

The Importance of Anonymity

Traditionally, A.A. members have always taken care to preserve their anonymity at the “public” level: press, radio, television, and films.

In the early days of A.A., when more stigma was attached to the term “alcoholic” than is the case today, this reluctance to be identified — and publicized — was easy to understand.

As the Fellowship of A.A. grew, the positive values of anonymity soon became apparent.

First, we know from experience that many problem drinkers might hesitate to turn to A.A. for help if they thought their problem might be discussed publicly, even inadvertently, by others. Newcomers should be able to seek help with assurance that their identities will not be disclosed to anyone outside the Fellowship.

Then, too, we believe that the concept of personal anonymity has a spiritual significance for us — that it discourages the drives for personal recognition, power, prestige, or profit that have caused difficulties in some societies. Much of our relative effectiveness in working with alcoholics might be impaired if we sought or accepted public recognition.

While each member of A.A. is free to make his or her own interpretations of A.A. tradition, no individual member is ever recognized as a spokesperson for the Fellowship locally, nationally, or internationally. Each member speaks only for himself or herself.

A.A. is indebted to all media for their assistance in strengthening the Tradition of anonymity over the years. From time to time, the General Service Office contacts all major media in the United States and Canada, describing the Tradition and asking for cooperation in its observance.

An A.A. member may, for various reasons, “break anonymity” deliberately at the public level. Since this is a matter of individual choice and conscience, the Fellowship as a whole obviously has no control over such deviations from tradition. It is clear, however, that such individuals do not have the approval of the overwhelming majority of members.