

OUR FREEDOM, OUR RESPONSIBILITY

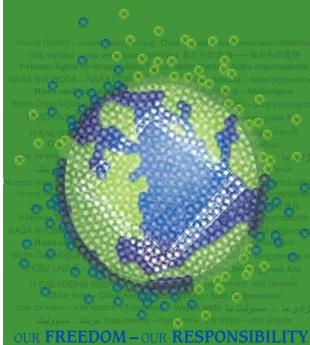
2008 2010

BUILDING
COMMUNICATION

OUR FREEDOM, OUR
RESPONSIBILITY

LEADERSHIP

Discussion questions for *Building Communication* and *Our Freedom, Our Responsibility* follow. We will post session outlines and handouts on the web for these topics, along with similar material on the third IDT, *Leadership*. Conference participants loved the new material on leadership we introduced at WSC 2008, and they're eager to hold local workshops with this material. Now you can, too.



For more information
go to

[WWW.NA.ORG/
IDT/IDT.HTM](http://WWW.NA.ORG/IDT/IDT.HTM)

FELLOWSHIP ISSUE DISCUSSIONS

The process of fellowship issue discussions continues to grow and evolve, allowing us to continually strive to work better, both at local levels and as a worldwide organization. Over the previous cycle, we discussed *Building Strong Home Groups*, *Who Is Missing from Our Meetings and Why?*, and *Our Service System*. These discussions have provided us with ideas and input that helped in the creation of tools for the fellowship, including the Building Strong Home Groups worksheet, service pamphlets, and leadership modules. These discussions also had an impact on the projects approved at the 2008 World Service Conference.

The theme for WSC 2008, and for this conference cycle, is **“Our Freedom, Our Responsibility.”** Many of our biggest challenges seem to involve putting what we believe into action at every level. This includes taking the time to have a thorough, honest look at our home groups to see how we can improve, and being willing to step outside of our comfort zone and work extra hard to carry our message to addicts who may think that they don't belong here, because we know they do. This also means that we need to exercise the courage to step up and try new ideas in our service system. As our Basic Text states, “We learn that we are growing when we make new mistakes instead of repeating old ones.”

The Issue Discussion Topics for the 2008-2010 cycle are *Building Communication*, *Our Freedom, Our Responsibility*, and *Leadership* (sound familiar? it should!). These topics all carry forward aspects from our discussions during previous conference cycles. Communication has been one of the important elements of our discussions on *Infrastructure* (2004–2006) and *Our Service System* (2006–2008). The topic of responsibility has come up in response to the common refrain we've heard in discussions throughout the fellowship for years, that our service efforts in many places are hindered by apathy and a lack of participation. Leadership similarly has been a topic of fellowshipwide discussion for several conference cycles now and continues to be a focus of our efforts throughout the service structure.

We all need to begin to recognize our personal ownership and responsibility for the success of NA in carrying our message and achieving our vision. By improving and diversifying our communications at every level, we can broaden awareness in the fellowship about what is happening in the NA service system. And by encouraging greater personal and collective responsibility for that service system, we can begin to develop an atmosphere of leadership among our trusted servants, as well as an increased desire to support the work done on behalf of NA groups worldwide.

As we have done in the past, we will develop session profiles with step-by-step outlines to help members facilitate workshops on these topics. These profiles, information about the Issue Discussion Topics, and topic-oriented online discussion boards will all be available on our website at <http://www.na.org/IDT/IDT.htm>. As we did in 2006–2008, we will use fellowship input from the first half of the conference cycle to refocus these discussions mid-way through this conference cycle, so be sure to check back often and watch *The NA Way Magazine* for updates.

OUR FREEDOM, OUR RESPONSIBILITY

We attend meetings and make ourselves visible and available to serve the Fellowship. We give freely and gratefully of our time, service, and what we have found here. The service we speak of in Narcotics Anonymous is the primary purpose of our groups. Service work is carrying the message to the addict who still suffers. The more eagerly we wade in and work, the richer our spiritual awakening will be.

Basic Text,
Step Twelve

Most of us came into Narcotics Anonymous with no clear sense at all of what “freedom” meant. The only freedom we really understood or wanted was the freedom to be left alone to pursue our self destruction without interference. Of course, NA changed all of that. Staying clean, working steps, getting involved, and building relationships with others and a Higher Power all have had a part in changing how we see freedom today.

Recovery starts with the freedom not to use, and the freedom to change progresses to the freedom to live our dreams. As the Ninth Step essay in our Basic Text tells us, “In time many miracles will occur.” Indeed, each of us who has been clean for any appreciable period of time, has seen those miracles unfold in his or her life. Where once we were afraid to leave our house or our neighborhood, now we travel and cross borders without fear. We have the freedom to build healthy relationships, to make choices, and to live comfortably.

Through NA we are given the ability to create lives of meaning. We are the makers of our lives, not just the “takers” of what is given to us. Freedom is a gift that we cherish. We show that we cherish that gift by being of service. Just as the “miracles” about which the Ninth Step essay speaks are the result of the work we’ve done in the eight steps before it, most of us come to understand that the price of freedom is responsibility. Many of us were “drafted” into NA service when we were relatively new in the program because someone, often our sponsor, told us it is what we “have” to do. We let ourselves be dragged to group business meetings and service committees. When we participated we were taken out of isolation and we learned to care. We may have even taken a position and served to the best of our ability because we felt we owed that much to NA. Over time, we come to see that we owe it to ourselves as well. Being of service to others is a part of our Twelfth Step work, and the spirit of service comes to infuse all areas of our lives. We know we have to give it away to keep it.

What’s more, we *want* to serve. This is our fellowship and it feels good to take responsibility for its well-being. We have been given a precious gift and we must look after it. Though many of us got clean in places where there were plenty of NA meetings and literature, the health of NA rests with us, now and in the future. We have had an evolution; initially, we may have just done what we were told to do—willing, if inexperienced, worker bees—but we become self-motivated trusted servants. We have developed a sense of self-worth through being productive, giving members of the NA community in which we live, work, play, and recover. We come to understand that responsibility is not a burden; it’s just as much of a gift as freedom. We are citizens of a worldwide NA community and it’s a privilege to contribute however we can.

The questions that follow invite us to talk about that understanding—how we put it into practice and how we can help others reach it. We have a responsibility to protect our freedoms. Those of us who are active participants have made a transition from seeing responsibility as something we have to do to something we want to do.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do I exercise my sense of responsibility in NA?
2. How can we help inspire others to become willing to share that responsibility?

It’s worth taking some time to reflect together or individually on our collective future: What would the fellowship look like if we all reached this point and took responsibility to make sure that others have an opportunity to experience our way of life—that no addict need die without having heard the message of NA?