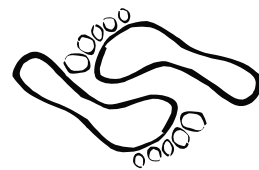


# FOOTSTEPS

The Newsletter of Recovery for the Greater Cincinnati  
Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous®



Carrying the A. A. Message with Enthusiasm and Gratitude

MAY 2012

## BEYOND POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

**Tradition 5 (SF): Each group has but one primary purpose—  
to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.**

I was taught to make the Traditions personal to myself. What does that mean, practically, with the 5th Tradition? I do not particularly like conflict and feel better when everyone is getting along. A character defect is showing when I value being nice or politically correct over staying sober. Another shortcoming in me is grandiosity. An inflated belief in my abilities and capacities sometimes causes me to act as if I can be everything to everybody. Maybe it's a touch of A.D.D. but I certainly do not know how to focus or to keep things simple. I could always relate to the circus performer who tried to keep an impossible number of plates spinning at the same time. Like all character defects, these always get me in trouble and cause pain.

Tradition 5 reminds us to do only one thing, the thing we do well. Alcoholics Anonymous is about staying sober and helping others find a "way out (A.A., p. 17)" of a "hopeless condition of mind and body (A.A., p. 20)." Saying this, however, puts up a fence which both includes and excludes and, in our contemporary culture, fences are evil. Exclusion is always, some say, discriminatory.

Here's one example: two A.A. members, regular attendees at my home group, brought along a friend one Saturday night to our closed meeting. She introduced herself as not an alcoholic but a mother concerned about her son who is a heroin addict. Some people wanted to be "nice" and allow the visitor to stay, saying "What harm could it do? She might learn something. Besides we need to be welcoming." Others suggested that it was not appropriate for her to stay; she openly said that she never drinks and has never had a drinking problem. Two women in our group offered to take her to another room and have a talk about recovery and perhaps to persuade her that Al-Anon or Nar-Anon meetings might be more helpful. That night, Traditions 3 and 5 led to an uncomfortable conflict. At our next group conscience meeting, we affirmed that we exist to help alcoholics, not everybody else in the world.

Tradition 5 has also helped me as a sponsor. When I fall into grandiosity, I act as if I can be a marriage counselor, career planner, lawyer, priest, or financial coach for the men I work with. It's humbling to re-discover that I'm just a drunk and the most precious gift I have to share is my own experience of trying to stay sober. Often my mistakes and failures turn out to be the most helpful stories I can pass on. I can discuss my own actions in doing the Steps, share what has worked for me. I can listen and be present, a fellow traveler on the journey. Ego-deflating? Absolutely. What a relief not to have to keep all those plates spinning.

Nor is it always required to be "nice" to a person I'm sponsoring. If my sponsors had simply tried to boost my self-esteem and make me feel good, I would be dead today. Alcoholism for me is a life-or-death struggle. If I avoid all conflict, am nice all of the time, and think I have the answer to every human problem I am violating the spirit of Tradition 5 – and maybe killing somebody else.--

*Kevin P., Clifton Saturday Night Group*

**Don't take them too seriously, but here are some indications that you just might have a drinking problem...**

20. You have awakened with an overwhelming feeling that you should go back and apologize... but you don't remember where.
19. The Topsy Taxi service has banned you from all its vehicles.
18. You refer to your favorite song only by its jukebox selection numbers, G-12.
17. People consider your spouse a Saint for reasons that totally escape you.
16. Your least favorite song: "Goodnight, Sweetheart."
15. The last time you had a legal driver's license, so did Ted Kennedy.
14. You bought your current pick-up truck because it has a cool place to hide a six pack.
13. Your last public sing-along experience included the entire Changes in Latitudes album.
12. "But Officer, it's been a long time since I tried to say my ABC's!"
11. You have considered starting a local chapter of

**DAMM, Drunks Against Mad Mothers.**

10. All of your old friends are now members of 12-step groups.
9. The 911 dispatcher no longer has to ask your wife for the address.
8. You think the nutritional information on the back of a beer can is proof that you should be able to buy it with food stamps.
7. The only hymn to which you remember all the words was written by Hank Williams, Sr.
6. "Screw dinner!"
5. You know for certain that putting your foot on the floor does not stop the room from spinning.
4. Your insurance agent drops by and mentions your policy does cover treatment centers.
3. You know the punch line to "Why does an Al-Anoner close her eyes to make love?"
2. The producers of the television program COPS still send you Christmas cards.

**And the Number One way you can tell if you have a drinking problem...**

1. Two words: Commode Huggin'.