

TRADITION TEN

"Alcoholics anonymous has no opinion on outside issues: hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy"

Drinking alcohol is one of the symptoms of alcoholism, but it is not the only symptom. I sat on a barstool for quite a few years and got very skilled at debating the good or the bad of just about any issue that a person could come up with. I became very crafty at it and prided myself in the fact that I could take any side of an argument and come up with indisputable evidence that I had it right. I carried that arrogance with me into every area of my life and I'm sure I alienated many of my friends and associates, if I really had any. I brought this character trait with me to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous and continued to shoot my mouth off well into my years of sobriety.

In the first paragraph of Tradition Ten, in the 12X12 it quotes an old-timer as declaring that "Practically never have I heard a heated religious, political, or reform argument among A. A. members. So long as we don't argue these matters privately, it's a cinch we never shall publicly." I wish that I could make that claim, but I can't. I was one of the worst offenders in my early days of sobriety. The Twelve Steps were right in front of my face in the beginning but I wasn't paying much attention to the Traditions at that time. I was overwhelmed with legal and domestic problems and tradition ten was the last thing on my mind.

With a little time under my belt, I began looking deeper into what the steps and traditions were trying to imply, and how I came to understand the true message they were sending. I understand the reason that A.A. doesn't want to get involved in political and religious issues "at the level of press, radio, and film," but there is also a protocol issue when members sit in the rooms before and after the meetings and start to share their political and religious views as if to say, "The meeting is over so I not going against the traditions". I say this, not to criticize anyone else, but to pull my own covers. As I said before, I was the worst offender. As I got to the level when I started taking the traditions serious, I realized that I had to live in *the spirit of the tradition* and not skirt this issue.

As I stated in the first paragraph, there are more symptoms than drinking alcohol. When I took an honest look at myself, I realized that when I was talking about those issues, it was a distraction so that I had cause to point out the faults with the world and I could also find fault with the people involved with those issues. I heard a motivational speaker once say that, when you are pointing out the faults of others, you are not defining them; you are defining yourself as a person with low self esteem and tearing down others, are a symptom. I could identify with that statement. I have since refrained from engaging in those issues before, during, and after

the meetings, and almost never talk politics to anybody, except for when I'm alone with family or very close friends.

I also assure you that I am not the A.A. policeman. I don't try to correct others that haven't reached an understanding of the spirit of this tradition, but I can be a good example by not engaging in it when it's happening. That can be left up to them to come to their own understanding. I am sometimes observant when a third party is present and seems disturbed by the debate, and if the opportunity arises I may take them aside and explain that we all have symptoms and they come in different forms. As the groups goes through Tradition Ten in the 12X12 that statement is made, and everyone hears it and it seems to make everyone think twice before getting into those types of discussions.

The reality is that as long as the doors of A.A. are open to new comers, we will always have these situations to deal with. I only want to make sure that I don't become holier than thou and violate other traditions in an attempt to get others to comply. To me, patience and understanding is, in the long run, is a much better way fostering these ideas. Remember, ~~Practice Makes, Per, perf.~~ Practice Makes Progress.

Rick R.