

The Principle of Anonymity

by Stan in recovery (<https://staninrecovery.neocities.org>)

"I deeply believe that the principle of anonymity must remain our primary and enduring safeguard." – Bill W.,(12-Step co-founder, 1970)

Our most valuable Tradition* in recovery is **Anonymity**. Sometimes it is easy to forget this.

How often have we heard "turn your camera on" or "tell us where you're from?" when trying to join a recovery meeting? How often have we come across gossip about a celebrity in 12-Steps, speakers introducing themselves with their full names, or fellows reading off the last names of other members (alive or deceased)?

12 Step co-founder Bill W. thought anonymity so important, that it was the subject [of the final message](#) he left us before dying. He emphasized:

"On the spiritual level, anonymity demands the greatest discipline of which we are capable; on the practical level, anonymity has brought protection for the newcomer, respect and support of the world outside, and security from those of us who would use A.A. for sick and selfish purposes... I deeply believe that the principle of anonymity must remain our primary and enduring safeguard."

Let us remember that spirit of anonymity, the safety and protection of which makes recovery possible for so many of us. Anonymity keeps our egos in check, protects the reputation of families of people in our fellowship, and keeps our work focused on the spiritual solution to our disease.

Let us continue to keep our meeting places safe, and our history rich and detailed. But let us not do so at the expense of this valuable tradition, which can be a life boat to the newcomer drowning in a sea of fear, terror, and worry.**

In fellowship,

—Stan in recovery (9.19.2025)

***The 11th Tradition (short form):**

Eleven—Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.

***The 11th Tradition (short form):**

11.—Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. We think A.A. ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as A.A. members ought not be broadcast, filmed, or publicly printed. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.

***The 12th Tradition (short form):**

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

***The 12th Tradition (long form):**

12.—And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of [our Higher Power] who presides over us all.

****SAA Voices of Recovery**

September 10

"For some, negative consequences of addictive sexual behaviors can become the motivation for change."

Sex Addicts Anonymous and the Lesbian ? Gay ? Bisexual ? Transgender Sex Addict, page 6

When I approached SAA for the first time, I was full of fear. I, like many others, was afraid of being judged or condemned by those in the meeting. I was afraid of friends and family finding out I had a problem. I was especially afraid I'd see someone I knew at the meeting. Furthermore, many of my actions were illegal, and I feared someone breaking anonymity and reporting me to the police. On the other hand, the thought of continuing the status quo of my addiction had also become terrifying.

I felt like I was being pulled between two poles of fear. On the north pole is my addiction with its fears—arrest, disease, losing those I love, and the unending misery and shame. On the south pole are the fears of recovery—being judged, losing friends and family when they learn of my problem, being vulnerable, and facing myself.

The time came when I had to weigh the two poles and decide which I feared more—my addiction or my recovery. Recovery can be frightening, and the journey is often painful, but, unlike addiction, the path of recovery offers light, hope, and serenity—an actual life. There I can become a real person in the real world.

Since I must face fears, I will choose the path with hope.

from SAA Voices of Recovery: (<https://saa-recovery.org/literature/voices-recovery-daily-meditation-book/>) (<https://saa-store.org/book/>)