

## 2014-2016 IDT—Welcoming all Members

*The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.*

**Session materials:** Welcoming All Members Notes Sheets (with quotes from 3<sup>rd</sup> Tradition on the back), Ground Rules, Brainstorming Guidelines, Facilitator’s Instructions, Traditions and Concepts summary handout, and IP #29 *An Introduction to NA Meetings*.

**Optional session materials:** Post-It sheets, markers, one copy of *IWHW* per table, *NA Groups and Medication* service pamphlet.

### Title—Slide 1

#### Purpose of Session

- ◇ Heighten awareness of the principles in the Third Tradition and how to put them into practice
- ◇ Increase awareness of IP #29 and how it serves as a complement to Third Tradition
- ◇ Identify issues that may challenge us as members to welcome all addicts
- ◇ Model the sort of discussion that could take place at a group support forum

#### Session Outline

Set-up of Session	15 minutes
Large Group Ice Breaker	10 minutes
Set-up for Small Group Discussion	10 minutes
Small Group Discussion	25 minutes
Small Group Feedback	15 minutes
Large Group Brainstorm & Wrap-up	15 minutes

#### Set-up of Session

**15 minutes**

#### Workshop Focus—Slide 2

Facilitators introduce themselves and provide an overview of the purpose of the session.

#### The Third Tradition...—Slide 3

Explain why the Third Tradition is important to the wellbeing of groups and NA. Share personal experience.

Explain that *IWHW* lets us know:

- *“The Third Tradition helps NA to grow by encouraging us to welcome others.”* Third Tradition Essay *IWHW*
- *“Any addict who walks into a meeting, even a using addict, displays a level of willingness that cannot be discounted.”* (Third Tradition Essay *IWHW*)

Discuss how we may welcome and how we have heard that we can be more welcoming. (Highlight a few of the bullet points below.)

- Addicts and those who refer addicts to NA let us know that we don't always do a good job welcoming all addicts. Many addicts find their way through referrals; we have had feedback that we have not always been welcoming, leading some professionals to not refer their clients to NA.
- Addicts who relapse many times may not feel welcome coming back in again for their white keytag.
- Sometimes meetings may be overwhelmed with addicts who are court-ordered to NA and may have a difficult time making those addicts feel welcome.
- Addicts who are younger or older, who work in professional fields, whose race/culture/gender differ . . . these are populations that we sometimes struggle to be welcoming to. Sometimes we can send the message that they are not "real" addicts because they didn't use the way we used.
- Addicts on drug replacement therapy may not receive a warm reception. Professionals who refer addicts to meetings will often refer those on DRTs or medications including mental health medication to other twelve-step fellowships because NA has a reputation of being unwelcoming.

#### Membership Survey Data—Slides 4 & 5

This isn't about focusing on institutions outside of NA; it's about actively encouraging a dialogue about how we can further our primary purpose. The reality is NA's reputation affects our ability to carry the message. Our last membership survey said that 63% of our members came to NA through treatment or drug courts. If professionals are unwilling to refer people to NA, some addicts may never find us. We also know that regardless of how people find NA, what makes them stay seems clear. The same survey said that 87% stayed in NA because of identification with others members, 71% because of a welcoming and supportive group, and 64% because of other NA members. This profile is about building on those strengths and talking together about how to be welcoming even when it's not always easy to do so.

Members know our groups have but one primary purpose—to carry the message of recovery to addicts. Literature can help bridge the gap. Familiarizing members or professionals with the service pamphlet NA Groups and Medication, for instance, can make a big difference.

#### Large Group Ice Breaker

10 minutes

#### IP #29—Slide 6

Those are several of the ways that we can be unwelcoming to addicts. This session is part of an ongoing conversation about how we can be more welcoming. We have a newly approved IP that may help new members feel more welcome in NA meetings. The IP attempts to explain NA customs and culture to new

members. We need to remember coming to NA for the first time may feel like one is going to a foreign country. We often forget how different and strange NA meetings may have seemed at first.

Go around the room taking turns reading the section titled “**A few things you might expect to see or experience in our meetings**” on pages 4 & 5 of *An Introduction to NA Meetings* (IP#29).

*Facilitator*—Before leading the whole group in the question below, briefly share your experience with being a new member and learning about or adjusting to the culture of NA.

### Large Group Question—Slide 7

- ***Question for large group: What are some of the ways that you felt like a “foreigner” when you first came to NA? What helped you feel at home?***

Get a few members’ answers—be mindful of the time. Thank members for their participation.

It may be that we inadvertently make newcomers feel unwelcome in NA simply because they don’t know our ways yet. In a sense, our “job” as described in the Third Tradition is to welcome members and potential members. NA’s only requirement is a desire to stop using. And, our groups are guided by our Fifth Tradition in their collective actions.)

## Introduction to Small Group Discussion

10 minutes

### Bulleted List—Slide 8

As we mentioned earlier, we’ve been discussing these issues for several conference cycles now. We’ve had IDTS on who’s missing from our meetings; the Third Tradition, and now—making potential members feel welcome.

Some populations may have a more difficult time feeling welcome in our rooms. We know that four types of addicts, in particular often are challenged to feel at home in NA:

- Addicts who are demographically different than most of the NA members in a meeting (or community); that is addicts who look different, are older, younger, a different race, gender, or ethnicity, etc.
- Addicts on drug replacement therapy.
- Addicts on medication.
- Addicts who are still using/chronically relapsing addicts.

The reality is that more and more addicts are being treated with medication. Many of them never find NA, sometimes because they are referred to programs that are perceived as more welcoming. Other potential members arrive to NA and may not stay long enough to hear our message because they do not feel welcome in our meetings.

In our small group discussion, we are going to talk about how to better practice the principles of the Third Tradition and reconcile what seems like a tension between the Third Tradition and the Fifth Tradition—maintaining an atmosphere of recovery in our meetings while still ensuring that all addicts feel welcome in our rooms.

Before moving to the small group exercise, ask members to take turns reading the three passages from the Third Tradition essay in *IWHW* on their handout sheets on the table. [Note: there is a PowerPoint slide for each of the three passages. Switch slides when readers switch.]

**Desire is not...—Slide 9**  
**We look for Ways...—Slide 10**  
**The Group is not...—Slide 11**

### Small Group Discussion

25 minutes

#### Third Tradition Principles—Slide 12

We are now going to move into a small group discussion about the principles of the Third Tradition

Let groups know they should choose a facilitator who will help the discussion to move and ensure that no one person dominates the conversation. Choose a recorder who will capture the ideas either on a large post-it or on one of the notes sheets.

#### Small Group Questions—Slide 13

Facilitator: Give a concrete example for question one and question two, if necessary. Note: For question two below, you may want to divide the room and have each table focus on one of the populations previously identified (or a population of the group's choosing):

- ***Question 1: What gets in the way of me practicing the Third Tradition principles as an individual member? Consider the four groups identified above or any group that may not feel welcome.***
- ***Question 2: What can I do to help my meeting (home group) to better practice the principles of Tradition Three? Again, consider the four groups above or any group that may not feel welcome.***

### Small Group Feedback

15 minutes

Let participants know you will have about fifteen minutes to hear back from a few groups

Call on as many groups as you can in the time allotted. If you are using large post-its, have them put up their post-it(s) when they share their ideas on one of the questions.

If you have a lot of tables and not enough time you may want to ask tables to share only two or three points that haven't been shared yet so that you can call on more tables.

Make sure to mention the following resources if they do not get brought up in discussion: *In Times of Illness* can provide good support & guidance on issues related to medication. The Basic Text story "The Only Requirement" is a good resource related to addicts on DRTs, and *NA Groups and Medication* addresses both.

◇ We have briefly heard of challenges with the practice of principles from a member's perspective and we have talked about a new resource, *IP#29, An Introduction to NA Meetings* that is intended to help new members feel more welcome and at home in NA.

◇ *IP#29 An Introduction to NA Meetings* has points that tie to the Third Tradition. These are a few:

**Regardless of...—Slide 14**

**We are not professionals...—Slide 15**

**We strongly discourage...—Slide 16**

1. Regardless of what you may be taking when you first come to NA, you are welcome.
2. We are not professionals and NA has no opinions on medical matters, we can only share our personal experiences with one another.
3. We strongly discourage any harassment, threats, or disturbing behavior before, during and after our meetings.

Ask the whole group to brainstorm briefly about the following question:

**Large Group Question—Slide 17**

- *What collective action can we take to maintain an atmosphere of recovery while still ensuring that all addicts feel welcome in our meetings?*

**Resources—Slide 18**

- ✓ Encourage members to consider having a Welcoming All Members workshop locally and to share any input or additional thoughts with NAWS, [worldboard@na.org](mailto:worldboard@na.org).
- ✓ Remind members that we have a project to draft a Traditions workbook this cycle, and we need their participation. They can find more information, a discussion board, and workshop materials on the project webpage: [www.na.org/traditions](http://www.na.org/traditions).
- ✓ If there is a copy of *IWHW* at each table, you can opt to give them away to the member at each table with the least amount of clean time. That ends the workshop on a positive, enthusiastic note.

Remember: *“The group is not the jury of desire. No addict should be denied an opportunity to stay long enough to develop that desire. We can nurture that desire with loving acceptance.”* (Third Tradition Essay *IWHW*)

[Facilitator's Note: Please send any input on these Issue Discussion Topic questions to [worldboard@na.org](mailto:worldboard@na.org). Session profiles and resources are available at [www.na.org/IDT](http://www.na.org/IDT).]

**Title—Slide 19**

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