



Debtors Anonymous  
Newsletter For the  
Fellowship of Debtors  
Anonymous

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# Ways & Means

Carrying the D.A. Message since 1988

## Best Vacation Ever!

Before D.A. I didn't take vacations, at least not in the normal sense. I lived from pay check to pay check and robbed Peter to pay Paul. There was never ever enough. Once I paid my bills, which were staggering, there was nothing left. I lived this way for years. I know now that it was only through my HP whom I choose to call God's mercy, that I made it at all.



Vacations for me would happen but not in the normal way. I would plan to go somewhere but fail to save money to actually pull it off. I went on trips flying by the seat of my pants. My idea of a vacation was to skip my bills for a month and use that money to go. Then I would come home and live hand to mouth trying to pay the bills that I should have paid before I went on vacation. I once traveled on a bus trip to Niagara Falls Canada with only \$17.00! I caught myself planning this trip for others and then couldn't afford to go myself. However, to save face I couldn't dream of canceling. The trip itself had been paid for in advance, barely, but there was no spending money. I got by because while there I begged my sister to wire me some money via Western Union. Now a normal person wouldn't have gone on a trip of that magnitude with no spending money but by now I'm sure the reader has figured out I wasn't really normal when it came to money.

All that changed when I came to D.A. I attended meetings regularly, started keeping my numbers, had PRGs and did service. Slowly but surely my thinking began to change.

In 2011 I had planned to take my family on a week-long vacation to Walt Disney World. I worked closely with a travel agency that had been recommended to me by a D.A. person. I made a down payment on the trip and monthly payments thereafter. I was laid off from my job of eleven years that year. My company paid me for the four weeks of unused vacation. I used that money to pay off this trip several months in advance.



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*"Somehow I kept missing the obvious..."* Linda G. Page 4

*"I work, I save, and I spend. I receive, I allocate, and I serenely spend. I grow, I give, and I grow again."*

Anonymous Page 3

# Ways & Means

## Best Vacation Ever...

As I got closer to the time of travel I made up a spending plan for this trip. I had the willingness to work my program and because of this I had money to fund each category. I went on the trip utilizing the envelope system. I made a game out of it, I strived not spend all the money in each category. This was the first time I came home from a vacation and still had money!

This hands down was the very best vacation I had ever gone on. There was no stress over there not being enough money. I didn't feel like I had to watch every dime for fear of the money running out. The children and I ate well. We got to go dinner at Wolfgang Puck's and the Rain Forest Café, two well-known restaurants! We got to get lots souvenirs. We rode every ride in the park. One day it was little chilly and my son who was six at the time was cold. There was money available to buy him a pull over sweat shirt with Mickey Mouse's face on it.

I could never have done this trip if it were not for being solvent in D.A. This was a trip my children and I will never forget.

Best trip ever!  
Lawanda,

## In case you haven't heard...

Submissions from readers on any aspect of D.A. recovery or service are welcome.

See page 10 for details. Today's submissions are from people just like you. Thanks to everyone for their service in

## Pay Forward

If I stop and think  
about today,  
and then, about yesterday,  
I am sometimes brought up short.  
I want a re-do, a re-make, a do-over.

There is no such thing  
so I am told,  
but there are amends, apologies and  
"pay-forwards".  
I like the sound of that -  
"pay-forward".  
It offers all those other things,  
along with -  
"I'll do better tomorrow."

Carol M.

## A Jump into the Arms of Her Higher Power

Time merely measured emergencies when I first came to D.A. I had no time to be of service to others; I was about to lose my house. The Promises, however, were being fulfilled in my sponsor's life. She shared her abundance of time with me by taking me through a study of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. It became my textbook for recovery from debting as an addiction. Pressure Relief Meetings and those that provided this wonderful service saved my house. Changing my thinking, however, meant I had to admit that I was an addict.

That Big Book study showed me that I had done everything Bill W. had done to gain power and esteem. I got drunk on adrenaline! I used martial arts; he used golf. He traveled the country selling and promoting; I traveled the country selling and promoting, running on grandiosity, no more than fear pumped up. He had a "long-suffering spouse trailing his Grand Captain of Industry schemes"; I had a spouse doing the same. His life was unmanageable and so was mine. The data was convincing in the chart I made documenting the similarities in our actions and feelings.

## Ways & Means

### A Jump Into Arms of Higher Power cont...

Six months after I began my Big Book study, I experienced jumping into my Higher Power's arms with total abandonment. I made the decision to return a rental car, which I had rented for \$450 a month. I had to pay for the rental each month in advance, but I had no money for the next month's rental, and the buses were not running due to a bus strike. If I returned the car, I would not have a way to get home, which was fifteen miles away. I remembered thinking "It's going to be interesting to see what my Higher Power is going to do." I telephoned the manager of the car rental company to inform him of my decision. "But you are my best customer," he moaned. I repeated, "I'm returning the car," and hung up the phone.

This time I did not jump into my Higher Power's arms to escape a calamity, but rather to face reality. A popular song, "Jump for My Love," came to mind as I unloaded my personal belongings from the car.

The phone rang just as I was about to leave the house to return the car. It was a relative who knew I rented a car, but had no idea of my financial situation or that I was returning the car. "Jason and I decided to give you the Saab, she cheerily explained, and then explained her plan. "We know you've been renting a car. If he can arrange to meet you, he'll drive the car to where you are, if you can drive him back to his work. We decided to get another car, and I'll pick him up after work."

Getting saved from disaster always came with an adrenaline high that caused elation and outright euphoria, along with an amazing story to share with anyone who would listen. This time, I did not feel that way. I was quiet for a second, then simply thanked my relative and gave her the address to the car rental company. The outcome was not my business; it was still up to my Higher Power.

The relative called again during the drive. "He's a jerk! He's not going to give you the car," she screeched.

I felt no crashing disappointment, just a quiet calm, and a certainty that no matter what, I would be cared for. I thanked my relative for letting me know and continued my drive.

My cell phone rang as I walked across the parking lot toward the rental company. My relative's voice was elated and bubbly. "He changed his mind! He'll meet you at the rental office," she said. I thanked her and returned the rental car. Her husband came within a short period of time and gave me the Saab.

This began my documentation of the Promises being fulfilled in my life through recovery in D.A. I received a new definition of prosperity – living unencumbered by fear, worry, resentment or debt. I became a GSR two years later and served at World Service Conferences and on special projects for our Regional Area Group. With less fear, resentment and worry, I had more time to give.



By Anonymous

# Ways & Means

## Applying the Traditions to Day to Day Life

When I was asked to speak on the Traditions, I thought “How am I going to make it personal and relevant?” I suspect I was thinking that to many of us, the Traditions are something dry, something necessary, something to concern the Board and the GSR’s, but not directly relevant to us personally. The Traditions are read at Business Meetings, and maybe are a topic once in a while at some meetings, but how do they concern the individual member?

But as I thought more about it, my task became easier. And that’s because for me, the **Traditions are a living, breathing part of my D.A. life.** I’d like to tell you how.

First of all, what are the Traditions? The Twelve Traditions are a fundamental part of the backbone of D.A., the same as the Twelve Steps, and the Twelve Concepts. The Traditions, like the Steps, came directly from A.A. and are an integral part of all mainstream 12-Step programs. They are the glue that hold everything together, that keep us on the right path.

If that is the case, then why are the Traditions perhaps less discussed or less ‘practiced’ in D.A. than they may be in some other programs? I attend another program, for example, where the meeting leaders share once each month on the Step of the month, and once on the Tradition of the month. I don’t see that in my D.A. meetings. Why not?

The first reason, as I see it, is that D.A. is a more complicated program – what some of us perhaps grandiosely call the ‘Grown-Up’ program. Debt is inextricably tied to the use of money, and you can’t just abstain from using money, the way you can abstain from using other substances. For this type of program, more concrete help is needed, which is provided by the Twelve Tools of D.A. And, to relieve stress and give us hope, something to look forward to, we have the Twelve Promises. Now here you have a lot of ‘Twelve’s to focus on – Steps, Tools, Promises, Traditions - and it’s no wonder the Traditions may fall lower in priority.

Another reason is that for many of us, at least in the beginning, the Traditions seem remote from our own lives and issues. And on one level this has some validity. The Twelve Steps are the direct guideposts for personal recovery, for leading our own Daily lives. The Twelve Traditions may be seen as ‘Twelve Steps’ at the group level, for the meeting. And in that vein, the Twelve Concepts are more relevant at the overall Fellowship level – the Conference and

the Board. So, for example, you don’t often see D.A. members ‘working the Traditions’.

That all makes sense, but viewed in another light, the **Twelve Traditions are definitely there for the individual member.** And that is something that I really came to believe as I progressed in recovery.

So, what are these Traditions? And how do they help the individual? **The Twelve Traditions are the guideposts for running and maintaining our program.** The Twelve Traditions keep us on the straight and narrow. They ensure that no matter where you are, you can be confident that the program as practiced in meetings will be the same – the same fundamental vocabulary, the same principles, the same guidance in achieving and maintaining abstinence on the road to solvency. **The Twelve Traditions make meetings safe for all members. That is key!** The Twelve Traditions ensure that newcomers won’t get conflicting messages from different groups or different pieces of literature. They are an umbrella under which a member, be he or she a newcomer, a long-timer, or what I like to call a “re-comer”, may focus on personal recovery, secure in the knowledge that ‘someone else’ has taken care of the details. Where you can find comfort and help. A safety net. A recourse when, as happens in any group of diverse human beings, some individuals may begin to drift in a different direction from their fellows. Then we have the Twelve Traditions to bring us back to the right path. In this capacity, the Twelve Traditions are absolutely critical to the continued well-being of Debtors Anonymous and all D.A. members. Absolutely critical!



That is why it is so difficult for us to alter the Twelve Traditions. In 2013 at the World Service Conference in Phoenix, the assembled delegates, 125 GSR’s and ISR’s in Convocation, made changes to the Twelve Promises of D.A. and the Twelve Tools of D.A. Yes, we were elected representatives, but we were a relatively small group of individuals who had the power and authority to make amendments on behalf of the whole Fellowship.

But a couple of years ago **it was suggested that D.A. amend the Eleventh Tradition,** which deals with anonymity in the outside public space, to bring it more up to Date. The current wording, “we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films”, was to be expanded to include television and the Internet. A no-brainer in the 21st Century. But the Conference cannot amend a Tradition. The Board cannot amend a Tradition. It takes a majority vote of all the registered D.A. meeting

# Ways & Means

## Traditions Brought to Life... continued

groups worldwide, some 500 in all. So a ballot was sent out to all the meetings. But, a majority vote in favor of the amendment was not reached, and thus **the Tradition remains as it was originally** formulated in A.A. many years ago. That shows how important maintaining this framework is to our program.

Now, it may seem that the Traditions represent a set of rules controlling our life in D.A. How can that be of help to the individual member? Here is where I first came to realize how we in D.A. have an advantage over other 12-Steppers, a way to help us view the Twelve Traditions in the proper light. That advantage is the D.A. Tool: Spending Plan. Very early on, newcomers to D.A. are introduced to the Twelve Tools, and it is made very clear that a Spending Plan, which is absolutely critical to our recovery, is not the same as a 'budget'. A budget is a control mechanism, preventing spending. A Spending Plan is the opposite, a freeing tool that gives us the permission to spend on ourselves and for our lives, as prudently determined in advance with the help of our Sponsor and our Pressure Relief Group. Once the Spending Plan decisions have been made, shopping is freed up to be a positive experience – with decisions to be made on the value of the purchased item or service, not on whether the money should be spent.

To me, the Twelve Traditions are the same thing for operating within the D.A. framework. Rather than being constrained, **we are freed from concerns and worries** over what is right and wrong, what is proper behavior, how should we act in the meeting, to other D.A.'s, or in the outside world. The Twelve Traditions make us safe, and free us to concentrate on living lives of 'serenity and prosperity', on focusing on recovery. They do not control us as much as relieve us.



## Recovery is....

When someone lives as an example,  
and is able to say  
when they are not,  
then, steps aside  
so as not to lead others astray,  
that is the recovery I want.



Carol M.

## Recovery through the Lens of the Promises

The Twelve Promises of Debtors Anonymous can be viewed as a lens that will clarify my perception of the problems I face today, and their possible solutions.

Before coming to D.A., I was filled with financial insecurity. I was in debt, anxious about my future, despairing, and hopeless. Doubting my abilities to take care of my financial responsibilities, I asked questions like, "How am I ever going to make it? What am I doing with my life? Is there any meaning in it? How can I endure this day?"



These questions reflected my depression and self-centered fear. I could not relieve my anxiety by stewing in it, beating myself up, or isolating from others. I felt paralyzed. I needed a "Power" greater than myself. In D.A., I found that Power.

Coming to D.A. and working the Twelve Steps brought me to the Promises. Seeing through their lens, I found my questions began to change.

The First Promise says, "Where once we felt despair, we will experience a newfound hope." I asked, "What do I hope for in my life today? What is the best thing for me to do right now?"

The Second Promise came true as "clarity replaced vagueness" and as confidence and intuition replaced my self-centered fear. I asked, "How do I engage in financial self care? How do I demonstrate and maintain prosperous living today?"

The Fifth Promise says, "We will realize that we are



# Ways & Means

## Recovery through the Lens of the Promises *Cont*

enough; we will value ourselves and our contributions.” I asked, “How do I value myself and my contributions? How do I value my solvency?”

For Promise Six I asked, “How do I replace fear with faith? How do I cultivate vitalizing nourishing friendships?”

With Promise Seven I asked, “Where can I give more? Where can I give more to my Higher Power, to others, and to myself from my abundance?”

Promises Eight and Nine led me to ask, “How do I respect that I have my path and others have their own? How do I accept and appreciate rather than resist and criticize?”

The Tenth Promise told me I would “move from hiding in denial to living in reality.” I asked, “How can I know myself better today?”

Faith may be defined as a belief in aid from sources beyond the human. My vision depends on and is built upon my faith in the D.A. way of living.

I ask, “How can I know if I am living my highest vision?” When I live within my spending plan, I live within my means, but my means do not define me. I define my highest dreams and goals and visions when I write my ideal spending plan. My Pressure Relief Group told me to put categories for savings and prudent reserves into my spending plan for every dream and vision I have. The following anecdote is a dramatic example of the program in action.

This November I returned from a work conference in mainland China. My heart leapt in my chest when the opportunity to go presented itself. But I asked myself whether I could do it solvently. I saved for one year, putting a certain amount every week into that savings category. I prepaid the flight, the hotel, the conference, my visa, and my vaccinations. And had a certain amount for spending that I exchanged into Chinese Yuan. I made a meticulous spending plan. I connected to my HP all during the trip. Every time I had a moment free I wrote out an affirmative prayer: “It is because I am solvent that I can take this trip; I bless and appreciate the world and wish prosperity for all. I am grateful for this conference and the people organizing it. I praise and bless the people of this city and wish them ever increasing prosperity, etc.”

When I put savings categories and prudent reserves into my



spending plan I am practicing financial self care. I create as many savings categories as I need to manifest my highest vision for my life. I am cultivating the faith to believe in myself, my visions, and my future. The Awareness pamphlet calls this creating solvency.

Promise eleven states, “Honesty will guide our actions toward a rich life filled with meaning and purpose.” I ask, “Am I solvent today?” And I answer, “Today my awareness and higher belief is creating my solvency, one day at a time.”

I work, I save, and I spend. I receive, I allocate, and I serenely spend. I grow, I give, and I grow again.

Anonymous

## Wait Before Spending

### Why the Debt is NOT my “First Drink”

I recently read an article that appeared in the 2009 quarter one issue of Ways and Means. The author wrote “The first debt is the first drink.”

I thought a lot about that quote and have come to believe that this is not true for me. For me, debting is the last thing to happen.

My “first drink” is giving in to the desire for instant gratification, which will eventually drive me to spend when I cannot afford it. That is how I slide into relapse. I may not be debting when I start, but if I continue to spend out of control, eventually, I will debt because my “off” switch is broken. When I hear people in program balk at calling themselves compulsive debtors because they can’t stop spending but they are debt-free, I want to remind them that **a “compulsive spender” is just a debtor who hasn’t run out of money yet.**



### The Cycle of Obsession and Craving

Once I start the cycle of spending in obsession, it unleashes craving. Because my craving is the monster now let loose, I cannot think straight and charge forward with nothing to stop me. One “bright and shiny object” after another rises up to devour my money, satisfaction for what I just bought is present for only hours, if not minutes, before I’m on to the next urgent purchase.

Only when there is no more money, or I convince myself foolishly that there is some other good reason to debt instead of to use cash (oh, how many times I’ve done that), will I pick up the credit card.

# Ways & Means

## Wait Before Spending... continued

Five years of recovery, one day at a time, has shown me why I cannot spend when I'm in obsession over the next "bright and shiny object" ... even abstinently (i.e., I have the money to buy it). Oh, that first item I buy may not seem like the first drink, but it sets in motion the change from sane spending to obsession to craving because the drug (adrenaline) is now revving up my body. Maybe I will hold on by my fingertips for a while in D.A., but eventually, if I continue to behave that way, it will end in relapse.

### Waiting In Recovery Is the Antidote

Thankfully, I work my program one day at a time by committing every penny to a sponsor before spending it. I live by a spending plan that is made up of categories that accrue and I don't move money between categories without discussing it with my sponsor or in a PRG before doing so.

If I get a sudden impulsive desire to buy some discretionary item, I always wait until the next day to commit and purchase it. If I am in obsession about said object, I choose to wait until I am calmer, which could be twenty four hours or more, because I don't want to buy anything in that adrenalized state. As an addict, I can often delude myself into thinking I'm not obsessed when I clearly am. Luckily, because I speak to a sponsor daily, if she hears that I am in obsession about an item, she can help me come back to my senses.

The same is true for bigger purchases. More than once I've gotten a bee in my bonnet that I **MUST** get some educational certification immediately, justifying it as a vision for a new career, or a raging urgency to try some new, expensive alternative medical treatment for my chronic illness, but didn't have the cash available. Before proceeding, I always bring it to a PRG team, and they, thankfully, always remind me that if I want something badly enough, I will create a category and wait until I have accrued the necessary funds, rather than spending down my savings.

Because I have established waiting as a habit, I recognize that the feeling that I will simply DIE if I don't make that purchase right now will pass ... so I can sit with the pain, trusting that this time is no different than any other. Indeed, it always does pass if I wait long enough. And it has gotten easier with time.



By the way, I have never once regretted waiting and most of the time I end up not wanting the object of my ardent desire at all, discovering that it was fantasy and delusion fueling the urgency.

Anonymous

## Giving More Opens the Gateway to Faith

When I finally walked into my first Debtors Anonymous meeting I was in a deep depression caused by my attempt to make the payments on my debt by working sixty hours a week while maintaining a home for my teenage son. My plan backfired, and I ended up on disability for six weeks instead. I was sure then that nothing would change and that I would carry the debt until I died. Dying actually seemed inviting to me, but I was determined to live, if only to show my children that I cared enough about them to live and face my debt and my fears. Since I couldn't do that on my own, I finally gave in and looked at the small notice that appeared in our weekly paper.

That first meeting was held in a church nursery. I cried through it, but did manage to say something. Thinking back it is obvious how devastated I was, since that nursery had tiny chairs and all of us sat in them, even those over six feet. It was very funny since our knees were very close to our chins.

When I left, I realized that for the first time ever, I felt some hope. Up until that point finding small moments of tolerance was the best I could do for myself. Hoping for change was out of the question. I had been to counseling for decades and attended other twelve-step groups in the past. Nothing had gotten past the darkness in my head. At some later meeting the Twelve Promises were read. They seemed so out of reach, but were concrete statements of what I wanted. The one that seemed written for me reads, "**We will realize we are enough; we will value ourselves and our contributions.**" I had been sure there isn't enough in the world and thought people who said there is enough should open their eyes and look at the "real" world.

Even after years in D.A. the feeling would not go away. I continually looked at the world through that skewed view and repeated that there isn't enough, in meetings and out. My spending plan seemed to reinforce the belief. Every few months I would pull it out, compare it to my financial standing at that moment, and angrily put it away. In truth

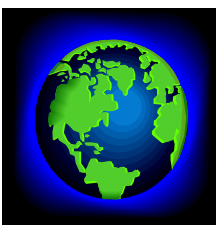
# Ways & Means

## Giving More Opens the Gateway to Faith cont.

there was not enough in future income to cover all of my needs. And my needs are very basic. It always appeared there was no way to get through without incurring new debt.

**Somehow I kept missing the obvious.** There was always enough to pay for all of my needs. I never incurred unsecured debt. In reality my needs were met and usually some of my wants. My Higher Power was taking care of me. Although there was never a large amount of extra money there was always something just in time to cover that next expense. I had taken the "half empty" view. I thought, "Every time I get some extra money something goes wrong and it is used up." Then another member described the same phenomenon and said she finally saw that she was actually being taken care of by her HP. Each time it happened was a small miracle.

So I decided to reinforce the "half-full" belief. After nine years in D.A. and five years of continuous solvency I began telling myself I had enough. I said it in meetings and at every other opportunity. I said it to myself every time the fear would appear. Slowly my thinking did change. My view of my world changed--it opened up. I looked at the people around me with awe. Could there really be enough for them and me?



Didn't I have to use as little as possible for the survival of all people?

For the past year I have revisited the world with my new view. Now I see that there is enough for all of us and, since I have come to believe I am part of "us", there is enough

for me, too. But it was not all good news. I work in the financial world and have become acutely aware of the disparity in income in our country and in the world. What I once saw that as irrefutable evidence that there isn't enough I now see it for what it is, the inability to share! **And why are people unwilling to share? Because they believe there isn't enough!**

Since I can't change anyone but myself, I decided I have to live in the solution and learn to share my time and money. I have looked at my spending plan to see where there was room to give. I had heard the slogan "Thrive With Five" regarding the cash we put in the D.A. basket. I wanted to do that. For a while though, "not enough" ruled and only my dollar went in.

A little while later our group discussed whether to hold our annual barbeque and day of workshops, which has been ongo-

ing for thirteen years. Attendance at the last event was low and the cost of putting it on can be a large drain on our spending plan and energy. Most in the group's business meeting said they could not support the expense. I thought sadly of all the event had taught me over the years, and of all the new people I had met from groups in neighboring states and Canada. Suddenly I was faced with the realization that for lack of time and money another D.A. tradition could die. Again, I



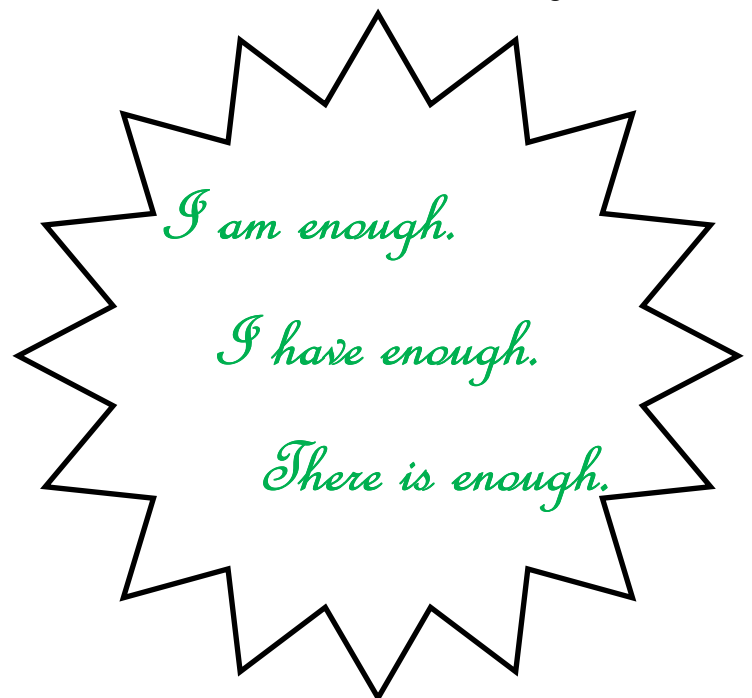
can't change anyone but me. Was I willing to contribute more of both to keep it alive?

The next time the basket came around I pulled out a \$5 bill and put it in the basket. I missed some of what people shared as I watched that \$5 going around the circle and into the treasurer's envelope. It was as if I

had put in my whole wallet. All the way home I panicked but repeated, "I have enough, I have enough, I have enough." That image was foremost in my mind the rest of that week. The next week I held my breath and did it again. Now I smile as I put it in knowing that it is only possible because D.A. taught me there is enough. By believing there is enough, I have discovered I *am* enough.

**Now, I value myself and my time as I share with newcomers.** My way of changing the world? Helping others realize that they are enough and that they have enough, too... enough to share.

Linda G.  
Burlington, Vermont





# Ways & Means

## Traditions Brought to Life Part Two

OK, enough about the Traditions as a concept. What do they say concretely, and how are they useful in following our program? Here is how I personally understand them and remember them.

### One group of Traditions impacts directly on the conduct of the individual D.A. group - Steps 1 & 4

**#1** states that our common welfare comes from D.A. unity, and **#4** states that each group is autonomous within the framework of the Fellowship as a whole. That tells us that we can organize ourselves as it best fits our needs, as long as we don't transcend the bounds of this framework. We are part of a larger, stronger whole with a recognized and accepted set of guidelines and principles, but within that structure we have the right to conduct ourselves as we see fit. Once again, controls that set us free.

### Another set of Traditions remind us why we are here in the first place and what our responsibility is - Steps 3 & 5

**#3** states that our only reason for being here is a desire to stop debting and **#5** states that we have a responsibility to help others in the same position. That makes our path clear and ensures that we don't get diverted by other concerns and issues. We must keep it simple and focused. Stop debting and help others to stop debting. The Steps, the Tools, and the Promises provide us the details on how to achieve this, but the Traditions make it clear and unforgettable. For those of you who like myself suffer from terminal vagueness, this framework keeps us on the right path.

### Three of the Traditions guide us in running our program on a Day-to-Day basis. Internal guidelines - Steps 2, 8 & 9

**#2** states that God is the only authority, all the rest of the structure is there to help us, not to rule us. **#8** reminds us to be nonprofessional - this is not a business venture, after all - and **#9** tells us never to be organized. We are a group of like-minded individuals suffering from a common problem with money and debt, and we have come together for our common welfare. Of course, for any group of our size to function, we need some structure and some people selected

to help get things done, both in the meetings and at higher levels, but in the final analysis it is the group of debtors in the church basement looking to a Higher Power for guidance that is the heart and soul of D.A.

### Three more of the Traditions deal with our face to the outside world, because the world is always going to be there when we come up out of our basement meeting rooms - Steps 6, 7 & 10.

**#6** states that we must be careful not to get entangled with outside interests - we have to keep our minds on our recovery journey and avoid getting involved in outside activities, especially where money is concerned. **#7** states that we as a group must take care of ourselves financially so that we can always remain independent, not beholden to anyone else, no matter how well-meaning they may be. And **#10** reminds us that we are basically a private group, formed to help ourselves and others like us, not a missionary group looking for outside causes to espouse.

### Finally, the last two Traditions stress that most fundamental aspect of our being - anonymity. It is so critical it is in our very name - Steps 11 & 12.

**#11** reminds us that while our mission is to carry the message to others, we must never become self-styled missionaries. **#12** simply recaps the whole philosophy of the 12-Step movement; that anyone can come and feel absolutely safe as a fully-engaged, fully-welcome member gaining all the benefits of supportive recovery while at the same time remaining fully anonymous.

So, that is how I see the Twelve Traditions. I obviously have a compulsion to organize things - you should hear me parse the Twelve Steps some time. And yet it was absolutely necessary for me to gain this understanding so that I could feel the comfort and safety of the umbrella of the Twelve Traditions to which I have referred so often. Like a Spending Plan, once I had assimilated the Twelve Traditions. I felt much more free to focus on my recovery, and to see the benefits of reaching out to help others, to be in PRG's, to be a Sponsor, to do service at all levels, and in return to accept back the help that I knew would be there for me and that I vitally need.

# Ways & Means

## Traditions Brought to Life

One final parenthetical note, if I may. The one Tradition that always bothered me the most was #11, and not just because it didn't mention TV. I just didn't understand the difference between Attraction and Promotion. After all, if we are supposed to get the message out there to the debtor who still suffers, what are we supposed to say and not say? Then, last year there was a flurry of advertisements on television for recovery establishments, always in Malibu, and always looking like fancy Palm Springs resorts. Their message was clearly: "Don't waste your time with 12 Step programs. We can absolutely cure you." I suddenly realized that that is 'Promotion': "My program will help you." And then I understood the difference between that and our message, be it face-to-face, in writing, or on radio or TV. The D.A. message is: "My program is helping me." That is Attraction, not Promotion.

So, that is what the Traditions mean to me, and how they help me. I hope this view might help you.



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## Ways & Means

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