

IN OUR study of the Traditions and Concepts, the importance of leadership is repeated and emphasized. Leadership is introduced in Tradition Two, “Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern,” and Tradition Nine introduces service activities found in “service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.” In Concept Three our leaders are provided with the Right of Decision, and in Concepts Four through Nine, we learn the different duties of leaders.

Because we practice the Twelve Steps and carry the message of recovery to families of alcoholics, it is necessary for Al-Anon’s growth that we develop good personal leadership. Each and every member of Al-Anon has the potential to become a leader. Because of our service structure and the way Al-Anon rotates service positions, members have many opportunities to develop their leadership qualities. In world service, leadership is provided by the Board of Trustees in recognizing, understanding, and defining the message of recovery and in making the vision of recovery available locally and throughout the world.

Each Al-Anon member is also the member of a family unit. Within that unit, leadership is needed, plans are made, action is taken. Parents, for instance, take a leadership role in providing health care and assuring education is given to their children. In Al-Anon, our fellowship grows when we choose, teach, and encourage our leaders on a continuous basis. We choose our leaders carefully and recognize their talent and values. In every way we encourage our leaders, knowing that with each new role, they are growing—“One Day at a Time.”

Some mistake the idea of “principles above personalities” to mean that we shouldn’t have leaders, or that they should have no opinions and simply do what the fellowship says. This is unrealistic and undesirable. We realize that some jobs require no special talents while other jobs require experience and expertise.

Concept Nine

Good personal leadership at all service levels is a necessity. In the field of world service the Board of Trustees assumes the primary leadership.

Each person brings their own talents to the job, and no two people will do a job the same way. We practice the slogan “Let Go and Let God.”

Natural leaders are people with such vision and enthusiasm that we want to follow them. In addition to vision, to be truly excellent, they also need to be responsible, tolerant, stable, flexible and of good judgment. Every Al-Anon member possesses some of these qualities. Practicing the Al-Anon program while we lead enhances them. Developing our leadership qualities helps us lead satisfying lives and helps our fellowship thrive as well. Thus we all benefit when we participate in service.

Within the Concepts, the role of leadership in every level of service—from Group Representatives, District Representatives, Delegates, and Trustees—is discussed. With the study of these Concepts, each level of service has also been discussed—the groups, districts, Areas, Regions, and now world services. Concept Nine guides us in understanding the importance of the Trustees in the leadership needed for our world service.

The development of the Al-Anon service structure provides excellent examples of the primary leadership of the Board of Trustees. The Board led the way in the establishment of our World Service Conference (WSC) in 1960, successfully combining members from the United States and Canada into one body. As Al-Anon General Service Offices (GSOs) develop around the world, they seek the experience, strength, and hope of our World Service Office (WSO) staff and the Conference, including our Board members. As the number of GSOs grew, in 1980 the Board initiated a biennial International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IASM). Delegates from all over the world attend, united in our primary purpose: to help families and friends of alcoholics.

Just as their term of service is concluding, many a leader in Al-Anon has been quoted as saying, “I just

figured out what I was supposed to be doing, and now it's time to turn it over to someone else." Our leaders, our election process, the rotation of service, our democratic thought and action are all the necessary ingredients that make Al-Anon so very unique and special. Rotating service—from changing Group Treasurers on a scheduled basis to imposing the maximum term a Trustee can serve—assures us that no one person gains control over Al-Anon and that the joys found in service can be shared by many.

In *Lois Remembers*, Lois W., Al-Anon's cofounder, wrote, "We believed that Al-Anon leadership should initiate ideas, offer choices, and perhaps emphasize aspects but leave it up to the fellowship to make the decisions." A detached, clear-headed ability to respond with courage and creativity is a quiet strength we seek in our leaders and in ourselves.

How do we select our leaders? In the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*, World Service Handbook section, the suggested election procedures for our trusted servants are outlined. Experience and careful thought have produced these procedures which are seen by many to be spiritual in direction. Guided by the principles found in all three Legacies—the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts—leaders are selected on the basis of Al-Anon membership, eligibility, special skills and willingness to serve. Selecting a Delegate by a two-third vote or by lot reduces the possibility of personalities interfering with principles and assures the newly elected Delegate of member support.

In our *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*, Al-Anon members will find a powerful essay by Bill W., the cofounder of A.A.. This essay on leadership defines the qualities that we seek for Al-Anon as well. Key points from the essay include:

"A leader is a person who can put principles, plans, and policies into such dedicated and effective action that the rest of us want to back him up and help him with his job."

“A good leader originates plans and policies for the improvement of the fellowship.”

“Good leadership knows that a fine plan or idea can come from anyone, anywhere.”

“Leadership should always have good reasons and give them.”

“Leadership is often called upon to face heavy and sometimes long-continued criticism—an acid test.”

Leadership qualities may seem overwhelming to some. Having Service Sponsors is helpful to all members at all levels of service in overcoming any feeling of self-doubt. Leadership begins with attending Al-Anon meetings on a regular basis and taking on group service positions. Good personal leadership at all levels also means welcoming the newest member into our fellowship and listening. One of the most valued service positions is that of answering the phone and listening to a member in need. If we remember that we seek progress rather than perfection, we can accept our human limitations while striving for the very best we can do for ourselves and for our fellowship. We are all leaders at one time or another, and we can practice those qualities that will make us excellent leaders in all the service jobs in Al-Anon.

Members Share Experience, Strength, and Hope

WATCH CHILDREN at play. Even with very young ones, you can pick out the natural leaders. They are the ones who are having such a good time that every other child wants to do what they are doing. You can contrast this with the child who is controlling, bossy, domineering, and so concerned with making rules and making everyone else follow the rules that the other children lose interest, rebel, or start their own game.

When I was in high school, I wanted to be elected to whatever, not because I had a plan or program to implement, but because I needed the assurance that I was liked and accepted. I would win the popularity contest, but then be frightened of the responsibility.

As I got older, I still didn't want the responsibility, but I wanted to be part of the in crowd. I took a position in whatever organization I was involved in. As the disease of alcoholism progressed in my family, I didn't have time for any positions because I had to worry about and take care of the alcoholic. I thought I was providing leadership in my family, but actually all I was doing was controlling.

When I came into Al-Anon I heard Tradition Two, "Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern." My first interpretation was that Al-Anon had no leaders. But without leadership, everything ends in chaos. The Tradition is saying that we have no authoritarian figures or dictators. We do have leaders, and they are to use the abilities God has given them to serve the fellowship rather than for individual power, prestige, or property.

I believe that in our Fourth Step we learn what our strengths and weaknesses are and how God can take our weaknesses and turn them into strengths. Because of financial insecurities in my childhood, I developed an interest and ability in financial matters. I have been able to use this in serving the fellowship.

WE ALL
SHARE
LEADERSHIP

When I became District Representative, we had 10 dollars in the treasury. Today our district treasury has enough funds to support the telephone service, do Public Information work, have an anniversary picnic, a monthly calendar, pay for some of our District Representative expenses, and do other special projects we conceive.

I also know my weaknesses. Every so often I decide to do something creative. I try a craft project, but I rarely finish it. One of our big fund-raisers is a craft fair in October, and I am very thankful that other creative people come forward and are willing to be leaders. We need to know each other well enough to know each other's strengths and weaknesses.

I like Concept Nine, as it is one that I can understand and apply to my Al-Anon service, my personal life, and my work life. It explains leadership better than any of the text books I have read, and I recognize myself and others in it.

I MUST
EARN
TRUST

I LOOKED up the word trust in a dictionary. The definition read, "a confident reliance on the integrity, veracity, or justice of another; confidence; faith; also the person or thing so trusted."

Before Al-Anon I confused trust with gullibility. I would believe what I was told regardless of how many times it was proven untrue. This Concept points out mutual trust. The Al-Anon groups trust the Conference and the Trustees to carry out duties and to be accountable unless the groups maintain an interest in hearing that accountability through reports from Delegates, the *Conference Summary*, and "Inside Al-Anon." Recently I received my copy of the *Conference Summary*. I turned to the back and read both the motions that were passed and those that were not passed. I noticed in those motions some things that will alter the descriptive text on the Concepts and some that will alter other portions of the *Service Manual*. Therefore it is important that I understand

the Concepts and *Manual* and examine these changes, and, when I have a question, seek answers.

Before Al-Anon I would have thought that I must simply accept without question or without further investigation. Concept Nine tells us to seek answers. A part of my trust must be that the person or thing will be accountable and thus willing to explain their answers. We place our faith in our Higher Power. Then we trust our leaders to act in our best interest—to fill their responsibilities. Leaders earn our trust. Within the fellowship we have the means, through group conscience, to remove a leader who breaks the Traditions or misuses group funds. In my everyday life, this Concept means a lot to me. I can have faith in my Higher Power that He will show me what I need to know. My job is to keep conscious contact with my Higher Power and to learn to be aware of His messages. God gave me some intelligence to use the knowledge available to me.

Before Al-Anon I had unfounded, irrational fears. One aspect of my disease is fear that made me think I had to take care of everything or it wouldn't get done. On the other hand, I was gullible, not seeking knowledge of His will.

Today I don't walk constantly in fear, but I have an awareness of it. Fear is a normal human emotion, and to me, a lack of trust stems from fear. Like any other emotion, fear can cripple me. I can swim and I'm not afraid of water—that would prevent me from swimming—yet I have an awareness that swimming could be dangerous unless I think and use necessary precautions.

Before Al-Anon the failure of others to meet my expectations was like having a rug jerked from under my feet. On the other hand, I jerked a lot of rugs, too. As a leader it is my responsibility to be accountable and earn others' trust.

Working Concept Nine

Good personal leadership at all service levels is a necessity. In the field of world service the Board of Trustees assumes the primary leadership.

- * What is “good personal leadership”?
- * What are the leadership positions available in my group? In my district? In our local Al-Anon Information Service (AIS) or Intergroup? Our local Literature Distribution Center (LDC)? In our Area? At the World Service Conference (WSC)? At the World Service Office (WSO)?
- * Who assumes the primary leadership in my group? My district? My Area? Our AIS? Our LDC?
- * How can I use Concept Nine as a practical, spiritual yardstick for choosing leaders? Roommates? Employers?
- * What are the differences between leadership and management tasks in my life?
- * In what situations have I served as a leader?
- * What qualities of leadership do I have?
- * Which ones would I like to develop?
- * Am I hesitant to be a leader? Why or why not?
- * What does it mean to have vision? How can I share my vision?
- * Do I have a Service Sponsor?