

THE GROUP-OUR PRIMARY PURPOSE WORKSHOP FORMAT (90 minutes) IRVANA SPIRITUAL RETREAT 2011

Objectives:

- Get people thinking about: NA's message, ways to carry the message (to potential, new and longtime members), principles used to maintain an atmosphere of recovery
- Interact with others and feel a part of, meet new people

Materials needed: paper for reporters, pens, big pad of paper, easel, markers, ground rule/brainstorm handouts (2 per table), "Tradition 5" handout to read and copies for all, 16 sheets of each question for small group tables (2 per table)

FACILITATOR FORMAT:

- I. (FACILITATOR 1): Introduction (5 minutes)
 - a. Introduce ourselves (FACILITATOR 1) and (FACILITATOR 2)
 - b. (FACILITATOR 1): This workshop will be focused on the how our groups carryout Our Primary Purpose as it applies to Tradition 5.
 - c. We will be discussing and sharing with one another throughout the workshop about ways the groups carry the message.
 - d. Everyone else introduce themselves and where they are from (Area &/or town)
 - e. Number off into small groups (5-8 per group) and rearrange at new tables
 - f. Handout "Tradition 5" from the Basic Text to each participant

- II. (FACILITATOR 1): Large group brainstorm (15 min)
 - a. Ask a participant to read aloud to the large group one paragraph of "Tradition Five" (from the Basic Text), then have other participants read each subsequent paragraph aloud until finished with handout. Reiterate what our message is. (5 min)
 - b. Ask large group "How was the message initially carried to you? In other words, how did you learn about Narcotics Anonymous?"
 - c. Record answers on large pad (facilitator 2 writes) (5 min)
 - d. Add examples if people are having a hard time brainstorming (saw a flyer, heard an H&I panel in treatment or jail, website, phonline, NA literature, etc.)
 - e. Read aloud, "**The groups' focus on carrying the message is so important to the survival of NA that it is called our primary purpose. That means it is the most important thing we do. Nothing ought to take precedence over it. This is the most basic guideline by which groups may examine their motives and their actions.**" from *It Works: How and Why*, page 118
 - f. Ask large group "Why is the newcomer the most important person at any meeting?"
 - g. Record answers on large pad (facilitator 2 writes) (5 min)
 - h. Add examples if people are having a hard time brainstorming (to keep NA alive, to inspire, to show it isn't working out there still, to show them love & hope & a new way of life, etc)

- III. (FACILITATOR 2): Instructions for small groups: (10 min)
 - a. "Now you're going to brainstorm on some questions within your own table's group. So for this part you will need to pick a person to be a facilitator, another to be a recorder, and a third person to be a reporter. The facilitator will keep the group on task and encourage all members at the table to give input. The recorder will record all brainstorming answers on the paper provided @ your tables. After you are finished brainstorming, the reporter will give state some of your answers to the whole large group." So, take a minute to pick your people." (5 min)
 - b. Pass out paper and pens for recorders

THE GROUP-OUR PRIMARY PURPOSE WORKSHOP FORMAT (90 minutes)
IRVANA SPIRITUAL RETREAT 2011

- c. Ask a volunteer to read "Brainstorming Guidelines"
 - d. Ask another volunteer to read "Suggested Ground Rules"
- IV. (FACILITATOR 2): In small groups (20 min)
- a. Ask small groups to brainstorm ideas to the question, "How can we plant the seed to newcomers and people yet to find us?" (Handout question -2 to each group) (5 min)
 - b. Ask small groups to brainstorm ideas to the question, "What is the value of this tradition to experienced members?" (Handout question -2 to each group) (5 min)
 - c. After small groups have come up with a list, ask each group's reporter to name one idea they came up with for the first question to the large group. (5 min)
 - d. Write groups' answers on large pad (facilitator 1 writes)
 - e. Ask reporters for a solution they came up with for the second question. (5 min)
 - f. Write groups' answers on large pad (facilitator 1 writes)
- V. (FACILITATOR 1): In large and small groups (15 min)
- a. Ask the **large** group to answer the question, "What would happen if the groups had a different primary purpose?"
 - b. Record answers on large pad (facilitator 2 writes)(5 min)
 - c. Ask the **small** groups to think of some answers to the question, "What are some distractions/hinderances/influences that can divert **our group** from our primary purpose" (Handout question -2 to each group) (5 min)
 - d. After small groups have come up with a list, ask each group's reporter to name one idea they came up with for the small group question and tell to the large group. (5 min)
 - e. Write groups' answers on large pad (facilitator 2 writes)
- VI. (FACILITATOR 2): In large and small groups (15 min)
- a. Ask the **large** group to answer the question, "What principles do we use to carry the message?"
 - b. Record answers on large pad (facilitator 1 writes)(5 min)
 - c. Ask the **small** groups to brainstorm solutions to the question, "How do we maintain an atmosphere of recovery in our groups?"(Handout question -2 to each group)(5 min)
 - d. After small groups have come up with a list, ask each group's reporter to name one idea they came up with for the small group question to the large group. (5 min)
 - e. Write groups' answers on large pad (facilitator 1 writes)
- VII. (Facilitator 2): In large group wrap-up –all groups share ideas, thoughts, experiences (10 min)
- a. Ask for people to share on "How do we provide consistency in our groups?"
 - b. If low on time, don't write on pad, just take answers. If good on time, write on pad (facilitator 1 writes).
 - c. Facilitator 2 read aloud to large group, "**Narcotics Anonymous is a fellowship with meetings around the world. Our primary purpose is a common thread that unites us. Tradition Five defines the focus of Narcotics Anonymous. This focus also helps to ensure our survival as a fellowship. The Fifth Tradition asks us to serve other addicts by carrying the message that recovery is possible in Narcotics Anonymous. This concentrated focus protects the integrity of our fellowship.**" from *It Works: How and Why*, page 121
 - d. Close with prayer

Tradition Five

“Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.”

“You mean to say that our primary purpose is to carry the message? I thought we were here to get clean. I thought that our primary purpose was to recover from drug addiction.” For the individual, this is certainly true; our members are here to find freedom from addiction and a new way of life. However, groups aren’t addicted and don’t recover. All our groups can do is plant the seed for recovery and bring addicts together so that the magic of empathy, honesty, caring, sharing, and service can do their work. The purpose of this tradition is to ensure that this atmosphere of recovery is maintained. This can only be achieved by keeping our groups recovery-oriented. The fact that we, each and every group, focus on carrying the message provides consistency; addicts can count on us. Unity of action and purpose makes possible what seemed impossible for us—recovery.

The Twelfth Step of our personal program also says that we carry the message to the addict who still suffers. Working with others is a powerful tool. “The therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel.” For the newcomers, this is how they found Narcotics Anonymous and learned to stay clean. For the members, this reaffirms their commitment to recovery. The group is the most powerful vehicle we have for carrying the message. When a member carries the message, he is somewhat bound by interpretation and personality. The problem with literature is language. The feelings, the intensity, and the strengths are sometimes lost. In our group, with many different personalities, the message of recovery is a recurring theme.

What would happen if our groups had another primary purpose? We feel our message would be diluted and then lost. If we concentrated on making money, many might get rich. If we were a social club, we could find many friends and lovers. If we specialized in education, we’d end up with many smart addicts. If our specialty was medical help, many would get healthy. If our group purpose were anything other than to carry the message, many would die and few would find recovery.

What is our message? The message is that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. Our message is hope and the promise of freedom. When all is said and done, our primary purpose can only be to carry the message to the addict who still suffers because that is all we have to give.

(reprinted from Basic Text Narcotics Anonymous, Sixth Edition, pg. 67-68)

**HOW CAN WE PLANT THE SEED TO
NEWCOMERS AND PEOPLE YET TO FIND
US?**

**WHAT IS THE VALUE OF THIS TRADITION
TO EXPERIENCED MEMBERS?**

**WHAT ARE SOME DISTRACTIONS/
HINDRANCES/INFLUENCES THAT CAN
DIVERT OUR GROUP FROM OUR PRIMARY
PURPOSE?**

**HOW DO WE MAINTAIN AN ATMOSPHERE
OF RECOVERY IN OUR GROUPS? HOW DO
WE PROVIDE CONSISTENCY?**