



RECOVERY ROAD ONLINE

GROUP UNITY STEP TWO

ZOOM UP THE HIGHWAY OF HOPE



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For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern. Where does Recovery Road Online get its direction? Who runs it? This, too, is a puzzler for every friend and newcomer. When told that our fellowship has no President having authority to govern, no Treasurer compelling the payment of dues, no Board of Directors casting erring members into outer darkness, and no members giving others directives and enforcing obedience, our friends gasp and exclaim, “This simply can't be! There must be an angle somewhere.” These practical folks then read Group Unity Step Two and learn that the sole authority in Recovery Road Online is a Higher Power, of our own understanding, in the group conscience. They dubiously ask an experienced Recovery Road Online member if this really works. The member, sane to all appearances, immediately answers, “Yes, it definitely does!” The friends mutter that this looks vague, nebulous, and pretty naive to them. Then they commence to watch us with speculative eyes, pick up a fragment of Recovery Road Online history, and soon have the solid facts.

What are these facts of RRO life, which brought us to this apparently impractical principle? From A.A.'s past, we reflect on the following story:



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John Doe, a good member, moves, let us say, to Middletown, U.S.A. Alone now, he reflects that he may not be able to refrain from gambling, or even live, unless he passes on to other compulsive gamblers what was so freely given to him. He feels a spiritual and ethical compulsion, because hundreds may be suffering within reach of his help. Then, too, he misses his home group. He needs other compulsive gamblers as much as they need him.

He visits preachers, doctors, editors, policemen, and social workers, with the result that Middletown now has a group and he is the founder. Being the founder, he is at first, the boss. Who else could be? Very soon, though, his assumed authority to run everything begins to be shared with the first compulsive gamblers he helped. At this moment, the benign dictator becomes the chairman of a committee composed of his friends. These are the growing group's hierarchy of service; self-appointed, of course, because there is no other way. In a matter of months, Recovery Road Online booms in Middletown. The founder and his friends channel spirituality to newcomers, hire halls, make arrangements to visit prisons, and entreat their wives to brew the coffee.

Being on the human side, the founder and his friends may bask a little in glory. They say to one another, "Perhaps it would be a good idea if we continue to keep a firm hand on Recovery Road Online in this town. After



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all, we are experienced. Besides, look at all the good we have done these compulsive gamblers. They should be grateful!” The founders and their friends are sometimes wiser and humbler than this; but more often at this stage, they are not.

Growing pains now beset the group. Panhandlers panhandle. Lonely hearts pine. Problems descend like an avalanche. Still more important, murmurs are heard in the body politic, which swell into a loud cry, “Do these old-timers think they can run this group forever? Let’s have an election!” The founder and his friends are hurt and depressed. They rush from crisis to crisis and from member to member, pleading; but it’s no use, the revolution is on.

The group conscience is about to take over. Now, comes the election. If the founder and his friends have served well, they may, to their surprise, be reinstated for a time. If, however, they have heavily resisted the rising tide of democracy, they may be summarily beached. In either case, the group now has a so-called rotating committee, very sharply limited in its authority. In no sense whatever can its members govern or direct the group. They are servants. Theirs is the sometimes thankless privilege of doing the groups chores. Headed by the chairman, they look after public relations and arrange meetings. Their treasurer, strictly accountable, takes money from



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the hat that is passed, banks it, pays the rent and other bills, and makes a regular report at business meetings. The secretary sees that literature is on the table, looks after the phone answering service, answers the mail, and sends out notices of meetings.

Such are the simple services that enable the group to function. The committee gives no spiritual advice, judges no one's conduct, issues no orders. Every one of them may be promptly eliminated at the next election if they try this. And so, they make the belated discovery that they are really servants, not senators. These are universal experiences. Thus, throughout Recovery Road Online, the group conscience decrees the terms upon which its leaders shall serve.

This brings us straight to the question, "Does the fellowship of Recovery Road Online have a real leadership?" Most emphatically the answer is "Yes, notwithstanding the apparent lack of it."

Let's turn again to the deposed founder and his friends. What becomes of them? As their grief and anxiety wear away, a subtle change begins. Ultimately, they divide into two classes, known in RRO slang as "elder statesmen" and "bleeding deacons". The elder statesperson sees the wisdom of the group's decision and holds no resentment over their reduced status. Their judgment, fortified by considerable experience, is sound. And



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they are willing to sit quietly on the sidelines and patiently await developments. The bleeding deacon is one just as surely convinced that the group cannot get along without them, who constantly connives for re-election to office, and who continues to be consumed with self-pity. A few hemorrhage so badly, that drained of all RRO spirit and principle, they go back to gambling.

At times the Recovery Road Online landscape seems to be littered with bleeding forms. Nearly every old-timer in our fellowship has gone through this process in some degree. Happily, most of them survive and live to become “elder statespersons”. They become the real and permanent leadership of Recovery Road Online. Theirs is the quiet opinion, the sure knowledge, and the humble example that resolves a crisis. When sorely perplexed, the group inevitably turns to them for advice. They become the voice of the group conscience. In fact, these are the true voices of Recovery Road Online. They do not drive by mandate; they lead by example. This is the experience which has led us to the conclusion that our group conscience, well advised by its elders, will be, in the long run, wiser than any single leader.

Again, from the annals of Alcoholics Anonymous, we relate this story of an event demonstrating how this principle occurred. One of the first members, entirely contrary to their own desire, was obliged to conform to group opinion. Here is the story in their own words:



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One day I was doing Twelfth Step work at court in a large city. The judge summoned me to his chambers. He started off with, “Does it not frustrate you that some of the people you help stop gambling, prosper, and make lots of money; far more than you do? Is this fair?” The judge left me with this thought. On the way home, I thought of my wife having to work all day; come home, do the cooking, washing and housekeeping; yet never refusing to accompany me to see a couple in dire need of help. The thought kept flashing through my mind—why shouldn’t I do as well as some of the others? When I arrived home, I told my wife about my thoughts to form a special therapist group and make it a business. I could clean up. She seemed a little interested, but not excited.

It was meeting night: the compulsive gamblers and their wives crowded into the meeting hall. At once, I burst into the story of my dreams. Never shall I forget their impassive faces and the steady gaze they focused upon me. With waning enthusiasm, my tale trailed off to the end. There was a long silence.

Almost timidly, one of my friends began to speak. “We know how hard up you are. It bothers us a lot. We’ve often wondered what we might do about it. But I think I speak for everyone here when I say that what you now propose bothers us an awful lot more.” The speaker’s voice grew more



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confident now. “Don’t you realize,” he went on, “that you can never become a professional? As generous as we would like to be with you, don’t you see that we can’t tie this thing up with anything professional? I know and we know that your plan is ethical, but what we’ve got won’t run on ethics alone; it has to be better. Sure, the idea and thoughts were good, but they’re not good enough. This is a matter of life and death, and nothing but the very best will do!” Challengingly, my friends looked at me as their spokesman continued. “Haven’t you often said, right here in this meeting hall, that sometimes the good is the enemy of the best? Well, this is a plain case of it. You can’t do this thing to us!” So spoke the group conscience.

The group was right, and I was wrong. The voice on the way home was not the voice of God. Here was the true voice, welling up out of my friends. I listened; thank God, I obeyed.