

Presentation: Helping GSRs with Controversial Topics

For fear of controversy, our leadership should not go timid when lively debate and forthright action is a necessity." AA Co-Founder, Bill W., July 1965

"Responsibility Is Our Theme," *The Language of the Heart*

Before I tackle a subject, I make sure I comprehend each word:

1. Starting with a definition: Controversy. Controversy relates to everything generating opposing opinions. Think about eating from the forbidden tree... AA has been "married" to controversy: smoking or non-smoking at meetings; rotation of positions; suggested length of sobriety for service positions, etc. and by using Tradition 4, each group may claim its autonomy regarding their particular decisions.

Controversy manifests in our human mind, expressed as confusion, or lack of decision therefore we **never hurry** a decision in AA.

2. A GSR **represents** the **voice** of the *informed* group conscience (Not my own), **reports** the group's thoughts to the DCM and the delegate (who passes them on to the Conference). (**Service Manual S26**)
3. As GSR, I am responsible for *bringing back to the group all Conference Actions that affect AA unity, health and growth*. And again, I am acting as a trusted servant only (**Tradition 2**) without a personal bias. **Prayer** is an indispensable tool to calibrate personal opinions and heated discussions. *Unity* allows for health and growth of AA and *controversy* is often the seemingly troublesome path to it.
4. There is a **finite number** only of pros and cons and finally most controversies simmer down to the following core principles: **does it hurt our primary purpose/unity/growth and health of AA?**

Let's focus on taking a group conscience and the chances of experiencing a lively controversy: Resume the meeting with a prayer, allow each person an allotted time to speak, provide all possible background info and abstain from taking sides. When turmoil occurs, a reminder of our loving HP as expressed in our group conscience can soften the edges.

The pamphlet *The AA Group*, (getting a group conscience, pg. 28/29) and the subsequent paragraph about group inventory (pg. 29/30) provide additional suggestions how to conduct a group conscience.

Traditions 1,2,9, 10 and 12 and **Concepts** 1,2,3,4 and 5 are great stepping stones toward an informed group conscience and it helps me to (more or less) memorize them.

In addition to looking up **written** experiences and suggestions, we can always **ask** other GSRs, our **service sponsor**, **DCMs** and **past delegates** about their experience and support with controversial topics.

Finally, an example demonstrating principles over personalities: {What about the *Newcomer*, who finds him/herself in a business meeting (unaware about the Principles of the Steps, Traditions and Concepts)? *Each member* has the *right to participate* (Concept 4). Group conscience is more than a group majority and considers the insight of the minority opinion (Concept 5). Our group conscience reconciles, embraces everyone to contribute their vote meanwhile trusting the GSR with the *right of decision* (Concept 3) to vote differently from the group's conscience at an Assembly, if the minority's opinion brings up a hitherto unconsidered insight and change of mind.} Every controversy will be solved over time as long as we practice these principles and keep right sized. Hurrah!