

Please print this letter and make sure it is read at your meeting. Please leave on literature table.

South Coastal MA Intergroup
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Thank you for sticking with us as we navigate the rolling and roiling waters along the South Coastal MA Intergroup's shores. Many among us have asked if we should be taking legal action against our former treasurer in the matter of substantial missing funds. Your Intergroup Board has done a lot of soul-searching and researching on this matter. The following is a summation of what we have learned.

**Excerpts from the Twelve Concepts of AA Service
by Bill Wilson**

(OA Conference Approved)

(Feel free to substitute OA and food for AA and alcohol if you wish.)

Concept XII, *Warranty Five*: **“That no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy.”**

“Practically all societies and governments feel it necessary to inflict personal punishment upon individual members for violations of their beliefs, principles, or laws. Because of its special situation, Alcoholics Anonymous finds this practice unnecessary. When we of A.A. fail to follow sound spiritual principles, alcohol cuts us down. Therefore no humanly administered system of penalties is needed. This unique condition is an enormous advantage to us all, one on which we can fully rely and one which we should never abandon by a resort to methods of personal attack and punishment. Of all societies ours can least afford to risk the resentments and conflicts which would result were we ever to yield to the temptation to punish in anger.

“For much the same reason we cannot and should not enter into public controversy. Even in self-defense. ... Nothing could be more damaging to our unity and to the worldwide good will which A.A. enjoys, than public contention, no matter how promising the immediate dividends might appear.

“Therefore it is evident that the harmony, security, and future effectiveness of A.A. will depend largely upon our maintenance of a thoroughly nonaggressive and pacific attitude in all our public relations. This is an exacting assignment, because in our drinking days we were prone to anger, hostility, rebellion, and aggression. And even though we are now sober, the old patterns of behavior are to a degree still with us, always threatening to explode on any good excuse. But we *know* this, and therefore I feel confident that in the conduct of our public affairs we shall always find the grace to exert an effective restraint....”

“[Grace and restraint] are the natural advantages which we must never throw away by foolishly entering the arena of public controversy or punitive action against anybody.

“Because our General Service Conference [or Intergroup] represents us all, this body is especially charged with the duty of setting the highest possible standard with respect to these attitudes of no punishments and no public controversy....”

“...under no circumstances should we exhibit anger or punitive or aggressive intent. Surely this should be our inflexible policy . . .”

“To the minds of some A.A.’s, ‘guardianship’ of the A.A. Traditions implies the right and the duty on the part of the Conference to publicly punish or sue every willful violator. But we could not adopt a worse policy; indeed such aggressive public acts would place the Conference in the position of having violated one Tradition in order to defend another. ... Privately, however, we can inform Tradition-violators that they are out of order.”

“... the power to sue would be a dangerous thing for us to possess. It was recognized [by A.A. founders] that a public lawsuit is a public controversy, something in which our Tradition says we must not engage....”

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Dodie H, Chairman of the Board, Overeaters Anonymous World Service Organization

In an e-mail, Dodie H, Chairman of the Board, Overeaters Anonymous wrote:

I am so very sorry about the difficulties South Coastal MA Intergroup has been having. It is always sad to have one's trust in someone shattered. It appears to me that your IG board has settled the question, based on your interpretation of AA readings. I would add, however, that *it is my opinion* that the time and energy required to prosecute is counterproductive to our primary mission in OA. We need to carry our message. I believe that part of our message is to forgive and try to forget. In this case, that will be hard to do, but not impossible. I will continue to pray for [this person] and the situation that caused him to break his trust with you. Prayer is very healing and can give comfort to you all.

(On the above recommendation of prayer, South Coastal Massachusetts Intergroup Board suggests the following Big Book [4th edition] readings: “The Sick Man’s Prayer”, bottom of page 66 to middle of page 67 and page 552, first paragraph.)

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Additional Information Compiled through Calls and Emails

- AA General Service Headquarters in New York City reports it has no record of any group, intergroup or region *ever* taking legal action or filing charges against individuals in their organization. They do say, over the years, they have been informed of similar situations to ours.
- A former trustee of another Anonymous program reports a former national treasurer “stole some of the proceeds and all of the collections from our World Service Conference, which came to thousands of dollars.” After consulting the 12 Concepts of Service and the AA offices, that program’s board chose not to file charges.
- A lawyer, who has extensive dealing with these issues and 12 Step programs, said, “The organizations saw it as a spiritual matter and did not take legal actions.”

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The Unanimous Opinion of the SCMI Board After Much Discussion and Prayer

Though we all have felt shock, outrage and intense justifiable anger over this incident, the **AA 12 & 12** cautions us these feelings are “the occasional luxury of more balanced people” and “could keep us on an emotional jag indefinitely. These emotional ‘dry-benders’ often led straight to [the food].” As we quoted Bill Wilson earlier, “the old patterns of behavior are to a degree still with us, always threatening to explode on any good excuse” and this situation seems like a pretty good excuse to explode. We believe that staying in anger and revenge-mode is not good for our recovery or our fellowship.

OA is a spiritual program. And our 12th Tradition tells us that anonymity is our spiritual foundation, “ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.” Our 11th tradition cautions us to always “maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.” If charges are brought, we violate two traditions.

Additionally, ours is a program of attraction. How attractive would OA be if associated with headlines reading, “Treasurer Gets Fat On OA Funds”?

For all these reasons, your Intergroup Board has voted at this time not to take any punitive action regarding this situation. We are putting the matter in HP’s hands and are moving forward.

You are invited to give your opinions and input at any of the numbers or addresses on the front page.