

PREPARING FOR THE ELEVENTH TRADITION

(Read pp. 180-183 of the “12 & 12”.)

THE ELEVENTH TRADITION:

“Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.”

Let us review the answer to the following questions in order to prepare for next week:

1. Am I promoting relationships or money in my life?
2. Have I been attracting good things into my life, or have I been attracting lack and negativity?
3. What good have I done today that I did not take credit for?

UNITY INSURES RECOVERY THROUGH SERVICE”
MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

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Homework: Writing Inventory on the Eleventh Tradition
By Dennis F.

Read pp. 180-183 of the “12 & 12”.

There are two principles to living this tradition: Living a life of attraction and anonymity.

The first half of the eleventh tradition contains the answer I have searched for all my life to the questions: can I stop being an outsider, have a feeling of self worth, and enjoy good relationships and financial stability in my life?

This mode of living is quite contrary to the way I operated when I was drinking. I thought everything depended on me. So I had to be the high-powered promoter, I thought, to get ahead in relationships and financially. It never occurred to me that I could only succeed if I surrendered to win. Helping myself through helping others was a foreign thought.

I like the saying of my friend Lee K., “God helps those who help themselves and helps even more those who help themselves by helping others.”

My relationships with others are a reflection of my relationship with God. If I am trying to manipulate God through prayer, I am very unlikely to be attractive to God. Promotion to me means manipulation.

Attraction comes from action; manipulating comes from thinking about the past.

How can I live an attractive life to God? The answer to the question is contained in the eleventh step: I am attractive to God when I pray only for knowledge of His will for me and the power to carry that out. When my prayers are no longer for me unless I can benefit someone else, I believe I begin to live a prayer life of attraction to God.

When I stop promoting, I stop living as if everything depended on me. It is not difficult to determine if I have been living a life of attraction or promotion. If I have been attracting lack and negativity into my life then I need to practice self-restraint and stop trying to be the manipulator.

I attract what I think. If my point of view is lack and negativity, that is exactly what I attract into my life. Instead of complaining, I need to praise God for what I have, if I want to begin to attract good into my life.

My personal relations policy needs to be changed if it isn't working. When I live an attractive life to God, I attract good relationships into my life.

Sick picks sick! This is why it is said in A.A. to avoid involvements with the opposite sex in the first year of sobriety. We need a period of time to solve living problems that we used to drink at. ("Sick picks sick" applies to a relationship between an A.A. and an Alanon. Both need growing, spiritual programs or the healthier one will no longer want the sicker one.)

When I was promoting relationships, I would always promote exactly where it was that I was at in life. After I had done the first nine steps and had started to do the tenth, eleventh and twelfth steps on a daily basis, God attracted a soul mate into my life. I did not promote her or the relationship. I hardly had anything to do with it. I saw goodness happening in my life out of attraction. This was a complete reversal to the life of frustration I led with the opposite sex while drinking. This is because I was not living a life of attraction. I was living the life of a con artist. So if I'm going to work this tradition in my life and my relationships, it means that I need to let go. I need to stop trying to make it happen.

It is not only that sick picks sick. The reverse is also true. Healthy picks healthy. My choice in women changed dramatically after the Twelve Steps changed me. I am glad now that I did not marry any of my choices in early sobriety but waited until my Higher Power led me to my soul mate when I had completed the first nine steps at three years of sobriety.

Financial well-being is also a matter of attraction and not promotion. When God became my employer, my financial benefits increased. The less I promoted myself, the better off I became.

When I was drinking, I thought that I had to con for every sale that I made. I thought I had to browbeat, manipulate and work the angles. I thought it isn't what you are; it's whom you know.

In my first year of sobriety, I did little more than go to meetings and begin to work the steps, and I just sort of showed up at work. I was too comatose to contribute much creative thought to my job. I simply showed up and did what was in front of me. Yet God rescued me from such financial straights in that first year that it amazes me when I look back at it now. I was close to bankruptcy, yet he rescued me, and I didn't do any promoting. So I know that the principle of living a life of attraction, which is sobriety for an alcoholic, will attract the finances I need. God did not get me sober to shoot me down the tubes over females or finances.

The question is sometimes asked, "How can we let others know help is available if we don't promote A.A.?" Restated in the home and work areas, the question might be, "How can my

business sell products without promoting?” or “How can I attract a soul mate without promoting?”

The answer lies in the difference between informing and promoting: A.A. has a “Public Information Committee” which informs the public about A.A. A.A. publicizes its principles and work, but not its members.

Likewise, I need a policy of informing my customers of my company’s products. If my business aim is to be of service, then the group conscience of the world will be attracted to buy my company’s products. God leads my business life to fill a need if my purpose is to be of service.

The same principles apply to relationships. I was lonely when I drank because I had little going for me that was attractive to a healthy person in a relationship.

As I became more attractive by undergoing a personality change through being transformed by the twelve steps and applying the twelve traditions and concepts of service to my relationships with God and others, my life improved.

The impact of a sober alcoholic living an attractive program is enormous on the drinking alcoholic. When I was drinking, I was never the same after I met my first sober alcoholic. I intuitively knew that I had just met someone who was exactly like me except that they were happy not drinking. I knew that there was a workable answer to my life long dilemma. “Was there a way to live a happy life without alcohol?” I viewed sobriety as a punishment for drinking. Sobriety was a condition to be avoided at all costs, I thought.

The second half of the eleventh tradition describes what I think is attractive to God: practicing anonymity about the good things I do for others. Doing good without seeking credit is personal anonymity. I give my life, time and money anonymously. I emphasize principles and not myself. I seek to accomplish the ambitions God gives me rather than my own. I surrender the rewards of the world’s recognition in favor of attracting God’s esteem.

“This tradition is a constant reminder that personal ambition has no place in A.A. In it, each member becomes an active guardian of our fellowship.”¹

I give my “alms” (“do good things”) in secret. Otherwise my empty bragging becomes its own reward. I bragged when I drank to try to impress you. (Praying for others without telling them what I am doing is practicing anonymity at its highest level.)

I can tell how I am doing in practicing anonymity by asking myself how long has it been since I did something for somebody without letting them know about it. This question is my eleventh tradition barometer.

Now I don’t take credit for anything. I used to think that maybe I should take credit for efforts, and give God credit for results. But I know that even the desire to make efforts is

¹ “12 & 12” p. 183

inspired by God's power. Now I think I only have one choice in life and that is to pray or not to pray. The 1% that I do is to choose to pray. Love now, rather than pain, motivates me to pray. God does the rest. Lack of power is no longer my dilemma now that I choose to pray.

My reaction to this tradition when I first encountered it was, "How can I be attractive if I'm anonymous?" The paradox of the eleventh tradition is that not seeking credit is far more attractive to God and you than all the self-serving accolades I thought were my due from years of seeking approval.

Each tradition contains a secret of how a sober alcoholic can get and maintain good relationships. The secret here is attracting good in my life by not seeking it. I will attract good if I don't try to manipulate you or take credit for God's gifts in my life, especially my sobriety.

The last two sentences of the long form of the eleventh tradition (see the "Big Book", p. 567) states the principle of attraction through anonymity best: "There is never need to praise ourselves; we feel it better to let our friends recommend us."

Anonymity has a specific meaning at the group level, which is frequently misunderstood in A.A.

I always identify myself by my first and last name when I speak at A.A. I am not ashamed that I am a recovering alcoholic. On the contrary, I am delighted that I have such a happy, sober life. I want others to know about the wonderful possibilities of sobriety!

Does this violate the eleventh tradition? Of course not. We are only anonymous at the level of press, radio, films and T.V. The press has not attended any meetings I have spoken at, so I am free to use my whole name.

Anonymity has become a fetish at A.A. meetings where members state their first name and last initial only. This indicates that the anonymity tradition is not understood when it is used as a reason for being personally anonymous. We are not ashamed of our sobriety.

The final paragraph on page 37 of the pamphlet "44 Questions" states: "It should also be noted that within A.A., at A.A. meetings and amongst themselves, A.A. members are not anonymous." Also see the inside back page of the pamphlet, "Understanding Anonymity".

The eleventh step is related to the eleventh tradition: by praying only for knowledge of his will for me and the power to carry that out, I become a source of attraction to God and give Him all credit for my wonderful life.

The eleventh step poses the question, "How can we improve our conscious contact?" The eleventh tradition answers that question by pointing out that when we do not take credit for the good we do, we become closer to God in our prayer.

The more that I make progress by practicing the principles of the traditions, the more I realize that it's easier to be anonymous because I don't need the world's approval so much anymore. The reason is that I know I have God's approval for the sober life I am living. God's approval is the source of my self-esteem, and that's what makes this tradition easier to do now than when I was first sober. The security of God's love makes it possible for me to be anonymous about the good I do when I take care of Father's business.

As we prepare to meditate for three minutes, let me suggest these ideas to consider. Is there any area where I have been taking credit in my relationships with God, A.A., home life, or work life? Where have I been saying, "This has happened because I did it." instead of giving credit to God for his blessings?

Secondly, I know in my meditation I want to thank God for the gift of an attractive life. I didn't know how to live an attractive life before He gave me sobriety. Sobriety is an attractive life. I attract my good now.

Finally, I want to become more and more one with the Father. The ultimate spiritual idea in anonymity is that I merge my personality into oneness in the principle of love that is God. And the more that I am less me, the more I am love, the more I am one with God. For me this is the ultimate in anonymity. I need me less, and I need God more as I become one with Him. The less I push myself, the more I can become one with God. In my meditation, can I merge even briefly into the principle behind God's love: selfless giving or anonymity!

(Pause for three minutes of meditation.)

The act of writing inventory is the action that surrenders me to living a new principle.

Let us write inventory on any area in our relationship with God and A.A., home life, or work life, where we have been promoting ourselves or taking credit for God's blessings.

HOMEWORK: WRITING INVENTORY

1. GOD and A.A.: Are my prayers attractive to God or manipulative? Am I carrying the message in A.A. without taking credit for the good I might do?

INVENTORY EXAMPLE - (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: The theme of too many of my prayers is for material happiness.
- b) What did I do wrong? Burden God with money requests rather than offering service.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray for more essential needs such as sobriety and service.

2. HOME: Do I take loving actions to help my mate without taking credit? Do I practice loving restraint in heated conversations and say nothing of my prayers for self-control?

INVENTORY EXAMPLE - (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: When I do something selfless, I think I should receive a reward.
- b) What did I do wrong? Base my self-esteem on the applause or lack of it from the world.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray for a selfless spirit in the giving I do.

3. WORK AND OTHER TALENTS (ART, SPORTS, ETC.)

INVENTORY EXAMPLE - (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: I once acted as if I had to command obedience from those who worked for me.
- b) What Did I Do Wrong?: I commanded instead of requesting, and was not an example.
- c) What Would God Have Me Do Instead Next Time?: Pray to be a source of attraction to my employees by leading through being an example of service.