

**Downeast Intergroup NEWSLETTER**  
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**Hotline (207) 479-1779**

The Downeast Inter group Committee is a group of AA members coming together in the spirit of fellowship to help carry the AA message by publishing a newsletter, sponsoring AA-oriented social events, and distributing AA literature. We support communication and participation between AA members, groups, and districts. Visit us at [downeastintergroup.org](http://downeastintergroup.org) for current events, meeting lists, a map of our member districts, and to read and download a copy of this newsletter.

**Step 9**

**Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except to do so would injure them or others**

Good judgment, a careful sense of timing, courage, and prudence – these are the qualities we shall need when we take Step 9.

After we have made the list of people we have harmed, have reflected carefully upon each instance and have tried to possess ourselves of the right attitude in which to proceed, we will see that making of direct amends divides those we should approach into several classes. There will be those who ought to be dealt with just as soon as we become reasonably confident that we can maintain our sobriety. There will be those to whom we can make only partial restitution, complete disclosures do them or others more harm than good. There will be other cases where action ought to be deferred, and still others in which by the very nature of the situation we shall never be able to make direct personal contact at all. We cannot buy our own peace of mind at the expense of others.

For the readiness to take the full consequences of our past acts, and to take responsibility for the well-being of others at the same time, is the very spirit of Step 9.

-Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions,

pp. 83, 84, 87

**Tradition 9**

Each A.A. group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the Officebest. The small group may elect its secretary, the large group its rotating committee, and the groups of a large area their central or intergroup committee, which often employs a full-time secretary. The trustees of the General Service Board are, in effect, our A.A. General Service Committee. They are the custodians of our A.A. Tradition and the receivers of voluntary contributions by which we maintain our A.A. General Service at New York. They are authorized by the groups to handle our overall public relations and they guarantee the integrity of our principal newspaper, the A.A. Grapevine. All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of service, for true leaders in A.A. are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority from their titles; they do not govern.

Universal respect is the key to our usefulness.

-Twelve Step and Twelve Traditions  
pp. 9, 191

### Why Study Tradition Nine?

*“A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.”*

A major principle identified during the course of my study of Tradition Nine was that of **“Organization”**. So what does that mean, and how does that benefit others and in the process my own program? (Common welfare comes before personal sobriety- Tradition One)

In the world outside Alcoholics Anonymous, many businesses and organizations have a hierarchy of authority where certain individuals have the authority to direct the actions of others. In A.A., we have a “fellowship of equals” where decisions are made democratically through a group conscience, and not by one or a few individual members. This way, a newcomer can immediately gain a feeling of belonging to and having a voice in group affairs.

The importance of giving all members an equal opportunity to express their views on matters ranging from what brand of coffee to buy to how they feel about the General Service Conference agenda items creates a strong sense of group unity, providing an atmosphere where everyone's opinion matters. When first walking into the rooms of AA dazed and confused, I found acceptance, respect, and a feeling that my life had purpose after all.



## Crosstalk

(from a safety workshop in Madawaska, Maine)

**Crosstalk is interrupting, commenting specifically to another person in the room or referring to another person's sharing.**

Here are some examples

“When I was sharing at my meeting last month, I was talking about how hard it is to have a conversation with my spouse about the importance of meetings. It talks about it in the Big Book and I wanted to hear more about best ways to deal with it. So & so said “she will never get it, stick around and you’ll see”. I was uncomfortable. I felt singled out. Then I was worried what if I saw so & so in public- would he say something to her?”

“I am new and when I went to my first few meetings it was difficult to feel like I fit in, probably like everyone else has felt. I raised my hand and said my name is so & so, I think I am an alcoholic. I was a little embarrassed when everyone clapped and yelled out “welcome”. Every person who talked afterward talked to me and referred to me. I was more uncomfortable then before. I could barely stand myself and everyone saying my name or talking to me made me feel like I was different. My new sponsor said, “they were trying to help you see that you were among your own kind”. that feeling is still pretty foreign to me and calling me out made me feel different.

“Commenting on my share is unsolicited advice, which nearly took me out of the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous 2 decades ago. Most times I just want to share my truth without commentary from anyone. I just want it out of my head. No need to reinforce my disease with yours.”

### **Group Report Back Solutions**

- Provide info to meetings and groups about crosstalk
- Keep topic on the topic (rather than going off topic)
- Group members responsible for stopping someone who may be talking about someone else’s share.
- Good sponsorship conversation
- If group allows crosstalk (a beginners meeting encourages new comers to ask questions of the chair/commitment to drive the meeting topic).
- When a person is sharing, no need to verbally agree with them during or after their share.

The Puzzle Piece  
By Heath W.

One of my recent A.A. meetings was one of those special meetings. One that stuck with me for days, and I couldn’t stop thinking about how powerful it was. It was one of the clearest signs that there are no coincidences - I was meant to be there at that exact moment. I was sitting in the right place at the right time. We were sharing about loss, and it just hit home with me. My story and how I got here begins with loss.

I grew up in a big, loving, Christian home. My dad was a pastor and had a few health issues when I was young. I was four years old when he had a stroke and some blood clot issues that slowed him down from the man he was, but didn’t stop him and his mission to spread the gospel. He survived death that year. The doctor came to

my mother and older sisters and told them that he wasn't going to survive the night, and that they should go in to prepare to say goodbye. But God had a different plan for him. He not only survived that night, but also lived for many years after. It wasn't until I was in 6th grade that my dad's health issues caught up to him again. Suddenly, one day he didn't feel well and went to the hospital. I woke up the next morning to my mother and sisters telling me that Dad had passed away. As you can imagine, that was pretty rough, and at that age, I definitely didn't know how to deal with loss.

In the same year, months later, my two oldest sisters and their husbands were opening a Christian youth camp in Vermont for inner city kids. Their husbands were some of the most mentally and physically strong men I ever knew, and they always provided good leadership and guidance for me. One evening, they went out to plan a canoe route for the campers. On the way to the water, one of the guys slipped and hit his head before falling into the water. The current quickly pulled him into the river, and the other jumped in to save him. The current took them both into a strong whirlpool, pulling them under. They both drowned.

With so much loss just months apart from each other, my family was crushed and truly heartbroken. I lost my dad and the two other men I looked up to most, losing the leadership in my life. I took this new freedom and started to rebel. Slowly but surely, I did whatever I wanted. I thought I was my own boss. The only leadership I had left was in our church family, and even though I was doing whatever I wanted, they were still supportive and a big part of my life. That was, until a few years later when I got my sixteen-year-old girlfriend pregnant. My relationship with her fell apart, and I was treated like a threat at church. I had broken rules in the bible and they abandoned me, making it clear they didn't want me around. That was the last bit of guidance I had left. I became pretty bitter and angry at the world and God. I drank and partied with my band mates and friends - drinking really started to work its way up to my best friends list fast. It quickly became my outlet for everything. When bad things would continue to happen, it was easy and comforting to drink, but eventually I drank to all my emotions - good, bad, happy or sad. Drinking became all I knew.

Throughout my life I never felt that I fit in anywhere – always searching for true friends and relationships. My family was always there, but their guidance always revolved around God, and I didn't want to hear about that anymore. Because of drinking, I wrecked job opportunities, friendships, and relationships over the years, until wrecking this last one. I had finally lost it all. The only thing I really knew to help me get through it was drinking, but that didn't even help me anymore. Instead of taking my life, I admitted defeat and was finally willing to get some help.

My whole life I have felt like this puzzle piece that just couldn't find where it fit into the world. Over and over, trying to force it where it didn't belong. It was Rehab that led me to Alcoholics Anonymous, and it was there I found the guidance I had been longing for my whole life. It's in A.A. that I have truly found my saving relationship with God. I learned forgiveness and how to love others, and myself for the first time. It is through A. A. that my puzzle piece found its home and where I've belonged this whole time. I fit in right here.

**Anniversaries:**

Please send in your notifications of anniversaries for the October newsletter.

This is my last issue that I will be editor of the newsletter. Thank you all for allowing me to serve

**Trust God, clean house, help others**