

*Conference-Approved Literature at Meetings:
Assuring Our Unity*



Debtors Anonymous

Item GSB-3

The General Service Board has received numerous requests to address the importance of using only literature that has been approved by our World Service Conference. This essay will explore how using Conference-approved literature is an essential and crucial way to ensure the integrity of the D.A. program. Tradition One states:

“Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon D.A. unity.”

It is not the purpose of D.A. to acquaint its members with all the approaches to the problem of compulsive debting—only the D.A. approach. Conference-approved literature keeps the focus on our spiritual message. As our Program grows we each benefit in many ways. We are able to attend meetings anywhere in the world, knowing that the D.A. message of hope and help will be consistent and uniform. Around the world, we study and practice the very same principles of the D.A. program—that is unity!

We all have heard the phrase “You can only keep what you have by giving it away.” In this respect we need always be aware that our recovery depends on D.A. members carrying the message to the still suffering debtor. This is our Fifth Tradition, our primary purpose. A newcomer can become confused if our meetings use literature that has not been approved through our World Service Conference’s Literature Approval Process. Conference-approved literature assures that the message therein will be clear and consistent, and will reflect the principles of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Debtors Anonymous. If a

newcomer leaves a meeting confused about the D.A. message because a piece of non-conference-approved literature was being used, then we have failed in our primary purpose. Outside literature has a place in the recovery process, but can conflict with the D.A. message and confuse the newcomer. Our experience has shown that, in the first days of recovery, a newcomer needs firm and solid grounding in the D.A. program.

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Tradition Six suggests another important reason why we do not use non-conference-approved literature at our meetings. Endorsing the use of any piece of outside literature affiliates D.A. with an outside enterprise, thereby diverting us from our primary purpose. Bookstores abound with shelves of self-help books. A D.A. meeting that uses any of these books is putting the program of Debtors Anonymous at risk of legal action from the authors or publishers of those works. Tradition Four reminds us that each group is autonomous except in matters affecting D.A. as a whole. In this case, using non-conference-approved material as part of the meeting’s format can place the entire fellowship in jeopardy. The GSB is not in the business of policing meetings or of telling members what they may or may not read outside our meetings; we are here to safeguard the Traditions and maintain the integrity of the D.A. program as a whole.

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(continued)

However, it is the opinion of the entire General Service Board that any D.A. meeting that insists upon using outside literature as part of its format is in fact not reflecting the principles of unity, putting the entire Fellowship at risk.

Meetings that insist upon using non-conference approved literature as part of their meeting format are breaking with Tradition. We would hope that these meetings regard this issue as seriously as we do and, in the interest of unity, reconsider their meeting format.

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Suggestions for new literature can come from any D.A. member or group. There is a process for creating and approving new D.A. literature. All pieces go through this process, which involves many committees before it reaches approval by the delegates at the Conference. If you believe there is a need for literature on a certain D.A. topic, we invite you to get involved by sending your idea to the Literature Committee of the becoming a General Service Representative and attending the Literature Committee of the World Service Conference in person.

Questions for Group Discussion

- Why do meetings or other D.A. events use only Conference-Approved literature?
 - Can groups or meetings jeopardize the entire fellowship by using non-conference-approved literature?
 - How are both the newcomer and the established member helped by Traditions One, Five, and Six?
 - How can new literature be made available for D.A. meetings?
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This is D.A. Service Material, developed from the shared experience of D.A. members throughout the worldwide Fellowship. It also reflects the guidance of the Twelve Traditions, the General Service Board and the General Service Office. In keeping with our Tradition of Autonomy except in matters affecting other groups or D.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of Service Material is to assist in reaching an informed group conscience. Since Service Material reflects the current and ever-developing conscience of our Fellowship as a whole, it does not undergo the usual conference-approval process, but may be updated periodically under the auspices of the General Service Board to reflect current Fellowship experience.