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 On the 7th Tradition  
  
  
“Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."**

Editorial by Bill W.

A.A. Grapevine, June, 1948

*"The A.A. Groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contribution of their own members. We think that each group should soon achieve its ideal: that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous, whether by groups, clubs, hospitals or other outside agencies; that acceptance of large gifts from any source, or of contributions carrying any obligation whatever, is unwise. Then too, we view with much concern those A.A. treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated A.A. purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority."*

Our growth continuing, the combined income of Alcoholics Anonymous members will soon reach the astounding total of $250,000,000, a quarter of billion dollars yearly. This is the direct result of A.A. membership. Sober we now have it, drunk we would not.

By contrast, our overall A.A. expenses are trifling.  
  
For instance, the A.A. General Office now costs us $1.50\* (revised cost as of 2019 is, $8.03) per member a year. As a fact, the New York office asks the groups for this sum twice a year because not all of them contribute. Even so, the sum per member is exceedingly small. If an A.A. happens to live in a large metropolitan center where an intergroup office is absolutely essential   
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to handle heavy inquiries and hospital arrangements he contributes (or probably should contribute) about $5.00 annually. To pay the rent of his own group meeting place, and maybe coffee and doughnuts, he might drop $25.00 a year in the hat. Or, if he belongs to a club it could be $50.00. In case he takes *The A.A. Grapevine* he squanders an extra $2.50!

So, the A.A. member who really meets his group responsibilities finds himself liable for about $5.00 a month on the average. Yet his own personal income may be anywhere between $200. and $2,000. a month -- the direct result of *not* drinking.

"But", some will contend, "our friends want to give us money to furnish that new club house. We are a new small group. Most of us are still pretty broke. What then"?

I am sure that myriads of the A.A. voices would now answer the new group saying, "Yes, we know just how you feel. We once solicited money ourselves. We even solicited publicly. We thought we could do a lot of good with other peoples' money. But we found that kind of money too hot to handle. It aroused unbelievable controversy. It simply wasn't worth it. Besides, it set a precedent which has tempted many people to use the valuable name of Alcoholics Anonymous for other than A.A. purposes. While there may be little harm in a small friendly loan which your group really means to repay, we really beg you to think hard before you ask the most willing friend to make a large donation. You can, and you soon will, pay your own way. For each of you these overhead expenses will never amount to more than the price of one bottle of good whiskey a month. You will be everlastingly thankful if you pay this small obligation yourselves.

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When reflecting on these things, why should not each of us tell himself, "Yes, we A.A.s were once a burden on everybody. We were 'takers.' Now that we are sober, and by the Grace of God have become responsible citizens of the world, why shouldn't we now about face and become 'thankful givers'! Yes, it is high time we did!".

Bill W.

The AA Grapevine, June, 1948  
  
  
\*Cost of Services per Member for 2017 was $7.40  
\*7th Tradition Self-Support Contributions per Member was $6.09  
\*Cost of Services NOT covered by Self-Support $1.31

P-4 **The TWELVE TRADITIONS Illustrated.  
 (GSO Approved Pamphlet)P-43**

We do have to be practical. A group can hardly hold its regular meetings on a street corner, and an empty basket won’t fill a coffee urn. As soon as we become active in a group, we learn how many expenses are involved in making its meetings effective. Then our horizons broaden. What about that intergroup or central office so many of us called to ask for help? Phone companies don’t give free service. Beyond our own locality, we learn about the A.A. General Service Office and the work it does for groups everywhere. A.A. activity is self supporting at all levels, and in every case the responsibility comes right back to us, the individual members, for we are A.A.

Perhaps, especially when we are very new, our contributions clink, rather than rustle. The first members were in the same fix, and it seemed to them that A.A. would need more outside help than the modest gifts then coming in.  
  
Their plans required grand-scale philanthropy. (Tradition Six hadn’t evolved yet; Bill W. recalled a scheme for “a chain of hospitals.”) But John D. Rockefeller Jr., an early friend said, “I am afraid that money will spoil this thing.” A few A.A.’s had already reached the same conclusion; gradually, this minority became a majority as experience showed that members themselves could provide enough to finance A.A.’s proper aim.

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In its simplest application, Tradition Seven is easily understood; when we hear about a new A.A. group being started with funds from a Federal antipoverty program, our quick reaction is “Somebody goofed!” But then we come to “borderline” cases: Groups put on a raffle for the benefit of their central office and invite the public to buy tickets; a hometown paper runs an ad for an A.A. dance and show. Both projects would be routine for any other society. For us, both mean that we’ve got the hand out again, asking nonmembers for money. Often, of course, we don’t have to ask. A.A. is now high on the worthy-cause list; G.S.O. and groups politely turn down many unsolicited gifts and bequests. In Tradition Seven, there’s a note of realism: Handsome gifts may have strings attached. We even put a limit of $5,000 on the amount members may leave to A.A. in their wills or contribute annually while living, so that none of us can buy influence in A.A., no matter how rich we are.   
  
Money may pose a different problem if a group treasury grows too fat, beyond a prudent reserve. Squabbling over uses for the spare cash, groups have lost their unity and strayed from their purpose. But there’s one simple solution that strengthens our unity and advances our purpose: Give the excess to A.A. activities and services.…  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
TRADITIONS CHECKLIST from the A.A. Grapevine These questions were originally published in the AA Grapevine in conjunction with a series on the Twelve Traditions that began in November 1969 and ran through September 1971. While they were originally intended primarily for individual use, many AA groups have since used them as a basis for wider discussion.   
  
Tradition Seven: Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.   
  
1. Honestly now, do I do all I can to help AA (my group, my central office, my GSO) remain self-supporting? Could I put a little more into the basket on behalf of the new guy who can’t afford it yet? How generous was I when tanked in a barroom?   
  
2. Should the Grapevine sell advertising space to book publishers and drug companies, so it could make a big profit and become a bigger magazine, in full color, at a cheaper price per copy?   
  
3. If GSO runs short of funds some year, wouldn’t it be okay to let the government subsidize AA groups in hospitals and prisons?   
  
4. Is it more important to get a big AA collection from a few people, or a smaller collection in which more members participate?   
  
5. Is a group treasurer’s report unimportant AA business? How does the treasurer feel about it?

6. How important in my recovery is the feeling of self-respect, rather than the feeling of being always under obligation for charity received?

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TRADITION 7  
 WORKSHOP

