

# Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions for Alateen

ALATEEN



Al-Anon Family Groups

Help and hope for families and friends of alcoholics

## Introduction

One person looks at life and sees beauty, friendship, goodness and warmth. Another looks at the same life and sees ugliness, loneliness, problems and hopelessness. What makes the difference? *Attitudes*. Our attitudes determine whether we will be happy or sad, uncomfortable or at ease, resentful or understanding, angry or serene, loving or hateful, mature or immature, whole or incomplete.

In Alateen, we learn how to become what we want to be by working the program—that is, by applying the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Slogans to our lives. A thorough knowledge and diligent application of their principles helps us to develop positive attitudes so that we can find happiness and fulfillment.

All of us have problems. It's human nature to look for past answers and easy solutions. Letting other people do our thinking doesn't require much effort; but someone else's answer may not be right for us. We are responsible for finding our own answers and making our own decisions.

This booklet of questions is designed to help us understand the Steps and Traditions better by stimulating thought and discussion. The answers have been left out because they are different for each person. The stories at the end of each section are not meant to serve as models, but only to provide examples.

## Twelve Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

## Step One

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

This Step is easier to understand if we accept alcoholism as a disease. We have no more control over the effects of alcoholism in our homes than over the effects of any other illness. When a family member is ill, the whole family is affected. Family schedules are interrupted; parents have less time for children; plans are changed unexpectedly; people are tired and short tempered; finances are unstable; discipline is not consistent. The same is true when the illness is alcohol. If we have not learned to live with the effects of alcohol in our homes, we can't say we're managing our lives very well.

1. Do we ever try to stop our alcoholic parent from drinking? How? Do our efforts have any effect? How do we feel after making such attempts? When our efforts fail, whom do we blame?
2. Can an alcoholic be forced to seek help? Do we feel this is our responsibility?
3. Do we believe we can make someone become an alcoholic? Have we ever felt we were to blame for the drinking? Do we blame the non-alcoholic parent for not forcing the alcoholic to stop drinking?

4. How can we apply the First Step to our non-alcoholic parent? To others in the family?
5. Are we “up” when there are periods of sobriety, and “down” when there is drinking? How can we detach from the problem without detaching from the person?
6. Have we accepted the symptoms as part of the illness—such symptoms as hateful behavior, violent temper, sloppy appearance, irrational thinking, unreasonableness? Or do we still resent it and think the alcoholic could behave better if he wanted to?
7. If we have sobriety in our homes, can we find peace of mind knowing the alcoholism is “arrested” and not cured?
8. How does the slogan “Let Go and Let God” relate to this Step?
9. Step One says that “our lives had become unmanageable.” How well are we getting along at home, at school, at work?
10. How can we apply the Serenity Prayer to this Step?

In Step One we admit we are powerless over alcohol, realize the problem is not ours to solve, but the alcoholic's, agree that before Alateen, our lives had become unmanageable, and understand that the only lives we can change are our own.

### Personal Reflections

I had taken the first part of Step One concerning my father, but I hadn't admitted my life was totally unmanageable. I didn't want to change because I was still comfortable with me. I started trying to control my boy friend because I was afraid of losing him. He was all I depended on. A few months later, I broke up with him. Now I think it's the best thing that ever happened to me. God, as I understand Him, used that particular time to teach me I needed to depend on Him instead of myself, a drug, or someone else. I hadn't really hit bottom entirely, but I started looking at things differently.

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When I had to admit I was not only powerless over the alcoholic, but over everybody else, it wasn't easy. I had to learn again and again that the universe doesn't revolve around me. I had to admit that other

people could be right, and that my way was not always the best.

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I was brought up to respect older people, especially my parents. When my father's drinking became a problem, I lost all respect for him. This upset me because it went against everything I had been taught. I was miserably unhappy because I loved him very much. I was feeling tremendously guilty because my nagging wasn't helping, and I felt guilty if I didn't nag him, because I felt I wasn't trying to do anything to help or to alleviate the problem. I was afraid if I kept on going to Alateen it would make him mad and his drinking would get worse. An AA member sat me down and said, "You can't be responsible for making an alcoholic drink or not drink. An alcoholic is going to drink because you're washing the dishes and drop one and break it or because it's raining, or because it's too sunny outside." And I have never forgotten it.

Since alcoholism is a disease and since I learned how it works, I don't have to have any loss of respect for my father any more. My life stopped revolving around Daddy's drinking. I noticed whether he was or wasn't but it didn't matter; it didn't set the pace for my whole day. I was able to detach myself emotionally from my parent's problem while continuing to love him, and I love him very much. I think when you love somebody very much, this is when alcoholism gets hard. If you didn't care, it wouldn't matter that they were drinking themselves to death.

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I was blaming myself for my dad's problem when it wasn't really my fault. My dad wanted sympathy and criticism and I gave it to him. Alateen made me realize that it wasn't my fault and I shouldn't criticize him. I should show my love and try to help him.

This whole Step is about surrender. It is very hard for me to surrender to anything, big or small. Inside of me is a huge monster that strikes out at everything that walls me in or disagrees with me. I know my father is sick and so is my mother. But the sickest of all are my monster and me. We must learn that we can never control or conquer the sickness of alcoholism or its victims.

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I learned to accept the fact that I cannot change my sister and I am not responsible for her drinking or for her doing dope. It was hard because at times I did feel responsible for the things she did. She tried to blame me and I felt as though there had to be something I could do. I used to try to tackle my sister's problems for her, to work her program for her. It just didn't work that way and it never can. After I learned I couldn't take her inventory for her and I wasn't responsible for her drinking, it left me free to learn things for myself and to improve myself because I was sick.

I not only am, but always was, and always will be powerless over alcoholism. It is a disease. I would be powerless with regard to any other disease.

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Before coming to Alateen, I had not inner unity. I was filled with resentment, jealousy and narrow-mindedness. My quick temper and tremendous ego got me into all sorts of trouble, including being pushed through a wall by my brother one holiday. I was withdrawn, discouraged and confused. I sure can admit my life was unmanageable! For someone with a big ego, admitting I'm beat isn't the easiest thing in the world, but I have to if I want to get the rest of the program. I know I'm powerless over the alcoholic's attitudes and actions. It took my mother a long time to get the way she is and things won't necessarily become quiet and serene overnight. Part of my acceptance of her disease involves patience and quiet confidence.

## Step Two

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

We have learned through experience that we cannot manage our lives alone, so we must look for a power greater than we are to help us. For many this "Power" is God. For some, it is not. Naming this Power is not important. What is important is realizing there is a Power beyond our own understanding.

1. The word "believe" is the key word in this Step. What do we believe in?
2. Have we come to believe in a Power greater than ourselves?

3. What is sanity?
4. What are some of the ways we have lacked sanity? Have we always had control over our actions? Have we handled situations in a levelheaded way? Have we lost our heads, become hysterical, gone into uncontrollable rages? Have we had severe headaches, stomach upsets, been unable to concentrate or sleep, felt worthless, or wished we'd never been born?
5. How do we think "a Power greater than ourselves" can restore us to sanity?

In Step Two we try to find belief in something greater than ourselves. We believe this Power can help us find a way to a calmer life.

### Personal Reflections

I realized that God could and would come into my life to bring order to my messed-up world if I would let Him.

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I came to believe that I could trust myself, God and my fellow Alateens, and love them freely, without being hurt.

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Some people don't like the word "sanity" in this Step, but I think it's quite accurate. Many times utter confusion caused me to react in ways which would not be typical of a normal person.

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It was almost too late before I saw that I couldn't solve my problems by trying harder or being extra careful. Am I really so experienced that I, and only I know all the answers? Could it be that the Power who is the Master of all creation has more ideas than me? I have faith in God now. I listen and learn from Him.

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I have come to believe that there is someone greater than myself from whom I can draw inspiration for loving. I have grown to regard my Higher Power as a friend to be talked to and this type of friendship allows me to unburden myself to Him. I can relax and straighten things up in my mind. Then I have a clear head and can make the decisions that have to be made each day.

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At one time, I was quite confused about the difference between God in a religious sense and God

in a spiritual sense. It seemed I never got as much out of church as I did out of an Alateen meeting. I was being preached at and told what to think. In Alateen, I was able to make up my own mind. Now I'm becoming more open-minded and am starting to understand what they're talking about in church, too.

## Step Three

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

Step Three calls for action. It starts with the words: "Made a decision . . ." It may be hard for some, easy for others. We must believe that doing God's will is a dependable way to be truly happy.

1. What will help us to trust in God enough to turn our wills and our lives over to Him?
2. How can keeping an open mind and listening to what others have to say help us?
3. How does the slogan "Let Go and Let God" relate to this Step?
4. How can we know God's will for us?
5. What will this Step do for us: Will it give us serenity? Or will it just give us an excuse—someone to blame when things don't work out well because we haven't done our part?

Each of us is free. Our Higher Power does not force His will on us. The decision to accept or reject it is up to us.

## Personal Reflections

I didn't have a Higher Power when I came to Alateen. To me, the last words of this Step are the most important—"God as we understood Him." I believe in God the way I want to and the way I think He wants me to. This has helped me an awful lot because I don't believe in any one religion.

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I felt that I had lost a part of me, a very vital part. The part that would help me enjoy life. I learned that I could regain this part by turning to God. Through Him I could regain the sanity I needed.

It doesn't matter that He isn't everybody's idea of God—He's mine that's what matters.

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This Step asked me to do the one thing I seldom could do before Alateen—make a decision. I had to be willing to work and meet my Higher Power halfway. That's only fair—after all, it's my life I'm concerned about.

I define my will as the way I'd like things to happen. When I can't have that, I look at it as the will of my Higher Power. I try to remember that the problem in front of me is never as great as the Power behind me.

## Step Four

Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

This Step suggests the value of making our inventory thorough and honest. We are to search out the trust and try to see ourselves as we really are. This is difficult and will take time and patience. Let's use the slogan Easy Does It. We must acknowledge our good qualities as well as our faults. It's hard for some of us to realize those good qualities, but it's important because they are our foundation for growth. No one is all bad, and thinking we are is only short-changing ourselves.

1. Do we make excuses for our actions and attitudes? Have we felt justified, believing our actions were not our fault, telling ourselves "they'd do the same if they lived in our home"?
2. Do we resent the life we live and the way we are treated?
3. Do we feel no one has as rough a life as we have? Do we take every opportunity to let others know? Or do we keep our problems to ourselves and feel like martyrs?
4. Are we willing to accept criticism or do we immediately start justifying our actions?
5. Do we accept the responsibility for our own actions whether they turn out right or wrong? Or do we blame everything on somebody else?
6. Do we have to be the center of attention all the time? Why?
7. Do we try to control our temper by finding healthy outlets for our anger such as sports,

writing, hard work? Or do we lose our cool and sound off when things don't go our way?

8. Do we realize that life is neither all good nor all bad?
9. Are we good losers? Can we accept defeat and disappointment without whining or complaining?
10. Are we good winners? Can we succeed without getting a big head?
11. Do we worry about the things we can't change?
12. Are we open-minded enough to listen to the opinions of others?
13. Can we enjoy the good things that happen to us or are we always looking for flaws?
14. Can we enjoy the success and good luck of others, or do envy and jealousy rob us of this pleasure? Do we resent it when others have more than we do?
15. Are we chronic fault-finders? Are we always complaining? Why do we find fault in others when we're dissatisfied with ourselves?
16. Do we try to set reachable goals and work towards them, or do we drift along and let circumstances push us around? Do we set impossible goals for ourselves and rob ourselves of a sense of accomplishment?
17. Do we have faith in other people and the fact that they love us?
18. Do we treat others as we would like to be treated?
19. Are we aware of other people's feelings, or do we just say the first thing that comes into our heads?
20. Do we sometimes hassle our parents or teachers because we're in a bad mood?

In Step Four we try to look at ourselves objectively with the help of our Higher Power to remember that we have good qualities as well as faults, to be completely honest with ourselves, realizing we cannot blame our faults on others.

## Personal Reflections

The first thing that really helped me was my moral inventory. I took that with the understanding that I was going to help myself; and, brother, everything I found out was terrible. I couldn't find

any good points at all! I realized then that I should start working on myself instead of criticizing others as I had been doing.

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When I took my moral inventory, I took a sheet of paper, put a line down it, and put good and bad at the top. I put down a bad thing, I put down a good thing. I put down a bad thing, and so on.

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It gives me such freedom when I can honestly write down my faults and for once find something good about me! The shortcoming I'm working on now is lack of gratitude. I've spent most of my life complaining and very little time noticing the small wonders that are given to each of us every day.

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Step Four took me a month to complete. In it, I wrote down everything I could possibly think of concerning myself. It wasn't easy to admit a lot of things but I know it was necessary.

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I took a "searching and fearless moral inventory" of myself. Searching and fearless? I must have had three pages of things I was great at! All my beautiful qualities. But when I got to the faults—I couldn't think of one. When I got to ninth grade, I really began to look into myself. And I found that maybe, just maybe, I had a teensy weensy fault. And the more I thought about it, the more I realized that I had a lot of faults. And they were big and ugly. It took time. The truth hurt. But finally I accepted the fact I had a lot of faults to weed out. I took a really searching and fearless moral inventory, and this time I found three pages of faults.

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When I took my Fourth Step, I took it on my feelings toward my father. I had a lot of resentments for what he had done to my mother and me and the whole family. It was hard for me to overcome these and I didn't really want to. But I eventually got rid of all my frustrations about him.

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It's important for me to look at my bad points, but it's just as important for me to look at my good points. It helps me to realize that there is some hope for me and I am encouraged to go on.

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Humility was what I gained most from the Fourth Step. I could see myself as I really was in relationship to God and my fellowman—not too high and not too low. I was neither superior nor inferior to anyone.

## Step Five

Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Now that we have seen our defects and good qualities more clearly, Step Five suggests we open up, talk about these problems, face them realistically and constructively. The biggest obstacle to achieving personal improvement is pride.

1. Why is it important to admit our faults to ourselves and to God?
2. Why is it important to admit our faults to another person?
3. Why should we be careful about picking the person we're going to confide in?
4. Why shouldn't we confide in a family member or very close friend?
5. Why is it good to take this Step with an adult we trust, such as a doctor, clergyman, guidance counselor, or personal Sponsor?
6. If we take the Step with someone in the group, what qualities should we look for?
7. What do we expect this Step to do for us? Help us get rid of guilt? Help us see ourselves as others see us? Give us the incentive to work on ourselves?

In Step Five we admit that the faults we looked at in Step Four really exist. We try to face them objectively. This Step helps us to develop honesty, humility and straight thinking.

## Personal Reflections

On the way home from a meeting one night, I took this Step with the guy who's my personal Sponsor. I rattled off things that were wrong with me. This did me an awful lot of good. I know, because it took a big load off my mind. I didn't have to worry about these things anymore.

The feeling I derived from the Fifth Step was fantastic. I really felt as if I were “walking hand in hand with the spirit of the universe.” For the first time in my life, I could see myself as a whole person, made up of good and bad. I knew the reasons I did some of the things I did. I knew my motives, the exact nature of my wrongs.

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By admitting my faults to God, I show Him that I want to become humble and sincere. This admission of my faults to my Higher Power became a way of standing on my bad points in order to climb higher toward a better me.

## Step Six

Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

If we have really been trying to work the first five Steps, we will have found and admitted our character defects. Now it is time to do something about them. Step Six is a readiness Step.

1. Just how ready are we to part with our defects of character? Are we comfortable with them? Are they making us unhappy?
2. If we're not ready to part with our defects, why not? Is it too hard? Are we afraid?
3. How can we show our willingness to have God remove our defects? Trying to practice the opposite virtues? Talking about it to someone who can make constructive suggestions?
4. How is Step Three related to this Step?
5. How can the Serenity Prayer help us with the Step?

In Step Six, we gather up our defects and package them for disposal. We are ready to have God take them away and replace them with good, honest thoughts and actions that are His will. Now let's take a last look and make sure we have them all in the package.

## Personal Reflections

I thought I was ready to take this Step because I was so lazy, I didn't want to have to remove any of my defects myself. I was glad to let somebody else do it. I expected to just say, “Okay, God, take over,”

and they'd be gone overnight. It didn't quite work out that way.

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Another great feeling came with the Sixth Step, when I finally became willing to have God remove these character defects. At first, I still wanted to hang on to a few, but I knew I had to release all of them to my Higher Power. I had a wonderful feeling of relief when I did this.

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This Step involved a certain amount of prayer and meditation on my part, while I prepared myself to do something about what I had discovered in Step Four.

## Step Seven

Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

Do we really want to change? We all have faults that we think we need, or enjoy, and we may not be ready to have them removed. We have to decide which we would rather do: strive toward greater maturity or stay the same. We can no longer say we don't know any better.

1. The key word in this Step is "humbly." What do the words "humbly" and "humility" mean to us?
2. When we ask God to remove our shortcomings, is that the end of our responsibility for them? What is our responsibility in this task? How is God going to do this for us?
3. How can the leaflet "Just For Today" help us work this Step?
4. How does the slogan "Let Go and Let God" apply to this Step?
5. What does the saying, "Do your best and leave the results up to God" have to do with this Step?

At first, asking God to remove our shortcomings may not appeal to us. We might feel that we would rather do it ourselves. Or we may think that God can't or won't help us. But we have to admit that when we were trying to do it on our own, we didn't do so well. God will help by giving us the strength to do the right thing. It's up to us to try.

## Personal Reflections

I started asking God to remove my shortcomings, and then went ahead and tried to get rid of them the best I could. I know my Higher Power was guiding me so I'd go the right way.

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From my own experience with prayer, I know that my Higher Power has helped me when I have asked Him to—not when I've demanded His help or bargained for it.

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I believe God will remove my shortcomings by giving me opportunities to work on myself. For instance, I have a really bad temper. But since I've become aware of this defect, it seems I catch myself more and more often wanting to blow my cool. I've talked to people and found out how they control their tempers. I believe this new awareness I have of myself is God's way of helping me.

## Step Eight

Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

Making a list of all persons we have harmed is not easy. Most of us do not want to look at our past mistakes. The Alateen program teaches us to live for today and let go of the past, yet this Step asks us to look back and go over our past conduct.

1. Why does this Step ask us to look into the past? Would we receive the same benefits from the program if we were to start right now to better control our actions toward others instead of looking back?
2. What are some of the ways we have harmed other people?
3. What does "taking responsibility for our own actions" mean to us?
4. Why do we belong on the list of persons we have harmed? How have we harmed ourselves?
5. What are some of the ways our behavior has harmed members of our family?
6. Why is it necessary to include those we have harmed in the past, but with whom we no longer have any contact?

7. We may be willing to clear our conscience by making amends to certain members of our family and friends, but not to others. Is it enough to be willing to make amends only to certain people? Is it enough just to feel sorry for what we have done?

In making a list, we may often think of listing people we have hurt who, we felt, had hurt us too. This Step is not concerned with what they do to us, but only with what we did to them. To really work this Step, we must avoid the justifications we have relied upon in the past, such as: "I'm only human" or "If you lived in this house, you would have done the same" or "I wouldn't do such things if they'd just stop picking on me." Now we must admit there is no excuse for taking out our emotions on others.

## Personal Reflections

Step Eight is like the grocery list we make before we go shopping. I made my list, taking note of the time interval since the incident had occurred and the degree to which it bothered me. I tried not to make mountains out of molehills and vice versa.

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It is important for me to make a list of the people I have harmed so I can clearly see what actions did me more harm than good. I was the best person at making all sorts of excuses for my bad behavior. I would either plead that I was just being human or try to blame it on the other person. For example, I had attended parochial grammar school and really had a strong desire to attend an affiliated high school. I wasn't accepted into the school of my choice and this really hurt my ego. I started to pout and had myself believing the only reason I didn't go to this school was because my mom and dad didn't have the money to send me. I really gave my family a hard time about it. If I hadn't recalled this incident and made either a mental or written note about it, I might very well have gone on believing my excuses. I wasn't just hurting my parents but I was hurting myself, too. My willingness to open my mind and my heart to make amends for this and my other harmful actions makes it a lot easier to avoid the recurrence of the same mistake.

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Any time I hurt someone else, I also hurt myself, because I really don't want to give anyone a hard time. When I haven't done things the way I honestly felt they should be done, or when I have failed to forgive myself, I have caused myself pain. To grow as a person, I have to be willing to make amends to myself, too.

## Step Nine

Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Before we begin Step Nine, let's make sure we have thoroughly understood and used Step Eight. Have we made a list of people we have harmed? Have we become willing to make amends?

1. How does this Step help us to get rid of guilt?
2. What does the term "direct amends" mean?
3. If we have made direct amends in whatever way we felt was right, and the reaction was hostility and anger, or the person refused to accept our attempts at restitution, what should we do?
4. How can we make amends to people who might become seriously upset if the subject were brought up again? Would a changed attitude toward them do it?
5. How can we make amends to people we can no longer reach? Can we substitute doing good things in our community instead?
6. How do we make amends to ourselves?
7. How do we make up for all the chances to do good that we passed up because we were too preoccupied with our problems?
8. Have we found ourselves making up excuses such as, "I'm waiting for a better time," when actually we have already passed up some good opportunities? Are we delaying because we're afraid? How can we overcome our fear?
9. What are some situations where making direct amends would harm others?

Step Nine requires good judgment, a keen sense of timing, courage and caution. The phrase, "I'm sorry," is only one approach to this Step. There will be some people to whom we can make only partial amends; a frank review of the situation might do more harm

than good to the others involved. There will be some cases in which action had better be postponed. This is where the sense of timing comes in. In other cases it may be wiser not to reopen the matter at all.

## Personal Reflections

For a long time, I got away with not working this Step by saying it would injure me—it would hurt my ego to apologize and to make amends, so I didn't do it. But I finally got honest. Now I know if I make amends to someone he probably will, think a lot more of me for it, and I'll feel a lot better when I'm with him.

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Lots of times I'm tempted to avoid the embarrassment of a direct apology by making amends in a more indirect manner. I have to be sure of my motives before deciding how I'm going to make amends. I ask myself if I'm avoiding the apology because it's better for me, or if I'm avoiding it because it's really better for the other person for me to make amends some other way.

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It doesn't matter whether or not my apologies are accepted. As long as I have tried, I have done my part.

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This Step helped to wipe away the last remaining fragments of guilt about my past. Now I can concentrate on living for the present.

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For several months, I had been putting off making amends to one person in particular. One night, I was thinking about how to make amends, when the person involved stopped by my house. This was an unusual occurrence. I took the hint and made amends.

## Step Ten

Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

This Step continues the process which began with Step Four—being aware of the things we do, and taking corrective measures without delay, instead of letting guilt pile up in us. Since two of the Twelve Steps are devoted to self-inventory, we must realize that we cannot grow without correcting our wrong actions.

Old emotions and habits have a way of coming back in various ways. We may feel we have been ridding ourselves of resentments only to find, on self-examination, they have come back.

1. How will this Step prevent complacency from setting in?
2. Why is it necessary to take this Step often?
3. Is it a good idea to do it at the same time every day? Why?
4. If we find ourselves listing the same faults in our inventory time after time, what does this tell us? What can we do about it?
5. This Step says: ". . . when we were wrong, promptly admitted it." Why is it important not to wait too long before doing so?
6. Why shouldn't we dwell only on our faults? How are we helped by recognizing our good qualities, and the improvements we have made in our actions and attitudes?
7. Should we use specific guidelines for taking our inventory? The inventory sheet? The list of our faults? Other?
8. Why should we review our thinking and attitudes as well as our behavior?
9. How does this Step relate to keeping an open mind?

Step Ten insures our continued growth in the program and that we are learning to practice these principles in all our affairs. As we continue to take personal inventory, we will find which defects are giving us the most trouble. We will also find we have almost eliminated some that we have been working on especially hard. Promptly admitting when we are wrong is a continuing practice of humility. If we use this Step every day, we will achieve growing peace of mind and serenity because we will be able to see that we are making progress. Yet we will not become complacent because we will always find new defects, and some old ones, that continue to hang in there. Our sense of personal worth will increase as we gain insight and stop being afraid to make mistakes.

## Personal Reflections

At night when I go to bed, I just lie there and try to think over what I've done and said and thought

that day. I can always see a lot of things I wish I hadn't done, and knew were wrong when I did them, but did them anyway. And I take a few of those that are the worst, and the next day try not to repeat them; I just concentrate on not doing those certain things. Then the next night, I take a couple more, and just keep going like that.

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My life is in the hands of God, but I am not God. I expect to make mistakes. I rely on God to help me iron out the rough edges.

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I take Step Ten every night before I go to bed. I enjoy seeing my progress and watching out for defects. If I had a good day, I pray that my Higher Power will help me through the next in the same way. If it was a bad day, I pray for the ability to do better tomorrow.

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I ask myself these questions at the end of the day:

- Did I make anybody happy today?
- Did I say or do anything kind?
- Did I encourage anybody?
- Did I waste my time?

## Step Eleven

Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us, and the power to carry that out.

We may think that prayer is the recitation of some words we memorized, or we may only think of it in terms of asking for something. Step Eleven suggests that prayer is the best way to get to know what God wants us to do. That means we have to think over our problems and talk to God about them. It means we have to think about God, and try to apply our new insights to our daily lives.

1. What is prayer? What is meditation? How can we improve on our form of prayer and meditation in order to feel closer to our Higher Power?
2. How can we tell what His will is for us?
3. What do we expect to gain from this Step if we carry it out sincerely? As an individual? As a member of our family? As part of our school?

In our circle of friends? At our job?

4. This Step directs us in a simple and uncomplicated way to pray for only two things. What are they, and why?
5. How can the insights gained from our daily inventory be included in our communication with our Higher Power?
6. What can we use to start our thoughts? A review of our day? Al-Anon or Alateen literature? A spiritual book? A prayer?

Prayer and meditation are our principal means of "conscious contact with God." Faith in God's love will help us to love ourselves and to accept His will for us. We must believe that whatever He asks of us, He will give us the strength to do.

### Personal Reflections

When I used to say my prayers at night, I'd ask God to bring me a bicycle, a new fishing pole, and this, that and the other thing. But I was praying for the wrong things. I didn't care about God's will. It was my will I was interested in; having the most fun was all that was important. But now I pray differently; and God has given me the courage to do things I never thought I could do, such as making amends and speaking to groups.

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It seems the harder I think about my Higher Power and the more I pray for His guidance, the closer I get to Him. I have come from thinking of Him as an awesome Being to believing in Him as a friend. When I talk to Him, I know He's listening. This gives me a lot of confidence because I know I'm never alone.

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God is my best friend. He is always there, ready to help, if I will let Him. I talk to Him each day first thing in the morning, and spend some time each day in a quiet place with Him. He knows what is best for me and I try to find out what that is.

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God plays a very important part in my life. Before, I just felt that God was there—big deal! Lately I have come to know Him as my own personal God. I am trying to improve my relationship with Him. I talk to God and He talks to me. We get along very well except when I start trying to run the show, which I do

quite often because I am stubborn and very human.

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I really improved my communication with God—God as I understand Him, not as somebody tells me He has to be. Not God as He is laid down somewhere but the God that helps me make it through my problems and shares with me and shows me the way when I am troubled—the God I can turn my problems over to—the God that makes me feel so good when I just look around and see all the beautiful things He has put here for us. That is the God I have come to know, and that is the God I can count on for help.

## Step Twelve

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Once we have gained a new awareness, we want to share it with others. Certainly all of us would like to be successful when we Twelfth Step another, but many times the new person turns away from Alateen. This does not mean our efforts were a failure or a waste of time. The Step reads “we tried to carry the message, . . . and to practice these principles in all our affairs.” Alateen is more than going to meetings. . . . it is an important part of our lives.

1. What is a “spiritual awakening”? Try substituting “awareness” for “awakening.” How does this awareness change our attitude toward God? Ourselves? And others?
2. Comment on the statement: “You can’t give away what you haven’t got.”
3. In what ways can we carry the message?
4. How is actively participating in meetings a way of taking the Twelfth Step?
5. What are some specific ways in which we can practice the Alateen principles in all our affairs? And how do the Steps, the Slogans and the Serenity Prayer apply to our daily lives?
6. Sometimes we find it difficult to practice these Alateen principles. Where especially does this happen? In new situations? At home? With others? Why do you think this happens?

When Twelfth Stepping someone, we can:

- Take a newcomer to his first meeting.
- Offer to give, or find, a ride if needed.
- Exchange our telephone numbers (but not anyone else's without first getting permission).
- Call a newcomer between meetings to show we really care.

But the best way to apply Step Twelve is to practice the principles of the program in all our affairs, thereby becoming happier people ourselves, and setting a good example for others to follow.

## Personal Reflections

I try to practice these principles in all my affairs. For many years, I hated English class and barely got passing grades. This upset my mother, and I didn't like having bad grades either, but I hated English. After I got into Alateen, I decided to ask my Higher Power for help, got down to work, and I got a B.

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I can't say I've helped that many people, but I've sure helped myself by trying to reach others.

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For the first time in my life, I asked God to come into my life and I turned around and hugged my brother and told him I loved him. This lifted a lot of weight off my shoulders and meant a lot to me, but it wasn't "The Star Spangled Banner" and all the lights like I thought it would be.

We talked at my first conference about being an instrument of God. I have been conscious several times of this happening to me, because I have gone out on a Twelfth Step call and have not known what I was going to say, especially during one experience. An Alateen member who'd been in the program for several months was saying she was quitting. I prayed on the way over there to find the right words. I did, and was able to convince her that she was where she belonged and that she did need Alateen. I don't know—no, I do know—where the words came from. They did not come from me because I had none of those thoughts before I went over there. It is a wonderful feeling to know that you are being used as an instrument of God.

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The main thing I have found in the program, aside from learning about myself, is to carry the

message to other people. Don't ever forget how it felt to be out there sinking without a rope. After you come in and you get so that you are happy and your problems don't seem so bad, it is easy to forget that there are other people out there still suffering. Don't forget those people. Don't forget that somebody who was in this program and relatively happy went out and got you. Go out and get other people—it will help you to be happy. When you start talking to other people about how the program should work, you realize yourself how it should work, and you start to get on the ball and get after it and polish up some of the areas you have been neglecting.

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There are many, many ways you can carry this message and share; and if you don't feel like getting up and talking behind the podium, you can do it by just going around and smiling and saying, "Hi, I'm glad you're here." That helps, and it makes people feel like somebody cares whether they come back.

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For a long time, I sat at meetings without saying anything—I was just taking it in. It is like a person is a dry sponge and soaks in all this knowledge. After they soak up so much, you can squeeze them and they give out something. Pretty soon, they soak up so much they have to let out something. They have to share it with others before they can get any more and grow any more.

The Steps have affected my whole life. They have given me faith, hope and love in place of the fear, despair and bitterness I once felt.

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I have tried to carry the message in many ways—by speaking to school assemblies, by writing articles, by speaking privately to counselors and other interested people and simply by being a better person. I think it's important to carry the message to other Alateens, too, since this is what builds strong membership. Carrying the message is a chance to say "Thank you" to Alateen. I try to greet personally any newcomers to our group and make them feel welcome.

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The nice thing about our program is that it doesn't ask anyone to be perfect, but to keep on trying so that we can feel good about ourselves.

## The Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend. The teenage relatives of alcoholics, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an Alateen Group provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.
4. Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other Alateen and Al-Anon Family Groups or AA as a whole.
5. Each Alateen Group has but one purpose: to help other teenagers of alcoholics. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps of AA ourselves and by encouraging and understanding the members of our immediate families.
6. Alateens, being part of Al-Anon Family Groups, ought never endorse, finance or lend our name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual aim. Although a separate entity, we should always cooperate with Alcoholics Anonymous.
7. Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alateen Twelfth Step work should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. Our groups, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. The Alateen Groups have no opinion on outside issues; hence our name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, and TV. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all AA members.

12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles above personalities.

## Tradition One

Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity.

Alateen is like a tree and we are like the leaves on the tree. In order to produce good, healthy leaves, the tree must be healthy. If we want the members of Alateen to get as much help as possible from the program, we must make sure that our group is in good shape and that the fellowship as a whole is functioning properly. What is good for Alateen is good for each person in it.

1. What does “unity” mean?
  - a. at the group level?
  - b. in Alateen world wide?
2. Why does the group’s good have to come before the good of any one member?
3. How does giving each member a chance to speak up at a meeting contribute to the common welfare of the group?
4. Why is gossip bad for unity?
5. How can we make sure Alateen will be the same the world over?
6. What are some good ways to handle:
  - a. the person who monopolizes all the meetings?
  - b. the person who is always trying to show off by telling things that don’t have to do with Alateen?
  - c. members who do not want to use Conference Approved Literature (CAL)?
  - d. members who treat Alateen like a social hour?

The unity of Alateen the world over, and the unity of our group, provides us with a core of stability we can depend on. When we are confused and upset, it is a good feeling to know we can rely on our group to give us comfort and reassurance. Later on, we share the responsibility of safeguarding the group’s welfare so it will be there when others need it. Together we can make it.

## Personal Reflections

To me, this is the most important Tradition. In order to get as much as I can from the program, I must have unity within myself, unity within my family and unity within my group.

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This Tradition strikes close to home with me. Our group never really paid any attention to the Traditions. We didn't have a single meeting where there wouldn't be one brother calling the other a liar, or a couple sitting together chatting about what they did Saturday night, or somebody rambling on endlessly about an irrelevant topic. Nobody was concerned enough with the group's welfare to wait until after the meeting to discuss their social life.

As a result, whenever a newcomer came to us, we made him feel uncomfortable. When the older members moved on to other groups, the newer ones were left on their own without much good program background to help them. Because of our own neglect, the group almost folded. If it hadn't been for one or two dedicated individuals who got the group back on the right track, it would have.

All I can say is, if a group doesn't follow the Traditions, it will suffer and no one will get anything out of the meetings.

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Our group's Chairman decided that the Alateen literature wasn't enough, so he started bringing in booklets and pamphlets from other organizations. Some of them were pretty good, and we ordered more. But most of it was on alcoholism, and the information wasn't always consistent. Our discussions ended up as arguments over the symptoms of the early or late stages of alcoholism. Everybody got annoyed and more confused.

Eventually, we got a different Alateen Group Sponsor who encouraged us to stick to the Alateen literature and to use the Al-Anon material for a back-up. We learned the hard way that literature is important to group unity.

## Tradition Two

For our group purpose there is but one authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are our trusted servants; they do not govern.

Alateen has no one person to whom the group turns in time of crisis. Every time a problem arises, it can be discussed with all the members, keeping the Traditions in mind. Our group's decision, if the problem is discussed openly and honestly, will allow our Higher Power to act as the conscience of the group.

1. How can our group function without some human authority?
2. What is group conscience?
3. How does our Higher Power express Himself in our group conscience?
4. What do we do when an officer or older member is trying to take over the group?
5. How do we arrive at reasonable solutions for the group's problems?
6. How do we show our trust in our leaders? How do our leaders serve without governing?
7. What role does a more experienced member play in the group?
8. How does the Group Representative (GR) make group conscience known on a worldwide level?

If this Tradition is practiced, there should not be any resentment felt by any one person. No one's voice or opinion will be stronger, or heard any louder, than a fellow member's.

## **Personal Reflections**

A few months ago, our Alateen group was faced with a serious problem: whether or not to allow pre-teens at our meetings.

A few of the older members felt it would be a very good idea, and were sure their position in the group could sway the vote. But their age and opinions were only those of equal members and their votes counted only as much as the next person's.

After much heated discussion, the group came to its decision. Even though the older members had

given a good argument for their point of view, the majority of the members didn't agree and everybody voted according to their own beliefs.

The older members, realizing that the group's decision was the important thing, went along with it without hurt feelings or resentments.

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Our group had one older member who had been in Alateen longer than anybody else. Because he was older and more experienced, everybody looked to him for answers and sort of took it for granted that what he said was right. After a while, some of the other members had enough experience to start taking over the meetings and other jobs. But this older member still wanted to be the boss and run the group. He was always trying to tell people how to do their jobs and he made a lot of trouble. He sent for the literature he wanted instead of asking the group. He invited speakers without checking with the Chairman. He even insisted that the Chairman should check with him before planning a meeting!

Our Alateen Group Sponsor could see the problem and suggested to the Chairman that we have a meeting on the Traditions. So we did—and we found out we were doing some other things wrong, too. Now we have a meeting on the Traditions at least once every six months.

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Our Alateen Group Sponsor meant well, but she was a schoolteacher and she tried to run our group like a classroom. She gave lectures every week, interrupted the discussions to give her point of view, and insisted on planning the meetings for the Chairman. Whenever anybody asked a question, she answered it instead of letting the group members do it. She wanted to help us, but she was helping too much and in the wrong way!

We showed her the pamphlet, *A Guide for Sponsors of Alateen Groups* (P-29) and asked her to read it. But it didn't help. She just kept on being a pest and our group was suffering because of it. We discussed the problem among ourselves, and decided to go to the Al-Anon group nearest us and request a different Group Sponsor. We felt really bad about having to do it, but the group's welfare had to come first.

## Tradition Three

The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend. The teenage relatives of alcoholics when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an Alateen Group provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

Alateen is sometimes called a selfish program. One of the reasons is because it is available only to teenagers who are directly affected by an alcoholic.

1. Why is it important for all the members to be relatives or friends of alcoholics?
2. Why is it harmful to the group for people without problems related to alcoholism to come to closed meetings?
3. Why should people who have criminal records, are on drugs or are alcoholics themselves be allowed membership if they qualify as relatives or friends of alcoholics?
4. Why are people who are no longer being directly affected by someone's drinking still eligible for Alateen?
5. What does affiliation mean?
6. Why are social activities or private clubs, such as dramatics, sports or parties, kept separate from Alateen?
7. How could being connected with another good cause harm Alateen?

Meeting with other teenagers who have alcoholic parents helps us to realize that we are not the only family suffering from this disease. Limiting our membership to people with this problem helps us to keep our group purpose unchanged. By following this Tradition, we make sure that those who need us won't be turned off by our affiliation with other organizations.

## **Personal Reflections**

I had a very close friend who didn't have alcoholic parents but she was very understanding and I felt I could tell her anything. I even told her about my father's drinking problem and how it affected me. When I went to Alateen, I wanted her to go, too.

She meant a lot to me and I thought the program was so terrific; it was good for everybody. I wanted to share it with her.

But I decided to ask my group first if it would be okay. After we had discussed the problem, I understood why it wouldn't be good for her to come. Some of the members might be inhibited and afraid to say what was really on their minds. It would put a hole in our common bond.

Some of the other groups in our area have let outsiders attend their meetings, but they have suffered because of it. I'm really glad our group discusses these things and tries to keep the Traditions.

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Our group met in the local church. They allowed us to meet there free and we were really grateful. We wanted to pay them back in some way, so we decided to have a benefit for the church. We put on a play, and sold tickets to all the neighbors that said the play was being put on by the church's Alateen group. We didn't realize we were giving the impression that Alateen was affiliated with that church. The people in the congregation started asking questions and got very annoyed.

It took a while to straighten out the mess, but now we know that we have to keep ourselves separate from the organization that owns the place where we meet.

## Tradition Four

Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other Alateen and Al-Anon Family Groups or A.A. as a whole.

Freedom to run our group the way we want is an important part of the program. Through this freedom, we find ourselves and we grow. But just as the good of the group must be considered before the wishes of any one member, so too, the good of the fellowship must be considered before the wishes of any one group.

1. What does "autonomous" mean?
2. What are Alateen groups free to do?
3. What are some of the things that could hurt another Alateen group, or the fellowship as a whole?

4. How does cooperating with the local Information Service help us to practice this Tradition better?
5. Why should groups stick to Conference Approved Literature (CAL) instead of writing their own?
6. Why should groups take their inventory?
7. If no one can punish us for breaking the Traditions, then why should we bother to try to abide by them?

“Obedience to the unenforceable” is a phrase we sometimes hear in our fellowship. It means that, although no one can force us to live up to the Traditions, most of us do it anyway because we love Alateen. We want to do only what will help it grow, so that it will be there when the next person who needs it comes along. We realize the Traditions are the results of many lessons learned the hard way, and that doing what they say will not only keep the fellowship strong, but will save our group a lot of headaches too.

## Personal Reflections

Our group was expelled from the church hall because a few of the members felt it was okay to steal. The church members didn't jump to any conclusions; they waited until they had proof. One night one of the Alateen members got caught, and that was the group's last meeting. It was also the last meeting for any Alateen group in that area. Rumors swept the area that all Alateens are a bunch of young hoods who get their kicks ripping off churches. With a reputation like that, it is doubtful Alateen will ever have a meeting place in a church around here. It's too bad for the kids who live here and really need the program.

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There were some kids in our group who were pushing drugs to pay for their own habits. They started out just supplying those who wanted the stuff after the meetings, but word got around that Alateen was the place to go if you wanted to get dope. The parents with straight kids kept their children home, and eventually the group was raided by the police and a lot of the kids were busted. That gave a really bad name to Alateen in our town. We don't even have a group any more because nobody wants to take the chance of sending his kids.

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Our group was doing well and we were pretty happy with our members. We liked things the way they were and didn't feel any need to keep in touch with the World Service Office or local Information Service. So we just kept to ourselves.

After a while, we got very stale. The meetings just didn't seem to do anything for us anymore. We kept on hearing the same old stuff over and over again. Discussions started to turn into gossip sessions.

We didn't get any news of what was happening to Alateen in other places. New pieces of literature came out and we didn't even know it. Nobody ever attended Assembly meetings—we didn't even have a Group Representative (GR) and nobody could remember whose mailing address was used. Members stopped coming—let's face it—the meetings were boring.

One member attended a workshop and came back with news of what was happening to Alateen. Groups all over had become so self-centered that there wasn't anybody to do Public Information or to go out speaking to high schools and such. The local radio station was looking for an Alateen speaker but no one wanted to go. We realized then that by isolating ourselves, we were depriving ourselves of vital information and the opportunities to spread the message. The fellowship was suffering from our attitude, too.

We now are active at the Assembly level and at the local level as well. Our GR reports on what's happening at World Service and we feel we're part of the total world picture. Our Information Service Representative (ISR) reports on local events and we've gotten really active in spreading the message. We learned that it's important for us to do our share to keep the fellowship alive and well if we want our individual group to survive and thrive.

## Tradition Five

Each Alateen Group has but one purpose: to help other teenagers of alcoholics. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps of AA ourselves and by encouraging and understanding the members of our immediate families.

The purpose of Alateen groups is an important one. No group can afford to dilute its strength by taking on other purposes. Otherwise the original purpose will be forgotten and everyone will suffer.

1. How does Alateen help the children of alcoholics?
2. What are some kinds of help Alateen does not give?
3. Why should someone who has a serious problem in other areas, such as drugs or sex, look for outside help?
4. Explain the meaning of "you can't give what you haven't got" in relation to this Tradition.
5. How does learning about the disease of alcoholism help us?
6. Why don't we give advice, but only share our experience and offer suggestions?
7. Why isn't it a good idea for groups to help members out financially?
8. Why shouldn't gifts be sent to anyone in the group's name?
9. How can we give "encouragement and understanding to the members of our immediate families"?

Groups which forget the purpose for their existence soon find themselves in trouble. The members aren't getting the help they're looking for, newcomers don't return, there is bickering and arguing.

## Personal Reflections

Our group decided it would be a good idea to provide an opportunity for our members to socialize. So we started having dances after the meetings. Pretty soon the word got around and the kids were coming just for the dance and not for the meeting. The plans for the dance got so important that the meeting was forgotten or the members were only half-hearted about it. Eventually, the group got together and

decided to eliminate the dances. You can go dancing elsewhere, but you can get the Alateen program only at an Alateen meeting. We found out the hard way that having more than one purpose only weakens the effect of the help we get in Alateen.

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A lot of our members were having problems with drugs. Pretty soon, we found that most of our discussion was on how to use drugs or not use them, instead of how to live the program. We got literature on drugs and had speakers from community organizations for drug problems. But nobody was getting help with their problems of living with an alcoholic parent. Kids who had no drug problem didn't come back and we ended up more mixed up than when we first came. We decided to stick to our purpose of helping other children of alcoholics and to leave other problems to those who are set up for it.

## Tradition Six

Alateens, being part of Al-Anon Family Groups, ought never endorse, finance or lend our name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual aim. Although a separate entity, we should always cooperate with Alcoholics Anonymous.

We are in Alateen to learn how to become better people, not to make money or get famous. We're not here to help others make money or get famous either. Giving our support, financial or otherwise, to outside organizations can only lead to a lot of strings that we will eventually wish we hadn't tied.

1. How can it harm a group if somebody starts selling things before, during or after meetings?
2. For what purposes are the group's funds used?
3. Why is it unwise for Alateens to make announcements at meetings concerning "Hot Lines," drug rehabilitation centers, and other helping agencies?
4. What is Alateen's "primary spiritual aim"?
5. What are some good ways Alateen can cooperate with A.A.?

6. Why would it be bad for Alateen to let a company use its name to make money?
7. How could it harm Alateen to back, as a group, a political candidate who is very knowledgeable about alcoholism?

Alateen has the power to change our lives if we use it properly. We must always remember why we are here, and never use the group to promote our pet projects, or our personal interests in outside causes.

## Personal Reflections

One member of our group worked on the school Hot Line. He was very enthused about the help it was providing for many people and the vital role he played as a staff member. He would very often bring it up at meetings and really made it sound great. When he saw that everyone was able to share some of his enthusiasm about it, he started to give it a plug.

When a newcomer asked the guy who worked on the Hot Line for a number to call, he gave her the Hot Line number instead of an Alateen number. When her father had a slip, she called the Hot Line number because she was really upset. She got a listening ear and a little bit of encouragement, but another Alateen member could have given her much more. When we found out at our next meeting what had happened, the boy on the Hot Line staff realized that his constant mentioning of the Hot Line was a deviation from Alateen's Traditions and he stopped it.

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Our group thinks it's really important to cooperate with A.A. We also enjoy doing it. Whenever A.A. asks for a speaker, we are glad to go, and we invite them to our open meetings and make requests for A.A. speakers.

When our Alateen Group Sponsor quit for personal reasons, we didn't have anybody to take her place. So an A.A. member took over the job. At first it was really great, and we didn't notice any difference. But after a while, we could see that the alcoholic's point of view was different from ours. He didn't understand about detachment, and some of the advice he was giving the kids was really confusing. A lot of our meetings started to focus on alcoholism and the alcoholic. Before we knew it, we were reading A.A. booklets

and kids coming in got the impression we were a part of A.A. instead of Al-Anon.

Eventually, we did get an Al-Anon member to sponsor the group and we now are back to the Al-Anon point of view.

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Our local psychiatric hospital has an alcoholism section and is interested in helping the families of alcoholics as well. So they asked some of us to come down and work with the families. They set up an Alateen group in the hospital for the children of the patients. We thought we were going to be running an institutional type meeting, but it turned out that hospital staff and doctors were running the groups and the Alateen program wasn't even mentioned, even though they advertised the groups as Alateen. We told them they had no right to use our name to describe the services they were providing the families, since they really weren't Alateen groups at all. The fact that they were run by professionals made them something else altogether.

## Tradition Seven

Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

At first it may seem foolish to refuse contributions from non-members. After all, think of all the good we could do if we were left a large sum in someone's will, or if the government gave us a grant. Even such things as free rent or refreshments seem attractive to us when we don't have much money. But experience has taught us that gifts from people outside the fellowship may have strings attached. We may not see the pitfalls until it is too late. Even help from a sponsoring Al-Anon group or individual Al-Anon or A.A. members when an Alateen group first starts should be discontinued as soon as the Alateens become self-sustaining.

1. What are some of the undesirable things that could happen to Alateen if we were to accept outside contributions?
2. How does footing the bill for our group's expenses help us to grow?

3. What does our local Information Service do for us? What do we do for it? (See *Al-Anon Information Services* (G-4))
4. What does our Group Representative do for us? What do we do for him? (See *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27))
5. What does our World Service Office do for us? What do we do in return?
6. Explain the meaning of the phrase "Gratitude without responsibility is hypocrisy," in relation to this Tradition.

Becoming aware of the needs of others is an important part of growing up. The more we learn about our fellowship as a world-wide organization, the more we will want to share in its work by supporting it in every way we can.

### Personal Reflections

Our Alateen group meets in a house that is owned by a church. We were given the use of the house for free. The pastor of the church was very impressed with the Alateen program and wanted to do whatever he could for us. He started to buy us refreshments and leave them in the house for us once in a while. The kids who were in charge of refreshments started to depend on him and they stopped bringing it themselves. Sometimes the pastor would leave refreshments and sometimes he wouldn't. It caused a lot of friction in our group, and we finally decided to refuse the pastor's generosity, because it was depriving our own members of the opportunity to assume their responsibilities and take an interest in the group.

After a while, whenever a church organization needed our meeting place on our meeting night, we were asked to move and were shifted from one place to another. This was really bad because the address of the house was listed in the meeting book and if a newcomer came late, he couldn't find us. Also, if one of the regular members missed the meeting the previous week, he wouldn't know where to look for us, either. We asked the pastor if he would please allow us to pay rent. He didn't want to let us, but we finally made him see why it was necessary. We showed him we were grateful but we also had to be

responsible. Our group sees why it's necessary to be fully self-supporting. It also helps our group unity when we all pitch in to pay for rent, literature and all other expenses.

## Tradition Eight

Alateen Twelfth Step work should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

No one can understand the child of an alcoholic like the child of an alcoholic. We help each other in Alateen by sharing our experiences and by trying to practice the Steps, Slogans and Traditions.

1. Why shouldn't Alateen groups hire professionals to guide them?
2. Why is Alateen considered the treatment of choice for the children of alcoholics?
3. Why shouldn't Alateen members call themselves Alateen counselors if they are working for an outside agency?
4. When and why does our fellowship need to pay special workers such as secretaries, bookkeepers, etc.?
5. Why can't Alateen members accept payment when speaking for Alateen? (Expense money is okay.)
6. Why can't teachers, social workers, or anyone interested in teenagers sponsor an Alateen group?

Our fellowship would never be able to function without the many volunteers who give hours and hours of their time helping newcomers, starting groups, answering phones, speaking, etc. Nor would we be able to function without the paid workers who keep our service centers functioning effectively and efficiently all year long. All of us have an important part to play in the Twelfth Step work of our fellowship.

## Personal Reflections

Our group was started by a social worker from the local mental health center. He was really interested in alcoholism and wanted to help. But he didn't know anything about the program, and he didn't have a problem of alcoholism in his family.

He wanted to do group therapy with the kids and use the information he got to do a paper for a magazine. When the parents realized what was going on, they got really mad. Now we have an Alateen Group Sponsor who lets us run our own program. It's much better.

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Some of our older group members have gone to work at the alcoholism treatment center in our town. They are working with the children of alcoholics, teaching them about the disease and helping them to understand their feelings about the disease. At first, they were calling themselves Alateen counselors, but have since found out that they have no right to call themselves that. It gives people the impression that Alateen is a counseling service, or that it's a training program for counselors. So they have started to call themselves family counselors, instead.

## Tradition Nine

Our groups, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

There are Alateen groups all over the world. To be sure the Alateen principles and ideas reach the millions of people who have been affected by alcoholism, some kind of structure is necessary.

1. In what sense is Alateen not organized?
2. When and why is it a good idea to form special committees?
3. Is it possible to run an Alateen group without any rules or regulations? Why?
4. How does the structure of the Al-Anon and Alateen fellowship help communication between the service centers and those they serve?
5. Is it a contradiction to say Alateen doesn't have rules when we do have Traditions? Why or why not?
6. Why should our committees be responsible to those they serve?
7. Explain the relationship of this Tradition to Tradition Two.

Even though there are no rules in Alateen, we are

responsible. Maybe we don't have the time or the skills to be involved with special service committees, but we are responsible to each other. It is our duty and obligation to see that the Alateen meetings are held in an orderly fashion and that the Traditions are followed.

## Personal Reflections

When our anniversary was coming up, we decided to break up into committees to take care of decorations, refreshments, and speakers. But the people on the committees forgot they were responsible to the group. The speakers committee invited an alcoholic who had sobered up without benefit of A.A., and he gave a talk on why he didn't need the program. The refreshment committee spent so much money that the group is still in debt, three months later, to the Group Sponsor who had to bail us out. And the decorations committee took things that belonged to the church without asking permission. They broke a couple of vases and the whole group got into trouble for it.

Next year, our committees will have to report to the whole group and get approval for their ideas before they go ahead with their plans.

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Our group was so unstructured, it was disorganized. We didn't have a Chairman; anybody who wanted to could lead the meeting. Nothing was ever prepared in advance; we just talked about what we felt like talking about. Nobody wanted to be treasurer, so whoever bought the soda and snacks took home the collection. We didn't have anybody bringing mail to the group or making announcements, so we didn't know what was going on and we had no literature. We didn't even have a regular Group Sponsor. Some of the women from the neighboring Al-Anon group took turns looking in on us, but we didn't have any one person responsible for us that we could turn to for guidance.

Needless to say, we were in terrible shape. We almost fell apart and, in fact, we would have if one of our sometime-Sponsors hadn't taken an active interest in our group. Now we have officers, and everybody understands the importance of planning meetings in advance.

## Tradition Ten

The Alateen Groups have no opinion on outside issues; hence our name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

Alateen is made up of teenagers with many different opinions on life, politics, sports, etc. As individuals, we are free to do as we wish. But we must be careful not to drag the name of Alateen into public debates.

1. How would the group's involvement in public controversy affect the group?
2. What effect would it have on the individual members?
3. Why shouldn't we try to defend ourselves publicly against criticism? How should we handle it?
4. Discuss the Slogan "Live and Let Live" in relation to this Tradition.
5. Discuss Tradition Eleven in relation to this Tradition.

Where outside issues are concerned, as a group, we are know nothings, hear nothings and see nothings. As individuals, we may get as involved as we like.

## Personal Reflections

The man running for Congressman last election was a recovering alcoholic and the father of one of our members. He really was a very concerned man and well-liked by our group. Many of our members started working on his campaign. In fact, it was so many of us that we started to make posters and buttons at meetings. We did all sorts of planning about which person would cover which area to hand out flyers and so forth. We even had cards printed up saying that Alateen supported this candidate.

This was bad for his anonymity, of course, and drew our name into public controversy. Before we knew it, his opponent had latched on to our campaign and made a big issue over the fact that our candidate was an alcoholic.

In the meantime, for three weeks all we did at meetings was try to figure out how we could get the opponent to retract what he was saying. One night, one of our members came to the meeting almost hysterical. She had had something on her mind for the past three weeks and just couldn't hold back

any more. Boy, were we ashamed! We hadn't had an Alateen meeting in almost a month.

We realized that as individuals we could get involved in the campaign but only on our own time.

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In the town where our meeting is held, there was some controversy going on about whether or not to have a class set up in the high school for alcohol education. One of the teachers who was for the project came to an open meeting and asked for our endorsement of his classes.

Even though our group realized how worthwhile it would be and what a need there was for something like that, we knew that drawing the name of Alateen into the controversy wouldn't do Alateen any good. So we said we couldn't take sides, but invited a few of the other teachers to an open meeting to educate them on just how much we had been helped by our knowledge of alcoholism.

## Tradition Eleven

Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, and TV. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all AA members.

Many people are still suffering from the alcoholism of a loved one. In our zeal to let them know about Alateen, we must be careful to avoid extremes. The hard-sell approach can be just as bad as hiding in the closet and not letting anyone know we're there.

1. What is the difference between attraction and promotion?
2. How can we let the community know about us?
3. Why must Alateen members be especially careful about guarding their anonymity? a) at the level of the press, radio and TV b) in local schools and community centers c) around the neighborhood
4. Why are we all responsible for spreading the message?

5. Explain the statement, "No one person can ever be a spokesman for Alateen," and how it relates to this Tradition.
6. What are some of the ways we can make Alateen seem attractive when we speak? (See *Guidelines for Members Interested in Speaking* (G-1))
7. Why shouldn't the name Alateen ever appear on the outside of an envelope that is addressed to a person?

We can help to attract people to Alateen if we always remember that we may be the only contact outsiders have with our fellowship and behave accordingly. We can let others know about us by displaying our posters in schools; churches and youth meeting places; by placing notices of our answering service number in our local paper, and by providing a phone number on the TV film strips.

### Personal Reflections

Our schools have alcoholism education as part of the health program. I was really looking forward to hearing the Alateen speakers our teacher invited. At the beginning of the year, I had been having a lot of problems and had gotten to be really close with this teacher. When I joined Alateen, I told her how great it was and it was through me that she decided to invite Alateens to speak to the class. There were a couple of other kids in the class who had drinking problems at home and she was hoping to reach them this way.

But I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw the Alateen speakers who came! The girl took off her shoes and put her feet up on the teacher's desk. She actually pointed to people with her feet! The boys were no better. I guess they were nervous and so they were trying to be super cool. They used bad language and had on dirty, shabby clothes. All they did was talk about what the alcoholic had done and brag about how they were drinking. They were the worst example possible. Most of the kids in the class thought Alateen was really bad news.

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When our secretary was sending out the anniversary invitations, she sent them to the group contacts' homes, but put the name of the Alateen group on

the outside of the envelope, too. One kid's actively drinking mother saw the mail first. She didn't know her daughter was going to Alateen and went into a rage over it. The girl is in the hospital as a result of the beating she got. We learned our lesson about anonymity the hard way.

## Tradition Twelve

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles above personalities.

Anonymity not only protects those we love from possible harm due to prejudice and ignorance, but it helps us to remember that Alateen is made up of equals. Job titles in Alateen refer to the jobs people are doing, not necessarily to their maturity or growth in the program. An Alateen success is not necessarily someone who is a group officer, or someone who is voted most likely to succeed, or the most popular group member. An Alateen success is a member who is a better person today than he was yesterday. That goal is within everyone's reach.

1. How does this Tradition help us develop humility?
2. What does it mean to "put principles before personalities"?
3. How does this Tradition tie in with the first one?
4. Why is all our literature written anonymously?
5. How does this Tradition tie in with Tradition Two?

Part of growing up is learning to tell the difference between important things and unimportant ones. Placing the welfare of the group first and applying the principles of the program to ourselves, in spite of difficulties with troublesome personalities, will insure our growth.

## Personal Reflections

I had been around the program for a long time before I came to Alateen. My father had been a member of A.A. and I often went to meetings with him. When I joined Alateen, a lot of the kids in my group were living with an active alcoholic and

were brand new to the program. I gave lip service to the principles. I could answer any question; no matter what was wrong, I could solve it. So for quite a while, I was the big shot around that group. But then another boy came to our meeting who was everything I was pretending to be. Right away, everybody could see right through me, so I had to change. The new boy became my Sponsor and I'm now trying to work the program for myself, instead of for everybody else.

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I had been a member of Alateen for almost three years when my family moved. It would have been too hard for me to get back to meetings at the old group. My sister and I, with the help of some Al-Anon people, started a new group in our neighborhood. My sister got married shortly after that and moved away, so I was the only experienced member left in the group. That really was unimportant to me, but it seemed to mean a lot to many of the younger members. Whenever they said anything, they kind of looked for my approval. I tried to explain to them that no member is any more important than any other, but at the same time, I was holding on to the job of Chairman because I didn't think anyone else would be able to handle it! I finally realized that it wasn't good for the group to have one personality stand out like that, and I gave up the chairmanship.

The Al-Anon World Service Office publishes books and other pamphlets which may be of help:

#### **Books**

*Alateen—Hope for Children of Alcoholics* (B-3)

*Alateen—a day at a time* (B-10)

*...In All Our Affairs: Making Crises Work for You* (B-15)

*Courage To Be Me—Living With Alcoholism* (B-23)

*Paths To Recovery—Al-Anon's Steps, Traditions and Concepts* (B-24)

*Living Today in Alateen* (B-26)

*Hope for Today* (B-27/B-28)

#### **Pamphlets**

*Moving On! From Alateen to Al-Anon* (P-59)

*Alateen's 4th Step Inventory* (Workbook) (P-64)

*Acceptance* (Booklet) (P-68)

*Serenity* (Booklet) (P-69)

*Slogans* (Booklet) (P-70)

*Detachment* (Booklet) (P-73)

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Alateen, part of the Al-Anon Family Groups, is a fellowship of young people whose lives have been affected by alcoholism in a family member or close friend. We help each other by sharing our experience, strength, and hope.

We believe alcoholism is a family disease because it affects all the members emotionally and sometimes physically. Although we cannot change or control our parents, we can detach from their problems while continuing to love them.

We do not discuss religion or become involved with any outside organizations. Our sole topic is the solution of our problems. We are always careful to protect each other's anonymity as well as that of all Al-Anon and A.A. members.

By applying the Twelve Steps to ourselves, we begin to grow mentally, emotionally and spiritually. We will always be grateful to Alateen for giving us a wonderful, healthy program to live by and enjoy.

*Alateen Suggested Preamble to the Twelve Steps*

**For meeting information call:  
1-888-425-2666 (1-888-4AL-ANON)**

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This pamphlet is also available in Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese and Spanish.

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