Cooperation, Entry 1 of 2

_It’s essential in whatever way we give back that we are able to share with others and to cooperate, and these are not skills most of us bring to the rooms with us._

— *Living Clean*, Chapter 7, “Principles, Practice, and Perspective”

Sharing and cooperation are generally taught to us as children as a core social value. A lot of us, however, didn’t quite absorb the critical lessons of sharing what you have, playing nice with others, and being helpful. Some version of “Together we can”—prioritizing the greater good and the concept of common welfare—is posted on schoolroom walls all over the world, just like the Twelve Traditions are often on display in our meeting rooms.

If we didn’t learn the lesson then, we can learn it now—and help other addicts to follow suit. The NA Fellowship is built on cooperation, mutual support, and shared leadership. True cooperation requires that we have respect for each individual with an eye toward acting in the group’s best interest. What is freely given is freely shared. We share our skills as well as our experience, strength, and hope.

In keeping with Tradition One, we can learn to disagree without being disagreeable. Taking disagreements personally is a threat to practicing cooperation and puts our common welfare at risk. Working the Twelve Steps helps us to be up to the challenge of sharing space, serving, and cooperating with those we don’t agree with. We pitch in even when we’re not happy with the group’s conscience, or at the very least, we don’t just quit when things don’t go the way we wanted.

Our cooperative participation helps deliver NA’s message to the still-suffering addict, and it helps our own recovery. We grow and thrive when we participate. We need each other, and NA needs us, too.

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*I am committed to overcoming my self-centered tendencies today by cooperating with other addicts to fulfill our purpose of carrying the message of recovery.*
Cooperation, Entry 2 of 2

Time and time again, in crises we have set aside our differences and worked for the common good.

—Basic Text, Tradition One

Cooperation is fundamental to what we do in NA, starting from the moment when the message is first carried to us. “I didn’t get clean because of my own Step One,” an addict shared. “I got clean because of someone else’s Step Twelve.” Whether we first heard the message from one member, a group, or a piece of literature, carrying the message to a using addict requires cooperation. We are clean because other members cooperated with each other—and we cooperated by listening and believing that recovery was possible for us, too.

Our cooperation in NA continues well beyond that first moment of willingness to listen and receive a message of hope. As we stay clean and get to know our fellow members better, we cooperate with each other and keep the doors open for the addicts yet to come. We’re sure to see or experience friction at some point, but addicts in recovery can be surprising in their ability to come together when it really matters.

“I got clean in a small town, and there were only two addicts at my first meeting,” a member wrote. “They carried a message to me that night. I thought they were best friends. Later, I learned that they couldn’t stand each other. I never would have known it from my first night clean.”

Some differences are more extensive than just a personality clash. “Our city was divided on racial/ethnic lines,” a group wrote. “We had two areas with big overlaps, and they didn’t get along. Some members finally had enough and created an annual unity event bringing both areas together. It was sort of controversial at first, but every year it gets bigger and better. Since it started, our areas have started collaborating on H&I and public relations service, too.”

Placing principles before personalities means cooperating whether I get along with someone or not. I will do my best to set aside differences for NA unity.