

What can be read or said at an AA meeting?

The answer quite simply is anything the group agrees upon. There is no “recommended” list, no “banned” list and no rules what so ever about what is read or said at AA meetings. What guides each group and each member is our Twelve Traditions. Clearly traditions are not rules and there is no compliance-enforcement division in AA.

The Traditions didn't come about as good ideas but rather from bad experiences. Each tradition is crafted from the unintended consequences of well-intentioned initiatives of every-day AA members. So if our rebellious natured irks us to defy the Traditions like a high-school student would break the rules when a teacher isn't looking, we will get away with it, but that's not to say there will be no consequences. The back chapters of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions are worth reading and we can all identify with the characters in the stories of AA's past. If we don't know our history we are doomed to repeat it.

That's one of the reasons we spend one meeting a month at Beyond Belief, reading a tradition and talking about it. Sure a lot of the members are inclined to use their time to talk for more pressing life-issues of calamity in their life right now, than talking about the misadventures of our fore-fathers (or “fore-parents” to be more 21st century). That's fine. But these traditions have great life lessons that lend themselves to improving our skills of dealing with the outside world. The Traditions have cryptic spiritual principals; if you will, woven into the self-will-run-riot tales of Bill Wilson and his running mates.

We often hear “That's not Conference Approved,” or “That's an outside issue,” from someone who steer the meeting in their perceived rightful path. These statements are at best, half-truths. AA doesn't approve what's read in a meeting, the group does. AA doesn't set rules in what can be talk about in a meeting, or cross talk or what the ritualistic readings are; the group sets these rules.

But for the record here is a cut and paste as I “have blanket permission to use the material, providing proper credit is given to insure that the copyrights of A.A. literature are protected,” from the Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Office web site, aa.org. This is “how it works” from the horses-mouth, as it were:

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