delegated to our boards and committees is the authority to serve, not to govern. Each element of our service structure, from the group to the world, has its own role to play; all, however, serve together as a team, striving toward a common goal, “that no addict seeking recovery need die without having the chance to find a new way of life.” It is our sometimes hard-won experience that quality service, just like quality recovery, can only be accomplished in an atmosphere of mutual respect, mutual support, and mutual trust. Together, we recover, and together, we serve—this is the spiritual core of our program, the foundation of our fellowship. A structure based on that foundation could only be one of service, never of government.

## Study Materials

These notes and questions have been put together to help individuals and study groups review the Twelve Concepts. Under each section are brief summary notes touching the major points of each concept. You or your study group may wish to use the note questions, among others, to ask yourselves about how NA services work and how the Twelve Concepts might be applied in your locale.

### First Concept

*To fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose, the NA groups have joined together to create a structure which develops, coordinates, and maintains services on behalf of NA as a whole.*

The primary responsibility of an NA group is to conduct its recovery meetings, carrying the message directly to the addict who still suffers. Groups join their strength in the service structure, ensuring that other services—H&I, PI, literature development, for example—are fulfilled effectively and without distracting the groups from their own primary responsibility.

#### Study and discussion questions

1. Does your group hold regular business meetings? (See *The Group Booklet*, pp. 9-10.)
2. Does your group regularly talk about how it can better fulfill its primary purpose?
3. After paying the expenses for literature, refreshments, and meeting-hall rent, does your group have enough money to conduct other services on its own?
4. Can your group perform a variety of organized services like PI work, H&I panels, phonenumber management, and literature development while still attending to its recovery meetings?
5. Does your group send a representative to your local area service committee? Do you contribute money to your ASC on a regular basis?

### Second Concept

*The final responsibility and authority for NA services rests with the NA groups.*

The groups have final responsibility for and authority over the service structure they have created. By fulfilling their responsibility to provide their service structure with the conscience, ideas, people, and money it needs, the groups also exercise their authority. Conversely, the service structure must always look to the groups for support and direction.

#### Study and discussion questions

1. Does your group have any way of letting your area committee know whether it's meeting your needs? How?
2. Does your group's GSR regularly take part in ASC meetings? Do you regularly contribute to the ASC? Do these things give your group any say about the way NA services are administered? How?
3. How frequently is your group consulted on service matters by the ASC? The RSC? The WSC? Do you want to be consulted more often? Less often?
4. What does the Second Concept say to our service boards and committees? Does your group believe that message is heard and understood by our service structure? If not, what can your group do about it?

### Third Concept

*The NA groups delegate to the service structure the authority necessary to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to it.*

In day-to-day matters, the groups have given our service boards and committees the practical authority necessary to do the jobs assigned them. This is not a blank check issued to the service



structure; the group's final responsibility and authority, spoken of in the Second Concept, still apply. To make Concept Three work, we must carefully select trusted servants.

### **Study and discussion questions**

1. In general, what does your group think about the concept of delegated authority?
2. If your group were consulted on every decision that had to be made by every service board, committee, or subcommittee at the area, regional, and world level, would you still have enough time and energy to address your own group's business? Would your group have enough information to be able to offer intelligent advice on such matters?
3. If the service boards and committees serving your group could act only after consulting your group, would they be able to act swiftly enough in performing the duties your group has given them?
4. In the essay on the Second Tradition in our Basic Text (p. 60), it says "We are mismanagers and not one of us is capable of consistently making good decisions." If this is true, how can we responsibly delegate to our trusted servants the kind of authority called for in the Third Concept?

## **Fourth Concept**

*Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.*

The trust necessary to confidently delegate authority is founded on the careful selection of trusted servants. Leadership is very important to the welfare of our fellowship. True, our leaders are but trusted servants, not governors; yet we also expect our trusted servants to lead us. If we select them carefully, we can confidently allow them to do so. The essay on this concept describes an array of leadership qualities to be considered when selecting trusted servants.

### **Study and discussion questions**

1. Read NA's Second Tradition. Does NA have leaders? If so, what kind of leaders? Does a fellowship that makes collective decisions need leaders?
2. Does your group have leaders? If so, who are they? In what sense can they be called "leaders"? Could your group do without leaders? Could a service board or committee do without leaders?
3. According to this essay, what are some of the skills and personal traits we seek when selecting trusted servants? What is the real foundation of NA leadership?
4. "Effective NA leadership knows not only how to serve, but when it will serve best to step aside and allow others to take over." Discuss rotation of leadership.
5. What does NA leadership have to do with recovery? With selfless service?

## **Fifth Concept**

*For each responsibility assigned to the service structure, a single point of decision and accountability should be clearly defined.*

In defining a single point of decision for each service assignment, we eliminate confusion about who has authority to do what. We also clarify accountability for our services: whoever is given the authority for a particular task will be held accountable for the fulfillment of that task.

### **Study and discussion questions**

1. Does your group assign particular tasks to particular people? Does this help ensure that important jobs actually get done?
2. Does anyone in your group know of a situation, either in the group or in a service board or committee, where more than one person or subcommittee were given responsibility for the same task? What happened?

3. If three different people are all given equal authority in a particular service matter and the work is not done, who can be held accountable?

## **Sixth Concept**

*Group conscience is the spiritual means by which we invite a loving God to influence our decisions.*

Group conscience is the means by which we bring the spiritual awakening of the Twelve Steps to bear in making service-related decisions. It is fundamental to our fellowship's decision-making process. It is not, however, merely a euphemism for "voting" and is not itself the NA decision-making process.

### **Study and discussion questions**

1. What do we mean when we say that NA is a spiritual society? Does a spiritual society approach the decision-making process differently than other organizations?
2. Is "group conscience" just NA's way of saying "voting"? (As in, "Let's take a group conscience on that.") In what way is group conscience distinct from our decision-making process? In what way is group conscience a fundamental *part* of that process?
3. Read NA's Second Tradition. Does the Sixth Concept conflict with the Second Tradition, or help clarify it?
4. Read NA's Twelfth Tradition. How does the practice of the Sixth Concept help us focus on "principles, not personalities" when we make service decisions?
5. Besides decision making, in what other areas of our fellowship's life can we see group conscience at work?

## **Seventh Concept**

*All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body's decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in its decision-making processes.*

Who should take part in our decision-making processes? The participation of all members of a service body provides the broadest group conscience and the soundest foundation for service decisions.

### **Study and discussion questions**

1. Right now, who participates in your ASC meetings? Why?
2. Who participates in your group's business meetings? Why?
3. Do all the members of your ASC bear substantial responsibility for the NA services delivered in your area? Do all the members of a particular subcommittee bear substantial responsibility for that subcommittee's work? Are there any differences in the way members participate in area committee meetings and in a subcommittee meeting? Why, or why not?

## **Eighth Concept**

*Our service structure depends on the integrity and effectiveness of our communications.*

Regular communication is essential to the fulfillment of all these concepts, and to the integrity and effectiveness of our services themselves.

### **Study and discussion questions**

1. How does regular communication support the Second Concept? The Third Concept? The Fourth Concept? The Sixth Concept?
2. How could a lack of regular communication undermine those concepts, and the integrity and effectiveness of our service structure?
3. Does your group receive regular communication from the trusted servants, service boards, and committees that serve it? Does your group regularly communicate with those trusted

servants, service boards, and committees? How has this communication—or lack of communication—affected your group? The service structure?

## **Ninth Concept**

*All elements of our service structure have the responsibility to carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.*

To check judgment, to guard against hasty or misinformed decisions, and to invite the sharing of new ideas, our services must consider all viewpoints when making plans. This is essential to the development of a fair, wise, balanced group conscience.

### **Study and discussion questions**

1. “An effective group conscience is a fully informed group conscience.” Why is it important to make sure all viewpoints are considered when making service decisions?
2. In your group, area, or region, how can an individual member voice his or her viewpoint on a service decision at hand?
3. Do NA services make the effort they should to seek out new, different viewpoints? Do NA services stifle opposing viewpoints?
4. How do you know when it’s time to speak up against a decision of the majority? When it’s time to accept a decision and surrender to group conscience?

## **Tenth Concept**

*Any member of a service body can petition that body for the redress of a personal grievance, without fear of reprisal.*

The Tenth Concept encourages us to treat each other with respect in the service environment, and provides us with a means of making amends when we wrong others. The essay describes ways in which an individual who feels he or she has been wronged can go about seeking redress of his or her grievance.

### **Study and discussion questions**

1. Do you know of anyone who has been wronged in service? Has that wrong been made right?
2. “Together, the Ninth and Tenth Concepts support an atmosphere in which our members feel free to express themselves frankly on matters at hand.” Have you ever been afraid to speak your conscience in service meetings? Do you know of anyone, in your area or elsewhere, who has been afraid to speak freely? If so, why? Would the Tenth Concept ease such fears?
3. When is it appropriate to apply the Tenth Concept? When is it not appropriate?

## **Eleventh Concept**

*NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly.*

The Eleventh Concept establishes the sole absolute priority for the use of NA funds: to carry the message. The importance of that priority calls for total fiscal accountability. Direct contributions to each level of service help us focus on our primary purpose and enhance accountability.

### **Study and discussion questions**

1. What is money used for in your group? Your area? Your region? Your world services?
2. Rank the following group budget priorities:
  - NA literature
  - refreshments
  - meeting-hall rent

- group reserve
- service donations

Why did you rank them in the order you did? Does your group have standing budget priorities, or does it handle such questions from month-to-month?

3. Do you know of instances where NA money has been spent frivolously at the group level? In an area or regional committee? In world services? What was “frivolous” about the way that money was spent? How should it have been spent instead?
4. Are NA funds well-accounted for in your group? Your area and region? In world services? If not, what kinds of financial reports would you like to see instead?
5. “Direct group contributions to our service structure encourage responsible management of service funds and help our services maintain their focus on NA’s primary purpose.” Does your area or region depend on NA fundraisers for a significant portion of its income? Is that wise? How does it affect the relationship of the ASC or RSC to your group? Would that relationship be any different if groups contributed directly to each level of service? Would our service boards and committees be able to operate solely on income from direct group contributions?

## **Twelfth Concept**

*In keeping with the spiritual nature of Narcotics Anonymous,  
our structure should always be one of service, never of government.*

Within the context of the Twelve Concepts, as a body, this concept serves much the same function as Tradition Twelve does in the context of the other traditions. The Twelfth Concept brings our consideration of concepts for NA service back to the spiritual root of selfless service. A structure based on that foundation could only be one of service, never of government.

### **Study and discussion questions**

1. What is the difference between service and government?
2. The difference between a governing organization and a service organization is often not of structure but of spiritual foundation and purpose. What is it about NA’s primary purpose and its spiritual identity that says “our structure should always be one of service, never of government”?
3. The essay on the Twelfth Concept talks about how gratitude, humility, communication, and selflessness help our structure remain “one of service, never of government.” Discuss these things.
4. Discuss how the Twelfth Concept applies to each of the eleven other concepts.

## Twelve Steps

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We 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.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

## Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA unity.
2. 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.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. NA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the NA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
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.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions reprinted for adaptation by permission of AA World Services, Inc.

## Twelve Concepts

1. To fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose, the NA groups have joined together to create a structure which develops, coordinates, and maintains services on behalf of NA as a whole.
2. The final responsibility and authority for NA services rests with the NA groups.
3. The NA groups delegate to the service structure the authority necessary to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to it.
4. Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.
5. For each responsibility assigned to the service structure, a single point of decision and accountability should be clearly defined.
6. Group conscience is the spiritual means by which we invite a loving God to influence our decisions.
7. All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body's decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in its decision-making processes.
8. Our service structure depends on the integrity and effectiveness of our communications.
9. All elements of our service structure have the responsibility to carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.
10. Any member of a service body can petition that body for the redress of a personal grievance, without fear of reprisal.
11. NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly.
12. In keeping with the spiritual nature of Narcotics Anonymous, our structure should always be one of service, never of government.

The Twelve Concepts for NA Service were modeled on AA's Twelve Concepts for World Service, published by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., and have evolved specific to the needs of Narcotics Anonymous.