



RECOVERY ROAD ONLINE

GROUP UNITY STEP TWELVE

ZOOM UP THE HIGHWAY OF HOPE



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Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all of our Steps of Group Unity, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

The spiritual substance of anonymity is sacrifice. Because Recovery Road Online's Twelve Steps of Group Unity repeatedly ask us to give up personal desires for the common good, we realize that the sacrificial spirit, well symbolized by anonymity, is the foundation of them all. It is Recovery Road Online's proven willingness to make these sacrifices that give people their high confidence in our future.

In the beginning, anonymity was not born of confidence; it was the child of our early fears. The first, nameless recovery groups were almost secret societies. New prospects could find groups only through a few trusted friends.

The bare hint of publicity, even for our work, shocked us. Though ex-gamblers, we still thought we had to hide from public distrust and contempt.

Even when Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book arrived in 1939, it was called "Alcoholics Anonymous". "It was important to remain anonymous because they were so few, at present, to handle the overwhelming number



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of personal appeals which may have resulted from the publication. Being mostly business or professional folk, they could not carry on our occupations in such an event.” Between the lines, it is easy to read our fear that large numbers of incoming people might break our anonymity wide open.

As the recovery groups multiplied, so did anonymity problems. Enthused over the spectacular recovery of a fellow compulsive gambler, we’d sometimes discuss those intimate and harrowing aspects of their case, meant for their sponsors ear alone. The aggrieved victim would then rightly declare that their trust had been broken. When such stories got into circulation outside of the fellowship, the loss of confidence in our anonymity promise was severe. It frequently turned people from us. Clearly, every member’s name and story had to be confidential, if the individual so wished. This was our first lesson in the practical application of anonymity.

With characteristic intemperance, however, some of our newcomers cared nothing for secrecy. They wanted to shout from the housetops and did! Compulsive gamblers, barely free from gambling, rushed about bright eyed, button–holing anyone who would listen to their stories. Others hurried to place themselves before microphones and cameras. Sometimes, they soon went back to gambling and let their groups down with a bang. They had changed from members into “slippers” and “showoffs”.



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This phenomenon of contrast really set us thinking. Squarely before us was the question, “How anonymous should our members be?” Our growth made it plain that we couldn’t be a secret fellowship; but it was equally plain that we couldn’t be a vaudeville circuit either. The charting of a safe path between these extremes took a long time.

As a rule, the average newcomer wanted their family to know immediately what they were trying to do. They also wanted to tell others who had tried to help them: the doctor, the minister, the close friends. As they gained confidence, they felt it right to explain their new way of life to their employer and business associates. When opportunities to be helpful came along, they found they could talk easily about Recovery Road Online to almost anyone. These quiet disclosures helped them to lose their fear of being a compulsive gambler and helped spread the news of RRO’s existence in their community. Many a new man and woman came to RRO because of such conversations. Though not in the strict letter of anonymity, such communications were well within its spirit.

However, it became apparent that the word-of-mouth method was too limited. A.A. history gives us the need to be publicized. The A.A. groups would quickly have to reach as many despairing alcoholics as they could. Consequently, many A.A. groups began to hold meetings open to interested friends and the public, so that the average citizen could see for themselves



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just what A.A. was all about. The response to these meetings was warmly sympathetic. Soon groups began to receive requests for A.A. speakers to appear before civic organizations, church groups, and medical societies. Provided anonymity was maintained on these platforms, and reporters were cautioned against the use of names or pictures, the result was fine.

Then came the first few, breathtaking excursions into major publicity. Articles appeared about A.A., turning their membership from a few into hundreds overnight. The news stories about Alcoholics Anonymous written by Ann Landers, Dear Abby, and others helped to increase the membership in a hurry. They highly recommended A.A. Such tributes brought opportunities for still more recognition. Other newspapers and magazines wanted A.A. stories. Film companies wanted to photograph members. Radio, and finally television, besieged A.A. with requests for appearances. What should they do? As this tide, offering top public approval, swept in, A.A. realized that it could do incalculable good or great harm. All would depend upon how it was channeled. They simply couldn't take the chance of letting self-appointed members, representing A.A., present themselves as Messiahs before the whole public. The promoter instinct in them might be their undoing. If even one member publicly went back to drinking or was lured into using A.A.'s name for their own purposes, the damage might be irreparable.



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At this altitude (podcasts, streaming, films, television, internet), 100 percent anonymity was the only answer. Here, principles would have to come before personalities, without exception. These experiences taught us that anonymity is real humility at work. It is an all-pervading spiritual quality which today keynotes Recovery Road Online life everywhere. Moved by the spirit of anonymity, we try to give up our natural desires for personal distinction as Recovery Road Online members, both among fellow compulsive gamblers and before the general public. As we lay aside these very human aspirations, we believe that each of us takes a part in the weaving of a protective mantle, covering the whole fellowship under which we may grow and work in unity. We are sure that humility, expressed by anonymity, is the greatest safeguard Recovery Road Online can ever have.