

A VIEW OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS GROUP CONSCIENCE

A Narcotics Anonymous Group is any meeting of two or more recovering addicts who meet regularly at a specific time and place for the purpose of recovery from the disease of addiction. All NA Groups are bound by the principles of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of NA. Each Group has but one primary purpose—to carry our message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. It is the most powerful vehicle for carrying that message.

The definition of conscience is a personal awareness of right and wrong that one uses to guide their actions to do right.

Our Second Tradition states, "For our Group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our Group conscience, our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern."

Every Group should have a conscience. A Group without a conscience is an unconscious Group. A Group conscience is where we all come together and invite a loving Higher Power to guide us as stated in our Second Tradition. True Group conscience is a collective Eleventh Step applied to a single issue. It is the utilization of spiritual principles by members of a Group to preserve the common welfare and fulfill the primary purpose of the Group. It is developed by first inviting a loving God to express Himself and then listening to what He delivers through the voice of each and every member. All members should be encouraged to achieve an understanding of the first three Steps. Group conscience in NA is the

responsibility of the NA Group and its members. When we surrender and seek out a loving Higher Power's will in our Groups we can obtain a true Group conscience. A Group conscience develops as a result of the process; indeed it is not the process itself.

When the NA Traditions were transcribed from AA, Group conscience was only a theory. Our predecessors said that they believed in something that did not exist. It is no longer a theory; Group conscience is now a reality.

"Group conscience is a collective understanding of, awareness of, and surrender to the principles within the Group; it is the basis of our decision making process."
— Greg Pierce.

Groups are autonomous and can function as they choose. However, it is important for a Group to strive for unanimity. In other words, make every effort to be 100% in agreement. The unanimous based process works well within an NA Group. The purpose of unanimity is so that everyone should be on the same page when guiding the Group. That way we have a single voice and not multiple voices going on at the same time. The benefit of unanimity is unity. All input should be considered equally from every member. Care should be taken to insure that everyone feels safe speaking their conscience. There are no big I's and little you's.

WHAT IS NOT NA GROUP CONSCIENCE?

Conscience is not a popularity contest. Too often we have seen a strong personality sway the Groups' decisions. In Group conscience, what is best for the Group and its members, including those members yet to

come, is usually best for the individual. It holds more importance than the personalities involved and is not about control or forcing self-will upon the Group.

Group conscience is not what happens in committee. Groups take instruction only from a loving God as expressed in Group conscience. Therefore, on issues that affect NA, the membership must be consulted directly so that the will of a loving God can be channeled through that process. Then the Groups are able to direct the service structure as to how to serve. Motions should originate only from an NA Group conscience. There is no "conscience" beyond the Group. Every other level of service merely compiles the conscience of NA Groups.

Group conscience is not a matter of simple vote. Instead it is a collective expression of every member's input. The business of the Group, defined by us as "How we spend the material component of the Seventh Tradition", is and always will be distinct from the spiritual business of the Group. The spiritual conscience of the Group influences how the money is spent. Ideally, the business of the Group will follow the conscience of the Group.

Robert's Rules of Order are not Group conscience. They were created to run government; therefore they are a form of governing which conflicts with the Second Tradition. Robert's Rules leaves the minority feeling marginalized. Its goal is to structure the debate and passage of proposals that win approval through majority vote. This process does not emphasize the goal of full agreement. Robert's Rules should not be used in a Groups conscience.

NA GROUP CONSCIENCE MEETING

As a Group we believe in distinguishing the conscience of the Group from everything else. Because of this distinction, we have our Group conscience Meeting on a separate day or time. In fact, in some parts of the world, it is common for a Group to have a separate Group conscience meeting. We dedicate our Group conscience meeting to God and use it as a vehicle to discover His will for our Group. Carrying the message is so important that many Groups take inventory regularly to help insure that our primary purpose is still in focus. We want to assure ourselves through the inventory process that God's will is running the meetings. The process of taking our Group's inventory is the best effort we can make in allowing a loving God to influence the Group. This allows the Group to present an atmosphere of recovery which makes it easier for God's voice to be heard.

The format we use is simple and allows for free, orderly discussion between Group members. It stresses for our members to express their feelings on how we have been carrying the NA message. It also allows us to add or detract from our Group format to adjust for changing times, as well as providing a place where members may discuss matters affecting NA as a whole. In essence, our Group conscience meeting is ideally a purely spiritual event where we can feel God's presence in the room. Each Homegroup member seeks their own conscience through conscious contact with their Higher Power and brings it to the Group.

Here is a typical meeting format.

1. Moment of silence/opening prayer
2. The complete 2nd Tradition is read from the book Narcotics Anonymous - Basic Text.

3. Group Inventory - The Twelve Traditions may be used as an outline for a Group inventory. Some Groups use a specific set of inventory questions, such as, "How are we doing carrying the message to the addict that still suffers and reaching out to the newcomer? Are we abiding by the Traditions? Are there addicts our Group isn't reaching? How can we make our meetings more accessible? What can we do to make new members feel more at home? Has the atmosphere of recovery diminished? Would a change in our meeting format strengthen that atmosphere?"

4. Minutes from the previous Group conscience meeting are read.

5. Group inventory of commitments and their related committees is taken. "How are trusted servants doing?"

6. Old business - Unfinished issues or any concerns or ideas that were brought up during the previous Group conscience meeting are addressed. We may or may not decide to act on these items.

7. New business. Everyone's input is needed. Group conscience is impossible without every member participating. This is where we might discuss other concerns like format changes. Unless everyone is on the same page and in agreement we do not change anything on the spot. We table it until the next time we meet while we pray, meditate and talk to our sponsors about it. At that time, the concerns become old business. This is what we know as a true Group conscience. There is no need for a sense of urgency or time sensitivity. If it's a good idea today, it will be a good idea tomorrow. After all of the Group concerns are taken care of, other service boards or committee's concerns may be addressed.

8. Closing Prayer



A View of Narcotics Anonymous Group Conscience

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A Different Look Group of NA
Please share this with your Homegroup
for review and input

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