

Personal Recovery in Service

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What is "General Service Work" vs. "12th Step Work"?

- ▶ **12th Step Work:** Sponsoring newcomers, sharing our experience, strength, and hope.
- ▶ **General Service Work:** Fulfilling commitments at the group, district, or area level (e.g., GSR, Intergroup rep, setting up chairs, making coffee).
- ▶ *Observation:* Many alcoholics note that becoming a "service junkie" can sometimes be a subconscious tactic to avoid deep, personal inventory work.

The Trap of "Helping Others First"

- ▶ **The AA Foundation:** Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety.
- ▶ **The Paradox:** We carry the message, but our personal recovery must be our number-one priority.
- ▶ **The Trap:** It is easier to focus on *others'* defects and group business than to inventory our own.

Why Do We Replace Recovery with Service?

The Psychology of Early Avoidance

- ▶ **Ego and Control:** It feels empowering to "fix" others or run a meeting, while actually doing your own Step 4 inventory requires humility and vulnerability.
- ▶ **Fear of the Unknown:** Facing our resentments, fears, and harms is painful. Service work offers a socially acceptable distraction or "running away" from internal work.
- ▶ **The "People Pleaser" Trap:** Many alcoholics seek validation. Taking on too many service commitments makes us feel important and liked, but leaves us spiritually depleted.

The Warning Signs: "Service Burnout"

How to Tell if You Are Over-committed

- ▶ **The Resentment Factor:** When service feels like a burden rather than a privilege, you are likely doing it for the wrong reasons.
- ▶ **Emotional Deterioration:** You are performing commitments but experiencing worsening anxiety, depression, or emotional swings.
- ▶ **Neglecting the Basics:** Missing your regular meetings, failing to connect with your own sponsor, or abandoning your prayer/meditation routine.
- ▶ **The "Dry Drunk" Phenomenon:** You may stop drinking, but your underlying character defects, resentments, and emotional immaturity remain untouched.

What Happens When We Substitute Service For Recovery?

The Dangers of a Weak Foundation

- ▶ **High Relapse Risk:** When the shiny newness of your service commitments wears off, or if you lose an election, your core foundation is weak, potentially leading to relapse.
- ▶ **The Consequence:** When stress peaks and the personal foundation is missing, alcohol or relapse becomes a real threat.
- ▶ Your sense of worth depends more on your position or responsibilities than on your spiritual condition
- ▶ You identify more with what you do in AA than with who you are as a sober member

Balancing Sponsorship and Personal Recovery in Service

- ▶ **Set Boundaries:** Remember you are a guide, not a therapist or savior.
- ▶ **Keep Your Own Side of the Street Clean:** Continue working the Steps daily (Step 10).
- ▶ **Work with Your Own Sponsor:** Continue being a sponsee. If you are sponsoring others, you must still have someone guiding you.
- ▶ **Check Your Motives:** Ask yourself: *"Am I doing this service out of love and gratitude, or out of fear, ego, or avoidance?"*.
- ▶ **REMEMBER:** Trusted servant roles carry significant responsibility, but they are meant to SUPPORT your recovery - not BECOME your recovery. Healthy service flows from spiritual fitness, it does create it by itself.

Questions & Discussion

- ▶ What are some personal warning signs that you are doing too much service and neglecting your step work?
- ▶ How can we gracefully step back from service commitments when our personal recovery is suffering?
- ▶ If all my service positions disappeared tomorrow, would my recovery still be growing?