

Volunteer Spirit

Winter 2024

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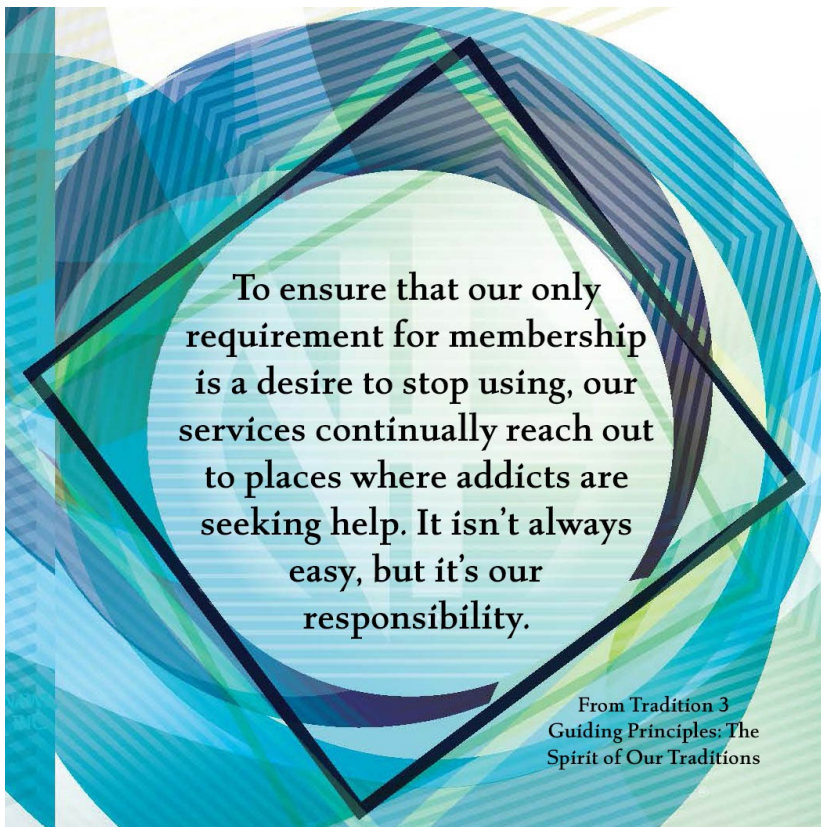


How might I practice the Third Tradition with my family? Or at work? I think I start by not focusing so much on the words, and instead pray and meditate on the spiritual principles holding it all up.

On Requirements and Responsibilities

James B, Little River Group, Knoxville, TN

So, there are probably going to be way more questions than answers brought up in this article. I don't know that I have very many answers, except that I've been told that staying clean must come first. But I will say that I have deeply enjoyed learning about how to apply spiritual principles in my home group's Traditions and Concepts workshop Sundays at 10am. We look to the 12 Concepts booklet and Guiding Principles, and for our extended 90-minute meeting we might get through two whole questions together. It is a real slow deep dive into the meat and potatoes of the program, and it has elevated my recovery in ways that I cannot describe. Right now we are studying the Third Tradition together, so it seemed timely to write this article given the theme of this edition of our regional newsletter.



When I first got to NA, I thought that the Third Tradition meant someone could come in stark naked to a meeting, throw chairs around, rant and rave, steal from the Seventh Tradition basket, and still be welcome at the same meeting - that no one can tell me to leave a meeting. But, don't we have an IP about violent and disruptive behavior that suggests otherwise?

What is membership in NA? And are there commonly-understood perks, benefits, or guarantees that come with that no matter what? I'm starting to question that. A good example is that just because I am an NA member, does it mean that I can come to any group and am guaranteed a service opportunity to chair their meetings?

There is an entire spirit behind this Tradition with many spiritual principles working together, such as inclusiveness. Maybe I really want a trusted servant position that I don't qualify for, or someone else gets it. But maybe the group can take me under a mentor's wing and show me the ropes to help guide me towards eventually trying that position out, couldn't they? Or help me find some other service work to do, right?

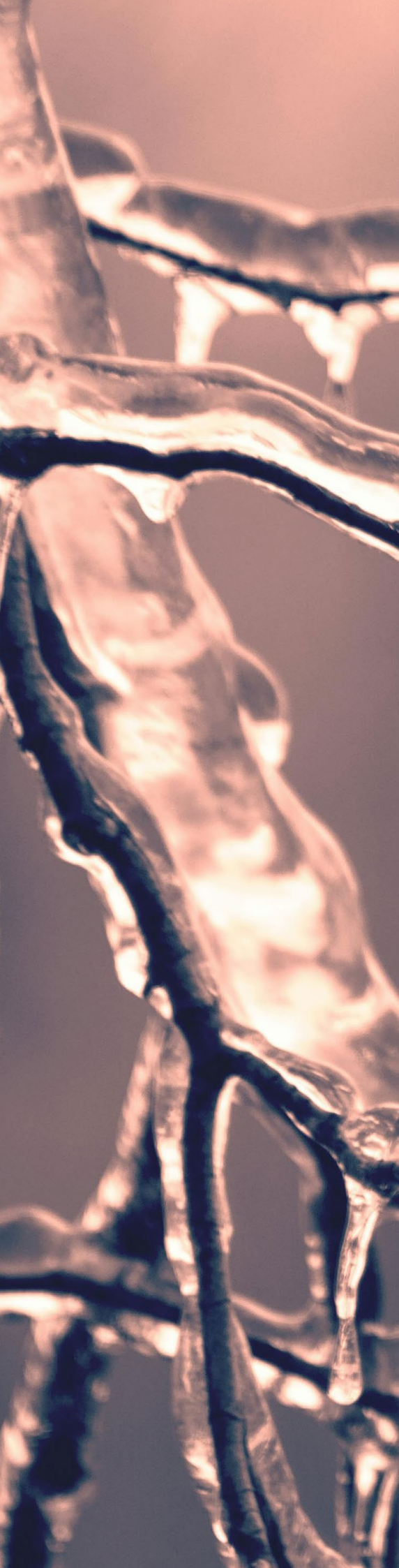
If I find myself in an unfortunate position of being asked to not return to a home group due to severe and extenuating circumstances, it doesn't mean I am kicked out of Narcot-

ics Anonymous. I just might need to find another meeting to go to. Are there any situations where an NA member can be asked to stay away from a specific meeting, and how does a home group navigate that without violating the Third Tradition, if so?

Guiding Principles gives us a lot to think about with the Third Tradition, such as whether or not a home group can place additional requirements on membership, or under what circumstances might a home group ask an NA member to stop coming around to their meeting. Those aren't easy questions for everyone, but the Second Tradition gives us a path to figure it out together, especially when we invite the literature in as a tool. How else can we see ties between the Second Tradition and the Third Tradition?

One of the greatest things about this Tradition, and really any of the Traditions, is I get to practice it on y'all, learn my lessons as I make mistakes, grow a deeper understanding of the spiritual principles behind it and how to apply it in NA service, and then start to practice in everyday society. And isn't that the idea?

How might I practice the Third Tradition with my family? Or at work? I think I start by not focusing so much on the words and instead pray and meditate on the spiritual principles holding it all up. My family might not be tethered together by a desire to stop using, but there is something there that ties us together and I can be inclusive there. My job



might have several requirements for “membership” on the payroll else it’s a pink slip, but I can still practice the spirituality behind the Third Tradition in how I interact.

I might not be met with the same integrity and values in outside society that I hold dear and am coming to understand and love more every day. But isn’t that also true in our fellowship, when we all slip up? In NA, I might have a duty to hold my brothers and sisters accountable in a loving way - when it is my part to do so, which is another topic of balance entirely. But it might not be my place in the same way when dealing with outside society. Sometimes, the best thing I can do is the best version of my part - the next right thing for me to do.

And there’s something to that with this Tradition. No one can take my NA membership card away from me. But I can certainly take it for granted, become complacent, trample on spiritual principles, show my butt, and cause wreckage. Is there anything else I can do to disrespect the guaranteed membership my desire to stop using grants me?

There’s something precious about the Third Tradition that makes me want to live up to my fullest potential in this program and in my dealings with others. To live the program in a way that carries a clear message about what NA membership can provide when opportunities to grow and recover are seized. Do we have any natural bridges like this to the Fifth Tradition?

There may be no additional requirements for membership other than a desire to stop using, but there are certainly implicit duties and responsibilities we strive for in this fellowship. And as far as I have experienced until now, those duties and responsibilities grow the more I grow awareness of the program. The more I learn about what not to do and what the next right thing is, the more I am accountable to follow the lead of God as I understand him along that path. To be of service and to think of others to the best of my ability.

And here, we might have a natural bridge to the Twelfth Step, don’t we?

In loving service,
James B

Life Beyond N.A.?



Tradition Three

*From "Some Personal Experiences
With The Traditions," The NA Way, March, 1985*

At my first meeting I had the misfortune of meeting a couple of overzealous members who ridiculed the way I was dressed - I was wearing a business suit. I felt intimidated; maybe I was not ready to clean up, maybe I hadn't lost enough yet, or hit my bottom. In any case, I took the comments of these addicts at face value. Therefore, I did not feel entirely welcome at my first meeting.

It got a little better at meetings after that, but because I had no understanding of the differences between financial and emotional bottoms, I wasn't sure that my life had become unmanageable. I began excluding myself from the

Fellowship, I had unconsciously bought what those two members had said, and had created some unwritten requirements for membership. I'm sure I was suffering from a loser complex, but nevertheless, I believed that I wasn't as bad as those I'd met at my first meeting. I hadn't been to prison or an asylum, nor had I been a prostitute or committed any felonious acts. On the other hand, I had gone far beyond the level of pothead or pill freak, and took great pride in being a street junkie. I was caught in the trap of seeing only the differences, and none of the similarities with other addicts.

It seemed obvious to me that I didn't belong in NA, because I had little desire to be like some of the people I had met in NA. In retrospect, I realize that I wasn't ready at that time. I guess I wasn't desperate enough. It was only after a few more years of doing it my way that I got to a point where my way just didn't work anymore. I knew there must be more to life than the meager existence I was living.

An accident got me back to meetings. It was at a time when fear and self-loathing made it easy for me to accept any offer of help or friendship. I was greedy for acceptance, and I found it at my next first meeting. I was surrounded this time by addicts who didn't seem to care how I was dressed, what I had used or how much. They only wanted to know if I had a ride home, or if I needed a ride to the next meeting. In their introductions and offers of phone

numbers and assistance, they accepted me at face value. Through their tone and manner, they demonstrated a desire to help me which I had not experienced the first time around.

I felt the first faint hope for myself, and felt that someone cared. In fact, it wasn't just someone, but three people - three people like myself. They weren't tough guys hung up on their past, but rather three addicts trying to change. They were trying to deal with the disease of addiction in all of their affairs, and to accept life after drugs.

In their behavior there was no hint of requirements for membership or acceptance. For them, my simple act of being present was enough. Now it becomes obvious why we have no written rules or requirements for membership in the Fellowship. However, we must always guard against those subtle requirements created through being insensitive to the newcomer, especially the newcomer who appears to be different. First impressions are so important. I know I will never forget my two first meetings.



Back to BASICS!



Before READING another book..

**READ NA's BASIC!
TEXT!-**

The one requirement we do have in NA is difficult to fulfill. Desire doesn't come easily. How many times have we wished someone we cared for would have a desire to stop using? The desire to quit is the greatest gift of all, for without it we have no starting place. Who would take the Twelve Steps without some sort of desire? I will never question another person's desire to stop using. When sharing with other addicts, I must always remember that my actions speak louder than my words.

*S.B.
California*





The Only Requirement for Membership and Our Primary Purpose

*Taken from the Issue Discussion Topic: **DRT/MAT as It Relates to NA: Helping Members Take Root**, currently found at: <https://na.org/idt/current-issue-discussion-topics>*

The previous two Issue Discussion Topics on DRT/MAT can be found here: <https://na.org/idt/issue-discussion-archive/>

We've been having conversations around Drug Replacement Therapy or Medication Assisted Treatment (DRT/MAT) for decades. We've written about the issues in *In Times of Illness, NA Groups and Medication*, and the PR pamphlet *NA Persons Receiving Medication Assisted Treatment*. The Fellowship has been surveyed on what to say in a piece of recovery literature about the topic, and that survey made it clear that we don't have a unified Fellowship position on this issue. Three previous Issue Discussion Topics (IDTs) have been at least partially devoted to the topic.

Many groups still struggle with how to respond to addicts who arrive at our doors on medication assisted treatment. And so, the discussion continues.

These conversations are important because:

- **It's not going away.**
- **Medication is part of treatment in and out of corrections, more and more often.**
- **Many people who come in on some kind of DRT/MAT are mandated by treatment or corrections that may require medication as part of their compliance.**
- **Whatever our individual feelings are about this subject, we exist in a larger world and its approach to addiction has changed. We need to consider how we carry the message in the world we live in, not the world we might wish for.**

How do we build a common bond when almost every door to Narcotics Anonymous has medication built into its frame? For many people outside NA, the lie is not dead: there is a prevailing belief that the only hope for the addict is long term treatment with medication. As an organization we don't endorse or oppose other approaches to recovery - even when it's tempting. That means we set aside any feelings we may have about the treatment industry when welcoming the newcomer.

The current Issue Discussion Topics Workshop on Drug Replacement Therapy/Medication Assisted Treatment isn't about focusing on entities outside of Narcotics Anonymous; it's about actively encouraging a dialogue about how we can further our primary purpose.

It is our job to make sure that recovery is available to anyone who wants it, and that it is attractive to those who need it.

The reality is NA's reputation affects our ability to carry the message. Most of our members first find NA through treatment or drug courts. If professionals are unwilling to refer people to NA, some addicts may never find us. No matter how people find NA, what makes them stay seems clear. Our most recent membership survey said that 82% stayed in NA because of identification with other members, and 68% said their first meeting was important or *very* important. We need to build on those strengths, and help people to find a sense of belonging in order to take root in Narcotics Anonymous.

Where we have consensus as a Fellowship:

- **Our message is hope and the promise of freedom. We are a program of complete abstinence.**
- **It doesn't matter what or how much you used.**
- **What we care about is what you want to do about your problem, and how we can help.**
- ***The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.***
- **We want people to be able to choose NA membership no matter how they arrive.**
- **We want NA to be a safe place to recover.**

Think about how you found a sense of belonging in NA and how we help to cultivate that for each other. Consider our own

experience of moving from an observer to an NA member, and consider what it took for you to take root in Narcotics Anonymous. The literature tells us that "there is no model of the recovering addict," and yet most of us have been challenged in one way or another as we made NA our home. What were some of the ways you felt your membership was challenged early in your recovery, and what made you "stick and stay?" How do we help people feel rooted and secure in Narcotics Anonymous?

"Our Third Tradition offers relief from reservations we might have about membership and about each other."
- Guiding Principles, p59

In the Third Tradition, *It Works: How & Why* reminds us that "the group is not the jury of desire.... No addict should be denied an opportunity to stay long enough to develop that desire. We can nurture that desire with loving acceptance." It also tells us that "...we are encouraged to open wide the doors of our meetings to any addict who wishes to join. We are asked to extend to others the care and concern that helped each of us find a sense of belonging."

In closing, think about these two questions:

- **How do you help to make space for a newcomer to surrender - even if it takes a long time?**
- **How can you set aside some of your own fear and judgment about members who come in on DRT/MAT to focus on helping addicts find a home in Narcotics Anonymous?**



Excerpt From Tradition Seven, *Guiding Principles: The Spirit of Our Traditions*

“**W**e ensure that NA will remain nonaffiliated, and that a desire to stop using will always be **the only requirement for membership**. We commit to making sure NA will be here when an addict reaches out for help. We may express that commitment in many ways; ultimately, it is how our gratitude speaks.”

Excerpt From Tradition Three, *It Works: How and Why*

“**C**ompassion lends kindness to all our efforts in service to others. With compassion as the foundation of our actions, we learn to support members through any difficulties they may experience. All too often, we are quick to judge the quality of another’s recovery or willingness. Tradition Three asks us to set aside our self-righteousness. Because **the only requirement for membership** is a quality we cannot measure, the right to judge another’s desire is denied us. Our attitude ought to be one of loving acceptance toward all addicts, regardless of any other problems they may experience. Generous application of compassion is more therapeutic to the suffering addict than a free application of judgment.”



The Third Tradition helps NA offer recovery to so many addicts by freeing us from having to make judgments about prospective members.

It eliminates the need for membership committees or applications. We are not asked to make decisions about anyone’s fitness for recovery. Since the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using, we as members have no reason to judge each other.

~From Tradition 3, *It Works How and Why*~



Upcoming Volunteer Region Events

- **VRSC Quarterly Meeting**
Dec 1, 9:30am CST
Crowne Plaza, Knoxville, TN
Available virtually via Zoom:
ID - 9013505030; PC - NATN
- **Show Me Region
Regional Assembly
Interim CAR/CAT Workshop**
Dec 14, 9am CST
Available virtually via Zoom:
ID - 84245267837; PC - RAC
Contact Info:
Susan M, RD
858-337-4411
Anne KVP, AD
636-279-0518
- **Holiday Italian Dinner
Presented by NA in May**
December 14, 6pm CST
*Trinity Unity Methodist
Church, 1738 Galloway,
Memphis, TN*
- **HOTArea of NA Fellowship
Development Presents:
Developing Our Members**
January 11, 11am - 5:30pm
*Woodbury Lions Club
634 Lehman Street
Woodbury, TN*
- **NA in May
Pancake Breakfast**
January 18, 9am CST
Colonial United Methodist

Church. 5330 Park Avenue,
Memphis, TN

- **Southern Zonal Forum Meeting**

Last weekend of January
The meeting will be held virtually. For more information, please visit: szfna.org

- **VRSC Quarterly Meeting**

February 2, 9:30am CST
Available virtually via Zoom: ID - 9013505030; PC - NATN

- **Important 2025 Interim World Service Conference (WSC)**

The CAR/CAT came out November 28 and can be found at na.org/conference
Amendments to interim CAR and CAT motions need to be in by February 13, 2025 (15 days before the WSC).

The Interim WSC meeting is February 28 & March 1, 2025, 11am-1pm & 2pm-4pm, Pacific Time. To see more important worldwide conference related dates, visit na.org/conference and look for the Important Dates & Deadlines dropdown menu.

- **NA in May**

May 2-4, 2025
4588 Billy Maher Rd,
Memphis TN
For more into, visit: nainmay.com

- **VRC 43**

Thanksgiving Weekend 2025
Memphis, TN

For more information and other events, please visit: natennessee.org/calendar/

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*Buy 2 items, get 3rd of the same or lower price for FREE!
(except for medallions, pins, and cloths, which have separate discounts)*

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That's because, for the first time ever, we're offering overstock merchandise from WCNA 38 for sale online! Buy two items and get a third of the same or lower price for free—except medallions, pins, and microfiber cloths, which have their own discounts.

Check it out at wcnashop.com





Volunteer *Spirit*

Thank You For Reading!

We at *Volunteer Spirit* would like to take a moment to sincerely thank you for reading! We are truly grateful.

It is a gift to share a message of hope with this publication, and we hope you have enjoyed reading as much as we have enjoyed putting it together!

Whether you have found something helpful, thought-provoking, or even just a little bit entertaining, we truly appreciate your choice to spend your time with us. If you enjoy *Volunteer Spirit*, please share it with others!

You can find this issue, as well as past issues, by visiting the Volunteer Region of Narcotics Anonymous website: <https://natennessee.org/volunteer-spirit/>

If you would like to submit to upcoming issues of *Volunteer Spirit*, feel free to contact us at: newsletter@natennessee.org