

Tradition 8 // Twelve and Twelve Notes

Short Form: "Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers."

Long Form: Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional. We define professionalism as the occupation of counseling alcoholics for fees or hire. But we may employ alcoholics where they are going to perform those services for which we might otherwise have to engage nonalcoholics. Such special services may be well recompensed. But our usual A.A. Twelfth Step work is never to be paid for.

P166: "Freely ye have received, freely give"

Source: Bible, Matthew 10:8

Other Historical Info related to Tradition Eight

1942 - October, Clarence S stirred up a controversy after discovering that Dr Bob and Bill W were receiving royalties from Big Book sales. Bill and Dr Bob reexamined the problem of their finances and concluded that royalties seemed to be the only answer. Bill sought counsel from Father Edward Dowling who suggested that Bill and Dr Bob could certainly not accept money for 12th Step work but should accept royalties as compensation for "special services." This later formed the basis for Tradition Eight and Concept Eleven. Both co-founders dedicated so much time to the Fellowship, it was impossible for them to earn a living through their normal professions. (DBGO 267-269, BW-FH 153-154, AACOA 193-195, PIO 322-324) *[Note: Bill W. received 15% of all book sales, and his heirs continue to]*

Editorial on the 8th Tradition

by Bill W. for the Grapevine Magazine, July 1948, vol. 5 no. 2

"Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional. We define professionalism as the occupation of counseling alcoholics for fees or hire. But we may employ alcoholics where they are going to perform those services for which we might otherwise have to engage non-alcoholics. Such special services may be well recompensed. But our usual A.A. "12th Step" work is never to be paid for."

Throughout the world A.A.s are "12th stepping" with thousands of new prospects a month. Between one and two thousand of these stick on our first presentation; past experience shows that most of the remainder will come back to us later on. Almost entirely unorganized, and completely non-professional, this mighty spiritual current is now flowing from alcoholics who are well to those who are sick. One alcoholic talking to another; that's all.

Could this vast and vital face-to-face effort ever be professionalized or even organized? Most emphatically, it could not. The few efforts to professionalize straight "12th Step" work have always failed quickly. Today, no A.A. will tolerate the idea of paid "A.A. Therapists" or

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"organizers". Nor does any A.A. like to be told just how he must handle that new prospect of his. No, this great life-giving stream can never be dammed up by paid do-gooders or professionals. Alcoholics Anonymous is never going to cut its own life lines. To a man, we are sure of that.

But what about those who serve us full time in other capacities--are cooks, caretakers and paid Intergroup secretaries "A.A. professionals"?

Because our thinking about these people is still unclear, we often feel and act as though they were such. The impression of professionalism subtly attaches to them, so we frequently hear they are "making money out of A.A.", or that they are "professionalizing" A.A. Seemingly, if they do take our A.A. dollars they don't quite belong with us A.A.s any more. We sometimes go further; we underpay them on the theory they ought to be glad to "cook" for A.A. cheap.

Now isn't this carrying our fears of professionalism rather far? If these fears ever got too strong, none but a saint or an incompetent could work for Alcoholics Anonymous. Our supply of saints being quite small, we would certainly wind up with less competent workers than we need.

We are beginning to see that our few paid workers are performing only those service tasks that our volunteers cannot consistently handle. Primarily these folks are not doing 12th Step work. They are just making more and better 12th Step work possible. Secretaries at their desks are valuable points of contact, information and public relations. That is what they are paid for, and nothing else. They help carry the good news of A.A. to the outside world and bring our prospects face to face with us. That's not "A.A. therapy"; it's just a lot of very necessary but often thankless work.

So, where needed, let's revise our attitude toward those who labor at our special services. Let us treat them as A.A. associates, and not as hired help; let's recompense them fairly and, above all, let's absolve them from the label of professionalism.

Let us also distinguish clearly between "organizing the A.A. movement" and setting up, in a reasonably business-like manner, its few essential services of contact and propagation. Once we do that, all will be well. The million or so brother alcoholics who are still sick will then continue to get the break we 60,000 A.A.s have already had.

Let's give our "service desks" the hand they so well deserve.

Bill W.

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GSO Special Workers: there are 74 employees of the General Service Office in NYC, with an average salary of \$49,648 per year. "Middle Class" in Manhattan is defined as \$80,000 - \$230,000 a year. (NYTimes)

Questions:

1. Does being a counselor in a treatment center, and a member of AA, violate this tradition? What about a "Paid Certified Recovery Specialist" or "Paid Peer Specialist"?

Glossary

Definitions taken from 1913 Webster's dictionary

Buffeted (p169): A blow from any source, or that which affects like a blow, as the violence of winds or waves;

Decry (p166): To cry down; to censure as faulty, mean, or worthless; to clamor against; to blame clamorously; to discredit; to disparage.

Dispelled (p167): To drive away by scattering, or so to cause to vanish

Furors (p167): Excitement; commotion; enthusiasm.

Inebriates (p169): People who are intoxicated

Mauling (p169): A severe beating with a stick, cudgel, or the fist

Topers (p169): One who topes, or drinks frequently or to excess; a drunkard; a sot.

Welter (p171): A rising or falling, as of waves; as, the welter of the billows; the welter of a tempest.

The Eighth Tradition

Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.



Spiritual as it is, A.A. remains very much of this world. The Eighth Tradition, like the Seventh, focuses on a vulgar five-letter word that isn't actually mentioned in either: money. Many of us have had to explain to some cynical prospect, "No, I'm not a social worker. I don't get paid for talking with you. I'm doing it because it's the best way to stay sober myself."

This does not mean, of course, that the idea of turning professional has never entered any A.A.'s mind. In the lean years, Bill W. did think of becoming a lay therapist to earn money through his experience in helping alcoholics. But, with a strong nudge from the group conscience, he soon realized that he could never hang out a shingle reading "Bill W., A.A. Therapist, \$10 an Hour"! It became clear to the early members that no A.A. should ever ask or accept payment for "carrying this message to somebody else, person to person and face to face."

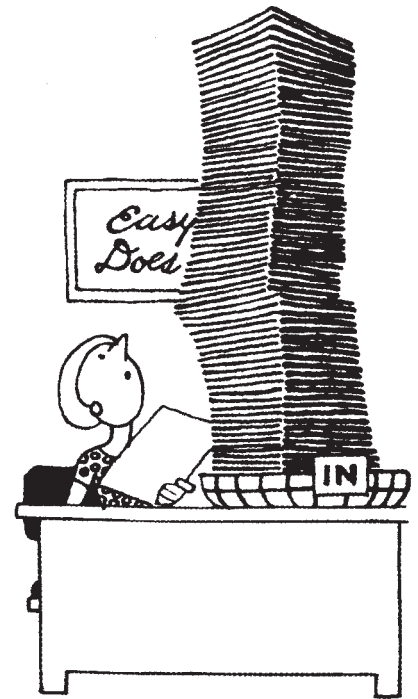


But new questions arose as membership grew and the word of hope spread, sending thousands of alcoholics in search of A.A. The first intergroups or central offices were usually manned by A.A. volunteers; now, most such offices are so busy that full-time employees are needed as well. Naturally, A.A.'s are better suited to such jobs than are nonmembers—but these A.A.'s then being paid for doing Twelfth Step work? No. In the office, they are just paving the way for this work. Arranging to get a sick drunk into a hospital, telling a shaky newcomer where the nearest meeting is tonight, they are helping to make it possible for that alcoholic to hear the message “person to person and face to face.”

A similar development has taken place at the Fellowship's “headquarters.” Once a tiny office for one co-founder (Bill) and one secretary, it has grown into the present General Service Office, fully staffed, with a big mailroom keeping the lines of communication open throughout A.A. worldwide. The employees, both A.A. and nonalcoholic, are paid on a scale comparable to that in profit-making enterprises, so that the office force can function depend-

ably. And the A.A. staff members are in exactly the same position as the A.A. intergroup employees. Suppose you drop in at G.S.O. one day when you're in New York. Staff members who pause to chat with you may have been working on next year's Conference or corresponding with a group in your home area, helping it to carry the message more effectively. For that, they are paid biweekly checks. But you may also hear them mention to other staff members plans for taking a newcomer to a meeting in the evening or for giving an A.A. talk to a neighborhood group the next week. For that, they are paid only with their own continuing sobriety.

In these office jobs and in other assignments, members are actually paid for their business and professional skills. Working at a G.S.O. desk, on Conference-approved books and pamphlets, or on the Grapevine, these A.A.'s use their abilities as correspondents, managers, writers, editors, artists, proofreaders—as well as their understanding of A.A. from the inside. On occasion, volunteers have given their time and talent to all these services, and their contributions are deeply appreciated. But what if the Fellowship decided that all such assignments should be handled *only* by unpaid volunteers? In present-day A.A., there's too great a volume of work to be done in spare hours here and there, and only the rich or the retired could afford to work full-time. If we tried to find in this limited group people qualified for particular tasks, obviously the field would be narrowed down—too often, down to nobody at all.



There would be another problem in using volunteers alone: It seems ungrateful—or, at least, it's socially awkward—to criticize or reject a job done for free. But paid jobs for A.A. get quite a going-over! Take our literature, for instance (like this pamphlet). Whatever the subject, we want to be sure that each piece expresses as clearly as possible the view of the group conscience of A.A. as a whole. So any new project must first be approved by the Conference. Once it is in process, the Literature Committee of the General Service Board keeps a careful eye on it at every stage. Frequently, drastic changes are required. The “finished” product then must be okayed both by that committee and by the Conference Literature Committee, and further revisions are often—



“Now wait a minute!” some old-timer may interrupt. “What's going on here? Didn't Dr. Bob say, ‘Let's keep it simple?’”...