

We, Entry #1 of 2

In NA, our identification as addicts is what we have in common (*In Times of Illness, "Mental Health Issues"*).

What bound our predecessors together in NA's early days is what connects us today: it's our identification as addicts through the common lens of the disease of addiction and our desire to get clean. That commonality alone means that we belong here and with each other—despite what or how much we used, the specifics of our stories and experiences, and what makes us different as people. One of NA's gifts, we hear members say over and over again, is having relationships with people whom we very likely would never even have met, let alone connected with, outside the rooms.

NA's success as a Fellowship since its inception has hinged on this fact: Our best hope for recovery from addiction is banding together to help each other out. Our common welfare—the health and well-being of our groups and NA as a whole—underpins our personal recovery. That includes every member of this Fellowship, past and present. Even our future members depend on the "we" of NA. Though we may approach them in a variety of ways, it's no accident that eleven of the Twelve Steps start with the word "We."

But "we" isn't just a concept. Like all principles, its practical application is what makes it spiritual. When we identify, we connect. When we share our true selves, that connection deepens. When we help each other and accept help, we stay connected. Above all, practicing 'we' is fulfilling our primary purpose of carrying the message of recovery to the still-suffering addict.

I will be mindful of practicing "we" today by investing in our common welfare: I'll keep what I have by giving it away to another addict.

We, Entry #2 of 2

Tradition One asks us to shift our perspective. For the first time, “we” comes before “me” (*Guiding Principles*, Tradition One, “For Members”).

Each and every addict who comes to NA and hears a message is able to do so only as the direct result of members serving NA. Plenty of NA literature discusses the paradox of keeping what we have by giving it away, and our Traditions outline a practical guide for doing so. As this Tradition One quotation indicates, it starts by thinking about the good of the group before thinking of ourselves.

As addicts, putting anything ahead of ourselves is a foreign concept. Some of the first things we do in NA are perfect practice for this. “In my first year, I never wanted to share,” one member wrote. “A home group member told me that I had to start opening my mouth or I would be stealing. I thought I had nothing to offer, but when I shared, I realized it wasn’t about me.” Being part of NA by sharing or taking service commitments helps us, but it’s not just for us—when we share in a meeting, when we show up early to set up chairs, we are actively participating in the common welfare of NA.

The same holds true as we gain cleantime. One member shared, “When I had a few years clean, I told my sponsor that all the meetings I had been going to were pretty bad lately. My sponsor suggested I start focusing on what I was bringing to the meeting instead of what I was getting out of it...and wouldn’t you know, suddenly I was going to a lot of good meetings!”

Contributing to our common welfare lets us “be the we.” We focus on giving instead of getting—at the group level and beyond—and we find that the way we experience recovery gets better and better.

Shifting the focus from “me” to “we” doesn’t mean disappearing from the picture. I will bring the best of me to NA so that WE will all do much better as a result.