

CONCEPTS CHECKLIST

A Service piece from the General Service Office

Some of these questions were originally developed by an A.A. group and further developed by the trustees' Literature Committee. It is their hope that A.A. groups, districts and area can use them as a basis for wider discussion. Useful information on the Concepts can be found in Conference-approved literature: *The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service* by Bill W. and "The Twelve Concepts Illustrated" pamphlet. (The Concepts stated here are in the short form.)

Concept I: Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world service should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

- Does my group have a general service representative (G.S.R.)? Do I feel that my home group is a part of A.A. as a whole?
- When did my group last hold a group conscience meeting? When appropriate, does that conscience get passed to the district, the area, or the local intergroup?
- How do A.A.'s who are not active members of a group get their point of view into the collective conscience?
- At my group business meetings, do we stay alert for any decisions that might affect A.A. as a whole?
- What is meant by the "collective conscience" of Alcoholics Anonymous? Is it at work in my home group? In my area?
- Define the upside-down pyramid of A.A. How does it work?
- Why is it said that Concept I is rooted in Tradition Two?

Concept II: The General Service Conference of A.A. has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.

- What is the general Service Conference (the "Conference")? How often does it meet? What does it do?
- Why was the conference given the responsibility for maintaining A.A. services?
- Who is our area delegate? Who is our district committee member (D.C.M.)? What do they do?
- What is a Conference Advisory Action? Does my home group's general service representative report back to the group on the highlights of the Conference?
- What is our area assembly, and what is its relationship to the Conference? Does my group contribute to our area?

Concept III: To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of A.A. – the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees, and executives – with a traditional “Right of Decision.”

- What is meant by the “Right of Decision”? Is it granted at all levels of service: in my home group, my district, and my area?
- Does our delegate know our area’s conscience on matters of importance to us?
- Why does our group need a group conscience when our area has the “Right of Decision”?
- Do I trust our trusted servants- G.S.R., D.C.M., area delegate, the Conference itself?

Concept IV: At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional “Right of Participation,” allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

- What is the “Right of Participation”? Is there a spiritual reason underlying this Right?
- What does “...in reasonable proportion...” mean?
- Do I expect that, because I’m an A.A. member, I should be allowed to vote in election at any group, even if I am not an active member of that group?
- Do I attend my home group’s business meetings regularly as a participant rather than an onlooker?

Concept V: Throughout our structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.

- Should minority opinion always be heard at the Conference? Area assemblies? District committee meetings? Home group?
- If the majority of my group feels one way about something, but I feel another way, should I just keep quiet and accept it?
- What is “substantial unanimity”?
- What is meant by the “Right of Appeal”? Is it applicable at all levels of service?
- What is meant by the “tyranny of the majority”? What is A.A.’s chief protection against an uninformed, misinformed, hasty, angry majority?

Concept VI: The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the General Service Board.

- Who are our General Service Board (G.S.B) trustees? How are they chosen? What are their responsibilities?
- Do I know the difference between Class A and Class B trustees? Between regional trustees, trustees-at-large, and general service trustees?
- What do “chief initiative” and “active responsibility” mean?

- Does too much “legal” and “political” talk get in the way of our real Twelfth Step work?
- Explain the notion of A.A. groups as stockholders? Delegates as proxy-holders?

Concept VII: The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the A.A. purse for final effectiveness.

- What is the Conference Charter? What are the Conference Bylaws?
- How does the Conference Charter differ from the G.S.B.’s Charter?
- If my group withholds contributions to G.S.O. in an effort to exercise its “power of the purse,” do we communicate that decision to the G.S.B.?
- Explain the notion of “balance of power” with regard to the Conference and the G.S.B.
- The practical power of the Conference is superior to the legal power of the G.S.B. Where does that power come from?

Concept VIII: The Trustees are the principal planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.

- What is the relationship between the trustees and the directors of A.A. World Services, Inc. and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc.? Are directors elected or appointed? How are they selected? Are they paid?
- How do A.A. World Service, Inc. and the A.A. Grapevine, Inc. operate?
- Do I understand that the General Service Board of Trustees serves on a volunteer basis?
- Does my home group subscribe to Box 4-5-9? The Grapevine? Do I?
- What is meant by “custodial oversight”?
- What are trustees’ committees? What is their function? What is their relationship to the G.S.B.? The Conference? The A.A. Fellowship?
- Why is it important that each corporate service entity have its own bylaws, working capital, executives, staff office and equipment?

Concept IX: Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.

- Does my home group hold Traditions or Concepts discussions? Does my group realize that 2/3 of the trustees are members of Alcoholics Anonymous?
- Do I see a relation between the Traditions and the Concepts?
- Why do we need group officers? Does it really matter who is the chair, or the secretary, or treasurer?

Concepts Checklist

- Is it better for my group to fill all the positions at our election, even if means doubling up or electing someone to a particular job who really doesn't want it?
- What is meant by "leading by example"? How important is god leadership? What are some qualities of a good leader?
- Is it important that I know that the basis of our structure rests on the dedication and ability of thousands of G.S.R.'s and committee members and nearly a hundred delegates?

Concept X: Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.

- Describe the authority delegated to the Conference.
- At my home group, does this Concept mean that the chair may bar "undesirables" from attending meetings?
- Define "authority" and "responsibility" as they relate to this Concept, regarding my G.S.R., D.C.M., and area delegate.
- Why is delegation of authority so important in the overall effectiveness of A.A.?

Concept XI: The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, and rights and duties will always be matters of serious concern.

- What is the purpose of the non-trustee director? Appointed committee members?
- What is the status of paid executives within A.A. and the Grapevine? Who are the paid workers? How are they compensated?
- I their rotation among paid workers? If so, how does it work?
- Are paid workers permitted the "Right of Participation"? If so, why?

Concept XII: The conference shall observe the spirit of A.A. tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

- What are the General warranties of the Conference? Do they carry any weight? How are they enforced? Do I know that they come from Article 12 of the Conference Charter?
- Why is it important to guard against becoming a "seat of perilous wealth or power"?
- What is a "Reserve Fund"? Do I encourage my group to maintain one? Do I believe we should take care of today's expenses only and trust in God to take care of the future?

Concepts Checklist

- Explain, “a strong stand against the creation of unqualified authority” at any point in our Conference structure?
- Discuss the importance of “informed discussion” and the “vote.”
- Discuss, “Conference actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy.”
- Does my group think of the Conference as “those people” and the trustees as “top brass”? Do I? Do members of my group refer to the chair as “the boss”? Do I?
- Why must A.A. “always remain democratic in thought and action”?