

Issue Discussion Topic Input Arkansas Region

Greetings Family,

I am proud to announce that for the first time that I can remember, the Arkansas region of Narcotics Anonymous is submitting written input on the Issue Discussion Topics chosen at the World Service Conference. We set aside time during a Regional Service Committee weekend, to do brainstorming sessions on both topics. The questions for the brainstorming sessions came from the newsflashes that were sent out. Following will be a list of the questions and responses. I would like to thank everyone that participated in this endeavor. It was informative and fun.

Questions on Self-Support

1a) (a) What are the Spiritual Principles of self-support? (b) How do we practice them as individuals and/or groups?

Honesty, Faith, Hope, Responsibility, Trust, Open Minded, & Service to others.

By being honest to others, and ourselves we know what we can and cannot expect and we can then be responsible to others and ourselves in the fellowship to follow through. Through love of our Higher Powers, others in NA, and ourselves we can raise our level of faith in the fellowship and learn to trust more. Through that trust, we can become open minded to change, hope that things will continue to get better, and as we grow and change we can be of service to others.

1b) How does the practice of the spiritual principles, of self-support, relate to (a) Our Primary Purpose, (b) Our Common Welfare, and (c) NA Unity?

By being self-supporting we can further our Primary Purpose through translations and giving the groups the ability to spread the message through meetings, etc. Without self-support, it would be extremely difficult to have a group.

Without self-support, our Common Welfare would not have any support structure and NA (as we know it) would have problems existing, without compromising our principles.

Through Unity and working together, we can show others how to achieve positive results.

2a) What is your understanding of “fully self-supporting”?

To not have to depend on others, but to allow members to do their part.

To be responsible enough to self, group, and NA to give back.

To avoid control issues by allowing others to contribute what they can.

Be available emotionally, physically, and/or financially.

Have faith in our Higher Power that we will be provided for as individuals, groups, and NA as a whole and we can continue our spiritual growth.

2b) What is your understanding of “outside contributions”

Accepting monies and/or other donations from non-addicts. By doing this we open NA to outside influences)

3a) What particular things does your group do to be self-supporting?

7th Tradition, Fundraisers, members getting involved and giving of their time – as well as attending recovery meetings & Business meetings, Literature Sales, and giving of personal property

3b) (A) Has self-support been important to your NA group;(B) If so, how and if not, why not?

Yes, through paying of rent and maintenance on buildings and by allowing groups to be self-supporting helps build fellowship and goodwill. It allows us to see others’ ideas at work. There was also a “No” response because the group started with non – NA people and Drug Court.

4a) (A) has your group, or service committee, ever held an inventory/assessment meeting to discuss or study how your group supports itself? (B) If so, describe your process and results.

The Arkansas Region did an inventory and there wasn’t a very large response back, but the responses that were received helped us to look at a few things and we have continued to discuss some issues that were brought up in that inventory. The groups that participated in this question, the majority said “no”. From one positive response the results were: writing - guidelines, purpose statement, “How to Chair a Meeting, description of service positions at group, and the responsibilities of group members.

4b) How does a service group integrate the spiritual principles of self-support into its activities?

Through honesty and faith that, through our Higher Powers, members will carry the message for the right reasons

Through having an open mind, we can listen and try ideas from everyone, allowing each member to give what he or she can

To educate by application, with events geared towards services – such as H&I and PI

Groups discuss what self-support means

Willingness for some members to do a little extra when other members cannot

No addict turned away do to a lack of funds

5a) Other than money, what do groups need in order to carry the message to addicts?

Unity in our groups, areas, regions, and the fellowship as a whole – Together We Can

Faith that our Higher Powers' will for us will guide us (as a group) to carry the message – Trust the Process

Willingness to make the extra effort to reach out to the still suffering addict

Willingness to place principles before personalities (to be able to disagree without being disagreeable)

We need members, with a strong message of recovery, to share experience, strength, and hope

Members who work the program and give back regularly

We need places to meet, unconditional Love, literature, as well as many other things – We Need the Members

5b) (A) What experiences or challenges have your local NA community or group(s) experienced regarding self-support? (B) If you have any experience with these areas, how did you resolve them?

(A) Renting a meeting place for a nominal or non-fair market price

(B) Motives needed to be checked – Was there a reason for this, if so what? The reasons were not for influence, but for community betterment

6a) Is relying on fundraisers and events to support our services consistent with the idea of self-support? If not, how can we decrease our reliance on these funds? If it is, in your opinion, consistent with the idea of self-support, explain your thoughts on this.

We had groups with differing opinions on this. The overall consensus was that fundraisers were not consistent with the idea of self-support (even though sometimes it has become necessary) Education on how important 7th tradition is for our day-to-day services is needed. Fundraisers are a good way to show that we can have fun in recovery and help to promote Unity. The other consensus was that fundraisers are consistent with the idea of self-support. Fundraisers attribute attraction rather than promotion by supporting Unity and a feeling of belonging. Fundraisers are a large part of carrying the message. Many groups have failed as a result of a lack of self-support. Fundraisers end

up being the hub of the monies needed, even though they are not the sole support.

6b) Has your group ever relied on support that was inconsistent with the spiritual principles of self-support? If so, how, and what happened?

Yes literature on credit, after group conscience availability was limited to *Basic Text, It Works How and Why*, and *Step Working Guide*. In addition, casino night was held and group conscience was mixed.

7a & 7b) What have you found to be the most effective way to educate members about 7th Tradition?

The majority believed that sharing with individuals the importance and reasons for 7th tradition is very important, to let others know where and how their monies are used. Also very high on the list were, education by sponsorship and example. By showing willingness to contribute monies, time, and effort, it helps others to see how we can support ourselves. Other forms of education that were brought up were, to bring this up as a topic at group and to get individuals involved in service so they can see where the money goes.

8a & 8b) How does your group spend its donation money? What percentage (if any) does your group forward to Area, Regional, or World Services?

There were varying responses to this question. Most everyone agreed that monies were spent on rent, literature, coffee, and supplies. Other responses added to those with activities, functions, and committees. When asked about forwarding monies, the responses were varied but close. A slight majority responded that funds were being forwarded to Area, if Area has excess they will send in to Region, and if Region has excess, they will send excess to World. The other response was what has been suggested in some of our literature. Anything above prudent reserve is split between Area, Region, and World (with varying percentages).

Questions on Atmosphere of Recovery

1a) What do you consider an atmosphere of recovery?

The question about what an atmosphere of recovery is generated several interesting responses. Unconditional Love, respect, and support with lots of hugs topped the responses. The next set of responses focused on sharing of personal Experience, Strength, and Hope, with a strong emphasis on living as a recovering addict focusing on recovery and solutions. In addition, another level of importance was meetings and groups that are unified with an open and honest atmosphere with no disruptions during the meetings and the ability to disagree without being disagreeable. Another position of importance was

having an unconditional position towards members with an emphasis on tolerance and being non-judgmental. The groups also put an emphasis on demonstrating through actions and behavior (walking the walk not just talking the talk). A few members shared the importance of having meetings where our Higher Powers are present and obvious and the importance of having couches to promote comfort and hominess.

1b) What spiritual principles need to be present to have an atmosphere of recovery?

The consensus on this was that all spiritual principles need to be present for an atmosphere of recovery with a strong emphasis on honesty, open mindedness, willingness, hope, acceptance, faith, and tolerance.

2a) What attracts you to your home group?

The responses of what attracts us to our home groups are varied, but can be placed into a few related groups. The first grouping centers on the willingness for support – in an atmosphere of love, caring, and acceptance and the feeling of belonging. The feelings that were felt as we were welcomed in, and continue to grow over time. The next grouping centered on communications/interactions. The emphasis in this grouping was the interaction of the membership, whether it was for newcomers, old-timers, or anywhere in between, and the respect shown to the membership. This respect can come out in different ways, from principles before personalities to honest interaction with being able to confront others openly about any situation. The next grouping was about the positive focus on recovery. This focus emphasizing on working the steps, sponsorship, continuity of attendance by addicts with solid clean time, having a conscious contact with our higher power, and getting involved in service. The last grouping, which was smaller, centered on the diversity of our membership combined with the experience, strength, and hope of the members.

2b) How does the concept of an atmosphere of recovery extend to a business or service meeting?

There were multiple responses to this question ranging from ‘if we’re spiritually OK our business meetings will be OK’ to ‘pg XVI in the introduction to the *Basic Text*, next to the last paragraph’. Multiple responses centered around keeping with the values that the program offers, with an emphasis on the spiritual principles in all our affairs. Another grouping looked at the willingness to look at, and accept, others’ views with an attitude of selflessness in the respect of group conscience. The groups also discussed the importance of patience and setting boundaries (so it’s not all about me).

3a) What does your group do to nurture an atmosphere of recovery at group business meetings?

The responses for this question varied, but are all quite interesting. The responses ranged from having the chairperson setting up clear and concise boundaries up front to calling to remind people of their responsibilities to be at the service meetings. It was discussed that

it is always a good idea to follow *The 12 Traditions*. Several responses reminded us to allow everyone their opinions, listen to all viewpoints, place spiritual principles before personalities, to remember our primary purpose, and to carry the message not the addict. Several responses centered on trusting the process. We need to remember that our combined Higher Powers are present and (through group conscience) are the final authority. One way to do this is through consensus-based decision making.

3b) What does your group do to nurture an atmosphere of recovery at group recovery meetings?

We can nurture an atmosphere of recovery at recovery meetings by practicing the *12 Traditions*, sharing personal experience, strength, and hope, remembering our primary purpose, encourage quiet during the readings, remembering we are addicts and not counselors or therapists, and always welcome the newcomer and make sure they get phone lists.

4a) How does your group communicate to its members what an atmosphere of recovery is?

Communicating to/educating our members about what an atmosphere of recovery is can be done in several ways. One way is through unconditional Love and practicing spiritual principles in all our affairs and remembering HP is in charge through group conscience. Another way is to welcome **all** members to each meeting in a loving manner, encourage fellowship after the meetings, and remember to give out phone numbers. Ask people if they are willing to sponsor someone to raise their hands and share recommendations about sponsorship. Remember to keep meetings recovery oriented and focus on solutions. We can educate/communicate through our readings and by choosing topics that reflect what our meetings are and what they are for. A few people reminded us to share experience, strength, and hope from the heart and allow **all** members to share without distraction and lovingly call someone on their behavior if it is not conducive to recovery.

4b) Do you think visitors and newcomers feel welcomed at your group? If so, how does your group create a welcoming atmosphere, and if not, how might you change this?

The overall response was “yes” newcomers and visitors feel welcome. For the second part of the question, the responses varied from asking at the start of meetings if any newcomers are present to having newcomer meetings. In addition, there were several replies on giving hugs, offering rides, and telling them we’re glad they’re ‘here’. Several responses included passing out phone lists, white booklets, and literature (if needed). Other responses included talking to them after meetings and inviting them for food, fun, and fellowship. Others felt it was important to let them know the literature was for them and to ask two people (at meetings) to share on the first step.

5) How do we, or how could we, maintain an atmosphere of equality and inclusion in our groups?

This question received a lot of discussion with a vast amount of responses ranging from asking newcomers to share during the first 10 minutes, to breaking the bonds of prejudice and clicks by relying on HP. We discussed welcoming everyone and asking all to attend service meetings, fellowship after meetings, and to get involved in formal or informal service (through service positions, chairing meetings, giving rides, making coffee, setting up. Cleaning up, etc). We discussed offering phone lists, meeting lists, and having members stay after to talk to newcomers and visitors. We discussed a variety of topics and/or discussions that we can focus on: the value and strength of diversity, equality for **all** members, recovery related topics, and giving solutions to problems through experience, strength, and hope. We discussed that the chairperson should be responsible for limiting sharing, so that everyone has a chance to share. We discussed the importance to listen to **everyone** and to listen more and talk less. We discussed the importance of practicing spiritual principles and remembering why we are here.

6a) How does your group help a member who has relapsed?

Our small groups decided that after a relapse, the groups need to welcome the person back with hugs and to make them feel welcome and loved. Then we need to encourage them to keep coming back and to share our experience, strength, and hope, especially concerning relapse and recovery. The groups also decided we need to place principles before personalities and pray for them.

6b) What disruptive behavior have you seen at recovery and/or business meetings, and how has it been handled?

Some of the disruptive behaviors that were seen were fights, character assassinations, and self-righteousness. Some of the ways these (as well as other disruptions) have been/can be addressed are letting individuals know that spiritual principles do not allow for this kind of behavior, practice self-discipline, ask for a moment of silence to remember why we are here, and refocus on our primary purpose and our message.

7a) How do we carry the message of recovery through disruptive or disinterested members and/or other distractions?

The most common response was that we need to lead by positive example. We looked at the importance of not arguing and being able to agree to disagree. We discussed the importance of taking a moment of silence to remember why we are here and to ask our Higher Power to give us the strength to address the problem spiritually. It was also discussed that you cannot sacrifice the group for one or two, that the chair sometimes will politely, need to, bring the disruption or disinterest to the person's attention. If this does not work you might ask the person to get with someone after the meeting or politely ask them to take their disinterest and/or distractions outside the meeting place/room. Sometimes we need to have meeting topics that address being respectful and caring, and sharing our experience, strength, and hope, reminding members of the value of listening and respecting others.

7b) How does your group welcome (a) newcomers, (b) regular group members, and (c) old-timers?

- a) We came up with the following solutions on welcoming newcomers. We can ask them to identify themselves and welcome them, we can give them hugs and phone lists, and we can tell them to keep coming back. We can set aside meetings for newcomers every week and share our experience, strength, and hope.
- b) For group members, there were several responses on welcoming them. We need to greet them and tell them to stay open to new ideas and suggestions. We need to let them know to focus on similarities and let them know that “life on life’s terms” is for everyone and share our experience, strength, and hope.
- c) Greet them and let them know they are a treasured part of the group for experience, strength, and hope and paving the way for us.

Again, I would like to thank everyone who participated in this endeavor. I hope the information we gathered can be of use.

In Loving Service,

Bill L
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