

TRADITION TWELVE: Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to *place principles before personalities*.

12. ANONYMITY, EXPRESSED THROUGH SELFLESSNESS, IS THE SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION OF OUR WAY OF LIFE AS PARTNERS, FRIENDS, OR FAMILY; EVER REMINDING US TO *PLACE PRINCIPLES BEFORE PERSONALITIES*.

This tradition says that selflessness is the spiritual foundation of our relationship and reminds us to place principles before personalities. This does not mean your “lofty principles” before your partner’s contaminated, unwholesome personality. It means CoDA’s principles before **your** contaminated, unwholesome personality! The main principle in a loving relationship is *unselfishness*. Our greatest expression of love is to be of help to one another. We can’t be of help to one another if we are selfish and self-centered.

One of our greatest gifts or privileges as members of a 12-Step recovery program is the opportunity we have to be of help to God’s kids. There is no room in our primary purpose for ego, pride, arrogance, selfishness, or unwillingness. There is, however, a lot of room for gratitude, humility, willingness, love, forgiveness, understanding, joy, and freedom.

Applying the first part of this tradition to my marriage threw me at first. If there is anonymity in marriage, then there is no one there. Then I thought of something I heard someone share in another fellowship. Anonymity expressed through selflessness is the spiritual foundation of our way of life as a marriage partner. Ever reminding us to place principals before personalities; the main principal in a loving relationship is unselfishness. Our greatest expression of love is to be of help to another (my husband) and we can not do that if we are selfish.

I can listen to my husband with an open mind, not discounting just because he may not be agreeing with me. I need to remember always that we are equal. I can still see the good and positive in him, even when I also see his faults. When we are not on the “same page”, I work on not judging him. I feel he truly listens to the content of what I am saying.

Tradition 12 reminds us to listen to what's being said, rather than getting distracted by who's saying it. It's easy for me to be defensive or filter when my partner says something because of my pre- conceived ideas or historical experience with my partner is, what they think and what they know and don't know. God speaks through all of us, and if I don't practice Tradition 12 in my intimate relationship, I could be missing an important message from my Higher Power coming through my partner.

Personal Example: I almost missed a good business networking opportunity because I forgot to practice Tradition 12 with my husband. Someone he plays on a sports team with gave him a business card to give me from a friend who is in my industry. I assumed that it wasn't worth following up because of the source! "How would they know, they're just a bunch of guys running around playing hockey, they don't know my industry. Just because this guy has a card doesn't mean he's a viable contact..." or so went my thinking. For 6 months this card sat on a pile on my desk. Finally, when my business was really slow, I went through and called every person in my stack of cards out of sheer boredom and desperation. And what do you know, the guy who my husband's team mate referred to me with a business card actually turned out to be an incredibly talented person and a very valuable contact! Go figure.

We have learned that lessons can be learned from everyone. Some will teach us how to be (role models) and others will teach us how not to be (serve as a warning!). We are reminded that our primary purpose is to be of service, to express God's love, and to treat others well.

God, treat me tomorrow the way I treat my partner today.

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION TWELVE:

- Is there a spiritual foundation to our relationship? Have we had a spiritual awakening?
- Do I place our common welfare first?
- What would happen to me if my partner disappeared?
- Do I treat my partner in a way that I'm proud of? Do I treat my partner one way in public and another in private? Do I care if others see every aspect of how I treat my partner?
- Can I comfortably say, "I can't do anything my partner can't watch"?
- Do I have an immature need for attention and recognition?
- What is meant by 'discounting the message because of the messenger'?
- Do I have personal integrity? Can I be true to my own beliefs?
- Is my relationship growing healthier, getting sicker, or just stagnating?

You are what you repeatedly do.

Excellence then is not an act but a habit.

By doing our best to adapt these traditions and their underlying concepts of willingness, positive attitude, humility, communication, fearlessness, love, tolerance, courtesy, honesty and integrity, we have seen not only our relationship/marriage benefit, but all of our other relationships as well.