

BOOZE NEWS

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STEP FOUR

Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

TRADITION FOUR

Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.

LONG FORM

With respect to its own affairs, each A.A. group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect A.A. as a whole without conferring with the Trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.

Pamphlet of the Month

Questions & Answers on Sponsorship

Questions & Answers on Sponsorship



Sponsorship has been part of A.A. from the very beginning. As the pamphlet explains, "Alcoholics Anonymous began with sponsorship" — one alcoholic helping another through shared experience. At its core, sponsorship is simply "an alcoholic who has made some progress... sharing that experience... with another alcoholic".

For those working through Step Four, this relationship is especially important. The pamphlet reminds us that early sobriety can feel overwhelming, and that we often need "constant, close support as we begin learning how to live sober." A sponsor provides exactly that—someone who understands, listens without judgment, and helps guide us through the Steps. It also emphasizes that sponsorship is not about control or perfection, but connection: "Sponsor and sponsored meet as equals." In that spirit, a sponsor helps us stay honest, grounded, and willing—especially when we're taking a fearless look at ourselves.

You can download or purchase this pamphlet, as well as many others, from [GSO's website](#).

dictionary definitions

autonomy (noun)

The quality or state of being self-governing; especially the right of self-government.

Self-directing freedom and especially moral independence.

conscience (noun)

The sense or consciousness of the moral goodness or blameworthiness of one's own conduct, intentions, or character together with a feeling of obligation to do right or be good.

A faculty, power, or principle that enjoins good acts.

fear (noun)

An unpleasant often strong emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger.

Anxious concern or solicitude.

fearless (adjective)

Free from fear; brave.

Bold or courageous in the face of danger or difficulty.

inventory (noun)

An itemized list of current assets, goods on hand, or personal possessions.

A detailed, often systematic listing or accounting of items, qualities, or characteristics.

moral (adjective)

Of or relating to principles of right and wrong in behavior.

Conforming to a standard of right behavior.

Based on or concerned with principles of ethics.

welfare (noun)

The state of doing well especially in respect to good fortune, happiness, well-being, or prosperity.

Aid in the form of money or necessities for those in need.



SOBRIETY TOOLKIT



Step Four is where recovery begins to take real shape. After making a decision in Step Three, we are asked to look honestly at the **resentments, fears, and behaviors** that have shaped our lives. The Big Book describes this as a way to “discover the obstacles in our path”—the internal barriers that keep us stuck in old thinking and behavior. Without this kind of **honest self-examination**, those patterns tend to repeat, often leading us back into the same cycles that fueled our drinking.

Below are a few tools to help you **start your inventory in a structured way** so procrastination isn't a barrier, as well as ways to help you **live and learn from an inventoried life**. These can be done in a journal, through mindful reflection or meditation, or with a trusted sponsor or group. While Step Four is written on paper, **it's not meant to be done alone. A sponsor is essential in this process.** They help guide us through the Big Book's instructions, keep us grounded when things feel overwhelming, and ensure we stay focused on honesty rather than perfection or judgment. **Most importantly, a sponsor helps us see what we often can't see on our own. Step Four is not about getting it “right”—it's about being willing, thorough, and supported as we begin to clear the way for real change.**

Set up an Inventory Schedule. This can remove overwhelm & procrastination.

Create a simple plan that encourages steady progress – It could look something like this: Day 1–2: Resentments, Day 3–4: Fears, Day 5–6: Harms / relationships, Day 7: Review. Sponsor Checkpoints along the way can help create accountability & prevent isolation. Set up check-ins that work for and are driven by you.

Create a Dedicated Inventory Space. This can signal to your brain that you are engaging in focused, honest work. So have a specific place (same chair/desk) or a specific time of day where you have minimal or no distractions.

Time to put pen to paper - Use the Timer Method. This is an anti-perfection tool that can help in many areas of our lives, but works really well when getting started on something that feels overwhelming. Set a timer for 10–20 minutes, write continuously until it ends, stop when time is up. This can help prevent overthinking and perfectionism.

Keep Cleaning House - Inventory-Focused Journal Prompts

Pattern Finder: Look for what repeats & turn isolated events into clear patterns you can work on.

- What situations trigger me most?
- What emotions show up again and again?
- What am I trying to control?

The Mask Check: Inspired by the Big Book idea of the “actor trying to run the whole show.” Will aide in revealing ego-driven behavior and support authenticity.

- Where am I trying to control how others see me?
- Where am I not being fully honest?
- Where am I performing instead of being real?

Assets & Liabilities Balance: Don't just look at defects—include growth. This keeps an ongoing inventory balanced. If updated and reviewed regularly, it supports progress, not perfection.

Create two columns; Assets & Liabilities. Assets could include: honesty, patience, willingness, etc. Liabilities could include: fear, resentment, dishonesty, etc.

TRADITION FOUR

a checklist for groups

“EACH GROUP SHOULD BE AUTONOMOUS EXCEPT IN MATTERS AFFECTING OTHER GROUPS OR AA AS A WHOLE.”

1. Do I insist that there are only a few right ways of doing things in AA?
2. Does my group consider the welfare of nearby groups in its actions and decisions? Of AA “as a whole”?
3. Do I judge or criticize other members’ behavior when it is different from mine, or do I learn from it?
4. Do I always bear in mind that, to those outsiders who know I am in AA, I may to some extent represent our entire beloved Fellowship?
5. Am I willing to help a newcomer go to any lengths—their lengths, not mine—to stay sober?
6. Do I ever criticize certain groups because I think they don’t do things how I believe AA should be done?

**These questions were originally published in the AA Grapevine in conjunction with a series on the Twelve Traditions that began in November 1969 and ran through September 1971. While they were originally intended primarily for individual use, many AA groups have since used them as a basis for wider discussion.*

Spring Recovery Playlist Growth, Honesty, & a Little Sunshine

Recovery, like spring, is a season of clearing, growing, & beginning again—one day at a time.

“Fix You” – Coldplay

“Hurt” – Johnny Cash

“The Joke” – Brandi Carlile

“Unwritten” – Natasha Bedingfield

“Here Comes the Sun” – The Beatles

“Rise Up” – Andra Day

“Shake It Out” – Florence + The Machine

“Bloom” – The Paper Kites

“Dog Days Are Over” – Florence + The Machine

“I Can See Clearly Now” – Johnny Nash

“Better Days” – Dermot Kennedy

“Brighter Than the Sun” – Colbie Caillat

“Good Life” – OneRepublic

“On Top of the World” – Imagine Dragons

“Let It Go” – James Bay

“Breathe (2 AM)” – Anna Nalick

“Weightless” – Natasha Bedingfield

“Three Little Birds” – Bob Marley

“Put Your Records On” – Corinne Bailey Rae

“Walking on Sunshine” – Katrina & The Waves

“Good as Hell” – Lizzo

“Send Me On My Way” – Rusted Root

“Island in the Sun” – Weezer

“Shut Up and Dance” – WALK THE MOON

FROM THE ARCHIVES

TRADITION FOUR: FREEDOM WITH RESPONSIBILITY

In the early years of Alcoholics Anonymous, there was no single model for how meetings should look or how groups should function.

As A.A. spread from Akron and New York into other cities, new groups began forming—each one shaped by the needs, personalities, and experiences of its members. Some groups held formal meetings, others were informal; some emphasized certain readings or practices, while others experimented with entirely different formats.

Not every experiment was successful. There were disagreements, growing pains, and even mistakes. But through these experiences, A.A. discovered something vital: recovery did not depend on uniformity—it depended on a shared purpose. What mattered most was that each group carried the message and supported alcoholics seeking help.

Out of this trial-and-error period came Tradition Four: “Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.”

This Tradition reflects a careful balance. On one hand, it protects the freedom of each group to make its own decisions—to adapt, grow, and serve its members in ways that are most effective locally. On the other, it reminds us that this freedom is not absolute. When a group’s actions impact A.A.’s unity, reputation, or ability to help others, responsibility to the whole must come first.

Tradition Four recognizes that no central authority governs A.A.—instead, groups are guided by shared experience, spiritual principles, and a commitment to helping the still-suffering alcoholic. It trusts that, over time, groups will learn, adjust, and align themselves with what best serves recovery.

Today, this principle remains one of A.A.’s great strengths. It allows meetings to feel personal and accessible, while still being connected to a larger Fellowship. It reminds us that unity is not created by control, but by a common solution and a shared responsibility to protect it.

Tradition 4 - Autonomy

Bill Wilson realized that AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) has no central authority to force any group to act. After trying to lead AA himself, he saw that using personal power only led to confusion and pushbacks. Tradition 4 represents a strong affirmation of mutual trust between AA groups. Each group is granted full autonomy to govern its own affairs, and this arrangement is safeguarded by ensuring that no central authority will exercise control over any group. In exchange, each group commits to avoiding actions that could adversely impact on the broader fellowship. Instances where this trust has been violated are exceedingly rare among AA groups. We found that trial and error was safe, which gave us confidence. The AA tradition allowed any two or three alcoholics seeking sobriety to form an AA Group, as long as they had no other affiliation. This encouraged each group to act independently, relying on its own conscience. Every group has the right to make mistakes.

“Examining Tradition 4 more closely, its initial sentence affirms that each AA group is granted local autonomy. Regarding their own matters, groups retain the authority to make decisions and adopt attitudes as they see fit. No overarching or intergroup body should infringe upon this fundamental privilege. We believe this principle stands even if, at times, a group may act with disregard for our Tradition.”
The above is Bill Wilson’s thought process on Tradition 4.

Through my elders and research, I discovered that autonomy is a form of independence that enables each group to be creative in its own way. In AA this freedom for individual groups comes with the reminder to also protect the fellowship as a whole. Regarding Tradition 4, Rule 62 emerged from a simple card which read: “Don’t take yourself too damn seriously.” This rule highlights how, under Tradition 4, an AA group can exercise its rights to make mistakes. I’ve made mistakes, but AA members have pointed them out and explained why I was wrong. This is a valuable tool for learning.

Over time, I’ve come to understand that every AA group has complete control over how its meetings are run. Each group decides the content, topics, and structure of their gatherings. They also choose whether meetings are open or closed, set their own schedules and locations, and determine when to modify their format or spending. Groups have the freedom to decide how their meetings begin and end. Some opt for prayer, while others prefer a moment of silence. These choices belong solely to the group’s members. Still, Tradition 4 reminds each group that they carry a responsibility to the larger fellowship. By honoring the program’s traditions and principles, groups help maintain alignment with AA’s core values.

The founders recognize there had to be limits on freedom of Tradition 4. It allows group autonomy but restricts rewriting the 12 Steps or Traditions and prohibits creating unauthorized literature or using outside materials. Groups are free to tailor their meetings within these boundaries, resulting in diverse formats. However, using non-approved literature or outside speakers can dilute the core message. I have learned there is no absolute right or wrong way to run a meeting, ignoring the Traditions may prevent the group from carrying its message effectively.

I also learned that group autonomy creates different environments. One AA member shared how encountering different approaches in various groups shifted his perspective. Initially, he thought other groups were doing meetings “wrong” because their styles differed from what he first learned. Over time, we all came to appreciate these variations, seeing them as what makes each group special. I have attended many meetings at different locations, and each has their Tradition 4 freedom. Some vary by humor, seriousness, or religious views. Now I look forward to the uniqueness of every meeting. As long as groups follow the basic guidelines and share the core message, their autonomy is another reason Alcoholics Anonymous works. To me this is AA freedom!

--- John D.

Upcoming Events

My Name is Bill W. Movie Night by District 18

March 28 @ 5:30 PM - 10:30 PM

Central Service Office, 409 Broadway Avenue
South Roxana, IL

Women's Recovery Brunch

March 29 @ 9:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Speakers from 4 Fellowships!
Bellecourt Manor, 225 East A Street
Belleville, IL

Monthly Delegate's Roundtable Meeting

Thursday, April 2 at 7:00PM CST.

Zoom Meeting Information:
Meeting ID: 883 6069 3283
Passcode: 413794

District 14 GSR Meeting

April 12 @ 1:00 PM

In Person at New Day Recovery Club
4046 Forest Blvd, East Saint Louis
Or online via Zoom Meeting ID: 720 074 2222

2026 SIA 21 Pre-GSC Workshop

April 11 9:00AM - 3:00PM

Hickory Point Township Hall
2335 West Mound Road
Decatur, IL 62269

18th Annual Spring Fling Convention

April 24 - 26

"We've Come of Age"
Hilton St. Louis Airport, 10330 Natural Bridge Rd
St. Louis, MO

So. IL Serenity Campout

May 27 - 31

Rend Lake North Sandusky Campground
8420 Loon Ln, Sesser, IL

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recommendations, sober
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