

## Our Traditions and Concepts: A Foundation for Leadership in NA

### Welcome and Introduction: 20 minutes

#### **Session leader's instructions:**

*Thank the group for their time and commitment to service. Lead brief self-introductions (only if necessary).*

*Have the group introduce themselves, stating their current service position. If the group is large or time is short then run through a 'service position countdown' to give an outline of the experience in the room.*

### Session Focus and Outcomes

"Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous." So states our 4<sup>th</sup> Concept.

We have already discussed the qualities we want to see in our leaders in NA in previous conference cycles – now we want to try to focus on some of the spiritual principles of our program that relate to leadership and see how we can put them into practice (use the first PowerPoint slide with the 'Leadership' graphic as a visual aid if available).

Leaders help us organize, focus our energy and resources, and act in unity. Without good leaders – at all levels of our service structure – it will be challenging, if not impossible, to achieve our goal – to carry the message of recovery to all addicts who suffer.

The purpose of this session is to introduce some of the basic foundational principles of leadership including:

- the traditions and concepts which help form the foundation of leadership in NA,
- how effective leaders can help service bodies function better as a team.

### Small Group Process

#### **Session leader's instructions:**

*Review length of session and other important logistics. Explain small group process: groundrules & facilitator guidelines if necessary. Each group should choose a facilitator and recorder. Stress the need to share ideas and experience, to stay focused, to learn with an open mind and heart, etc.*

### Introduction to Small Group Discussion on Leadership Principles

The source for guidance on the role, qualities, and practice of leadership in NA comes from our Steps, Traditions and Concepts.

Any discussion of leadership must start here, and the foundation for success of any leader in NA must start with an understanding of our Steps, Traditions and Concepts.

This session focuses on a few of our Traditions and Concepts that have much to teach us regarding leadership in NA.

We are going to have a small group discussion about the traditions and concepts. Each group will be assigned a tradition and a concept and discuss what they teach us about leadership in NA, and how we should apply these traditions or concepts in our role as leaders. First we will walk through a discussion of the Fourth Concept together in a large group as an example.

**Session leader's instructions:**

Ask the group to answer first: **What does this concept teach us about leadership in NA?** and then **How could we apply this concept in our role as leaders?** Write the points down on a post-it at the front of the room. Be sure the responses include the following points, or you can suggest them as the discussion progresses if you need to.

**4<sup>th</sup> Concept:** “Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.”

**What this concept teaches about leadership in NA:**

- That we have leaders and that we value them.
- One of the ways we value them is in selecting people who fit the task. Once they are elected, we can provide them with the tools and training they need to be successful.
- Every member has something to contribute and has the potential to play a leadership role in some way. Leaders will help develop potential in others by creating leadership opportunities.
- Leadership is not only ‘position’ or ‘title’. There are many ways to exercise leadership in NA.

**How could we apply this concept in our role as leaders?**

- One of the most important roles of a leader is to help identify and cultivate leaders within the members they serve, by mentoring them, supporting them and appropriately matching talent to task.

**Small Group Discussion: 40 minutes**

**Materials – Worksheet #1**

**Session leader's instructions:**

Break attendees into small groups (aim for 5-10 per group) if they haven't been already. Assign half of the room the First Tradition and the other half the Ninth Concept

Take 20 minutes for each group to discuss the significance of the tradition or concept they've been given. Answer the same questions as the previous exercise.

**What does the tradition or concept teach us about leadership in NA?**

**How could we apply the tradition or concept in our role as leaders?**

Come up with specific examples - **stress this point!**

**Session leader's instructions:**

Make sure to keep groups on task—ten minutes per question. Announce the time a couple of minutes before they should switch from the first to the second question. Then announce the time again at the time they should be finishing.

At the end of 20 minutes review each tradition or concept provided. Ask groups who discussed that particular tradition or concept to report, focusing on a couple of points from their discussion. Ask other groups who discussed the same tradition/concept not to repeat points already reported, but to add to the discussion with new insights. As the facilitator, add to the discussion by offering the points for each tradition or concept used in the activity. (The filled in worksheets below provide additional points you can add.)

<p><b>NA Concepts and Traditions</b></p>	<p><i>Review the Concepts and Traditions assigned and answer the following questions:</i></p> <p><b>What do they teach us about leadership in NA? How could we apply them in our role as leaders? (Give specific examples.)</b></p>
<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> Tradition:</b> “Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA unity.”</p>	<p><b>What this tradition teaches about leadership in NA:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Leaders are accountable to the group.</li> <li>○ Leaders focus on what’s best for the group and NA as a whole.</li> <li>○ A leader’s impact on others as individuals and on the success of the service structure as a whole is significant and can give a leader a tremendous sense of satisfaction, worth and purpose.</li> </ul> <p><b>How could we apply this tradition in our role as leaders?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ We have a responsibility to elect the best leaders possible and support them. There are both constructive and destructive ways to question the activity of a service committee.</li> </ul>
<p><b>9<sup>th</sup> Concept:</b> “All elements of our service structure have the responsibility to carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making process.”</p>	<p><b>What this concept teaches about leadership in NA:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Leaders make sure that all points of view are heard in a discussion.</li> <li>○ Leaders create an environment in which all are comfortable in offering their perspective, and in which disagreement can lead to more productive outcomes.</li> <li>○ Leaders facilitate the development of group conscience, accept it and ensure it is carried out.</li> </ul> <p><b>How could we apply this concept in our role as leaders?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Leaders don’t impose their will or perspective on the group. They may challenge some of the assumptions in a discussion in order to help the group, but leaders are facilitators.</li> </ul>

Draw attention to the other side of worksheet #1, which contains some points around Tradition Two and the Third Concept. Invite participants to add to these later, or workshop them from scratch in their own communities.

**Leadership and Teamwork: Applying Traditions and Concepts in NA**

**Large Group Discussion – Operating as Part of a Team: 20 minutes**  
**Materials – Worksheet #2**

As all of these traditions and concepts indicate, leadership is not a solo action. We will close this session with a brief discussion about working well as a team and how a leader can help the team function better.

To be effective, leaders draw from the diverse talents and experience of the group – strengths they may not possess themselves.

Operating as a team has many benefits, such as:

- building unity around a common purpose and vision,
- broadening the opportunities for service,
- developing future leaders.

**Session leader's instructions:**

*Read the scenario below to the group and ask them to answer the following questions:*

**1. What could be the source of the problem?**

**2. Which of the characteristics of an effective team is the ASC not exhibiting?**

**3. What could the more experienced members do to help get the ASC back on track?**

*In facilitating the discussion, encourage the group to pull from their own experience in working on teams, as well as the tips provided on worksheet #2.*

**Team Scenario:** “The more experienced members of the Area Service Committee are frustrated. The ASC doesn’t seem to be functioning well as a team. The H&I committee wants more money for literature than the ASC has budgeted for their committee. Many GSRs just come to buy their literature and leave. Activities want to do their third event without submitting a budget for the first one. Three people want to be convention chair but none are willing to stand for PI/PR chair.”

**Large Group Discussion – Qualities of NA Leaders: 10 minutes**

**Materials – Worksheet #3**

If these are some of the principles that relate to leadership in our fellowship, what are some of the qualities leaders must have? What does it take to play a leadership role in NA?

**Session leader's instructions:**

*Ask the group for examples of some critical skills or qualities that leaders in NA must possess to be effective. Summarize by emphasizing a few of the points from Worksheet #3. Tell the group that the items on this list came from a review of many discussions on leadership among the fellowship over the past two Conference cycles. Relate the points from the sheet to some of the input attendees gave earlier in the session if possible.*

Encourage the group to delve further into our Traditions and Concepts to learn more about our roles as leaders in NA. Virtually all of the Traditions and Concepts have something to teach us about leadership.