

AA District 2 Attraction vs. Promotion Workshop

Facilitator Guide (60 Minutes, Single Facilitator with Two Readers)

Workshop Overview

This workshop explores Tradition 11, attraction rather than promotion, and how it connects to Tradition 12 and the principle of anonymity. Rather than a lecture, it is structured as a guided conversation around four real-world scenarios: a public-speaking moment that crossed the line, a well-meaning social media post, a subtle case of promotion in a meeting, and a quiet but public mistake on Facebook. Two readers voice the “what went wrong” and “a better way” versions of each scenario so the group can hear the contrast before discussing it together.

Total run time is 60 minutes. All times below are elapsed time from the start of the workshop and can be shifted to match your actual start time. There is no scheduled break, so keep segments moving and start on time.

Roles and Responsibilities

Give each person below their own copy of this guide, highlighted to their section, at least a week before the workshop.

Role	Responsibilities	Who / How Many
Facilitator (MC)	Opens and closes the workshop, delivers the Tradition 11 teaching and each scenario introduction, and leads the discussion after every scenario. Keeps the overall schedule on track.	1 person, ideally the District PI or Literature Chair
Reader 1 (What Went Wrong)	Reads the “what went wrong” version of each scenario aloud, in character, where it helps the room picture the moment.	1 person
Reader 2 (A Better Way)	Reads the “a better way” version of each scenario right after Reader 1, so the contrast lands clearly.	1 person
Resource Table Volunteer	Sets up and staffs a table with the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions, the Understanding Anonymity pamphlet, and the Traditions Checklist handout for anyone who wants to look or take a copy.	1 person
Timekeeper	Optional if the Facilitator wants a dedicated person. Gives a quiet warning before a scenario discussion runs long.	1 person, or the Facilitator doubles up

Materials and Room Setup

- Sign-in sheet and name tags at the entrance
- Chairs arranged in a circle or semicircle to support open discussion, since there is no panel table
- Wall clock or visible timer for the Facilitator and Timekeeper
- Printed scenario cards for both Readers, so they are not reading off a phone
- Printed or QR-code access to the Traditions Checklist at <https://The12Traditions.com/TraditionsChecklist> (password District2)
- Resource table: the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions, Understanding Anonymity (P-47), Speaking at Meetings Outside of A.A. (P-40), and The 12 Traditions Illustrated (P-43)
- Notepad or index cards at each seat, if you want to collect written reflections instead of only spoken ones

Run of Workshop

Time	Segment	Length	Lead
0:00 to 0:03	Welcome and Framing	3 min	Facilitator
0:03 to 0:08	Tradition 11: Short Form and Long Form	5 min	Facilitator
0:08 to 0:16	Opening Story: Two Worlds Collide	8 min	Facilitator
0:16 to 0:24	Scenario One: Speaking About AA vs. Speaking For AA	8 min	Facilitator + Readers
0:24 to 0:32	Scenario Two: Gratitude vs. Promotion Online	8 min	Facilitator + Readers
0:32 to 0:40	Scenario Three: The Subtle Promotion Inside the Room	8 min	Facilitator + Readers
0:40 to 0:46	The Principle Behind Tradition 11: Anonymity	6 min	Facilitator
0:46 to 0:53	Scenario Four: The Facebook Connection	7 min	Facilitator
0:53 to 0:58	Reflection Questions	5 min	Facilitator + Group
0:58 to 1:00	Traditions Checklist, Resources, and Closing	2 min	Facilitator

Resources

- The 12 Steps and 12 Traditions, Tradition 11 essay
- Alcoholics Anonymous (the Big Book)
- Understanding Anonymity (P-47), AA General Service Conference-approved pamphlet
- Speaking at Meetings Outside of A.A. (P-40), AA General Service Conference-approved pamphlet
- The 12 Traditions Illustrated (P-43), AA General Service Conference-approved pamphlet
- A.A. Guidelines: The Internet (MG-18), General Service Office service material
- The Traditions Checklist, AA Grapevine, reprinted at <https://The12Traditions.com/TraditionsChecklist> (password District2)
- The AA Preamble

Pre-Workshop Checklist

- Recruit two Readers at least 1 week out and give them their scenario cards ahead of time so they can read naturally, not cold
- Confirm the Facilitator and, if using one, a separate Timekeeper
- Print this guide for the Facilitator and both Readers
- Print or prepare QR-code access to the Traditions Checklist for handout or display
- Set up the resource table with the 12 and 12, Understanding Anonymity, Speaking at Meetings Outside of A.A., and The 12 Traditions Illustrated
- Arrange chairs in a circle or semicircle rather than rows, to support discussion
- Prepare a sign-in sheet and name tags if needed

Workshop Format

Welcome and Framing (0:00 to 0:03)

The facilitator opens with a short welcome and sets expectations for a conversation, not a lecture.

Welcome, everyone. Thank you for being here. Today, we're looking at Tradition 11, attraction rather than promotion, and how it connects to Tradition 12.

This isn't a lecture. It's a conversation. We're going to use four real scenarios to look at how these traditions come alive, and how easily the line gets crossed without any of us noticing. I'll read a short teaching section to start, and then [Reader 1] and [Reader 2] will read two versions of each scenario for us: what went wrong and a better way. After each one, we'll talk about it together. There are no wrong answers today, just honest reflection.

Let's start with what Tradition 11 actually says.

Tradition 11: Short Form and Long Form (0:03 to 0:08)

The facilitator reads both forms of the Tradition and offers context.

Here is Tradition 11 in its short form, the version most of us know by heart:

“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.”

It's simple, memorable, and easy to repeat. But the long form fills in the depth behind that idea and shows why it matters. Listen to how much more it says:

“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 long form shifts the focus. It isn't asking how to get the word out. It's asking how to protect the message from ego and distortion. Attraction is not a strategy. It's a safeguard. By removing personalities, endorsements, and self-praise, it makes sure what people see isn't us promoting AA. It's the lives that have been quietly changed by it.

Tradition 11, like most of the Traditions, is closely tied to Tradition 12 and to the principles of anonymity and humility. Together, 11 and 12 exist to protect AA from ego.

Opening Story: Two Worlds Collide (0:08 to 0:16)

The facilitator tells this story from memory or reads it naturally, then pauses before opening it up for discussion.

A man with long-term sobriety—we'll call him Charlie—who was the president of a large national nonprofit. He was comfortable in front of cameras and did press conferences regularly. One day, he stepped up to the microphone, cameras rolling, and his meeting voice just took over. “Hi, I'm Charlie, and I'm an alcoholic.”

Total silence. The cameraman peeked around the camera and said, “That's alright, we're all alcoholics here, we'll just cut that first part.”

Everything worked out, but Charlie knew immediately what had happened. He had crossed a line between two worlds.

What just happened here? Which Traditions were involved? Was there harm, even though it worked out fine in the end?

Guide the discussion toward Tradition 11 (public identity and promotion) and Tradition 12 (anonymity at the public level). The harm was potential even though the outcome was harmless.

Scenario One: Speaking About AA vs. Speaking For AA (0:16 to 0:24)

Reader 1 and Reader 2 read the two versions below. Let the group name the problems first, before the Facilitator explains them.

Reader 1, What Went Wrong:

A member is invited to speak at a church event about recovery. He steps up and says, "Hi, I'm John Smith, and I represent Alcoholics Anonymous. AA is the best program out there. If you want to get sober, you should come to our Tuesday night meeting. We do it the right way."

Reader 2, A Better Way:

There are many programs out there to help people recover from alcohol and other addictions. They often change a person's life by giving them structure and support from people who understand. It did for me.

So what went wrong in the first version? [Let the group answer.] He spoke as a representative of AA. He promoted AA as the only solution, and even promoted a specific meeting. That's ego stepping in where Tradition 12 asks for humility instead.

Here's the key teaching point: speaking publicly is not the problem. AA even provides guidance for this in the pamphlet Speaking at Meetings Outside of A.A. The problem is the shift from sharing experience to representing AA.

Notice what the better version does. It doesn't hide the recovery; it just removes the institutional endorsement. The message is still there. The promotion is gone.

We are not spokespeople. We are examples.

Scenario Two: Gratitude vs. Promotion Online (0:24 to 0:32)

Reader 1 reads the public post below exactly as written.

Reader 1, Public Post:

"I'm celebrating 2 years sober today thanks to AA. Life couldn't be better. If anyone needs help, message me. AA saved my life. It can save yours, too."

This scenario tends to generate the most discussion. Many of us have done something like this, or know someone who has.

The key insight is that the post feels like gratitude. It comes from a genuine place. That's what makes it tricky. But in a public space, it functions as promotion, with identification attached. The person's name is permanent and searchable, linked to AA. If you doubt that, try searching your own name and see how many references come up.

Under Tradition 11, we maintain anonymity at the level of press, radio, and film. In today's world, social media is the press. A public post reaches the same audience a newspaper article once did. It's also worth remembering that others are affected. Anyone who comments, likes, or is tagged in that post is now indirectly associated with it.

Reader 2, A Better Way:

Don't post publicly. Go to a meeting and pick up a chip, or send a message to your AA friends and tell them privately.

That version still carries the message of hope. It just doesn't name the program or publicly claim membership. Claiming a chip in a meeting gives newcomers hope and confidence.

We can share recovery. We just don't advertise AA.

Scenario Three: The Subtle Promotion Inside the Room (0:32 to 0:40)

This scenario surprises some people, because it happens inside the room, not out in public.

Reader 1, What Went Wrong:

“AA is the only thing that works. If you want to stay sober, there's only one way to do it, our way. You must do it this way.”

The misconception here is thinking that if we're only talking to other alcoholics, Tradition 11 doesn't apply. But the principle of attraction over promotion applies everywhere, including how we share at meetings.

When we use absolutes like “the only thing that works,” we've stepped into authority. We've stopped sharing and started instructing. The newcomer in the room, who has tried other things, just heard that they were wrong.

Old-timers are especially susceptible to this. We've watched people struggle for years, and it would be so much easier if we could just insist AA is the only way. But people have to come to it on their own, and some find other paths to recovery. Bless them for that.

Ego shows up not just in how we identify publicly, but in how we position ourselves as having the definitive answer.

Reader 2, A Better Way:

“AA is the only thing that has worked for me. Until I decided I needed to change my life, nothing worked. Others find recovery in church or medication or support, but for me, this was the way.”

Same message. No pressure. It leaves the door open.

Attraction invites. Promotion pressures.

The Principle Behind Tradition 11: Anonymity (0:40 to 0:46)

Before the last scenario, ask the room this question directly and let them sit with it before you offer an answer.

Before we look at our last scenario, let's pause. What do you think the spiritual principle behind Tradition 11 actually is? [Pause and let the group answer before offering the word anonymity yourself. It lands harder when the room arrives at it on its own.]

If the group needs a nudge, ask them this: What does it take to share your experience without claiming authority over it? To carry a message without attaching your name to it?

Here's how 11 and 12 fit together. Tradition 11 tells us the method: attraction, not promotion. Tradition 12 tells us the why: because the moment we put our face on the message, the principle gets lost behind the personality.

Anonymity builds humility, and humility is what makes attraction possible. When we stay humble, anonymous, example-based, and not promotional, the program speaks for itself.

Let's take a few minutes for open discussion before we move to our last scenario.

Scenario Four: The Facebook Connection (0:46 to 0:53)

The facilitator tells this story in the first person.

Someone told me about this scenario. He heard a speaker from the General Service Office in New York. Solid message, strong presence. Impressed, he sent a friend request on Facebook, and the GSO representative accepted.

Out of curiosity, he looked at their public profile. It talked openly about their work as a member of AA and their role in the main office.

That gave him pause, and here's why. People look at the mutual friends list before they accept you. So anyone connected to that person is now indirectly associated with someone publicly identifying as a member of AA.

This wasn't a press conference. It wasn't a news interview. It was just a Facebook profile. But today, a public social media profile is a public statement, and it creates a chain of association. The violation wasn't dramatic. It was subtle, unintentional, and completely public.

Some of you might be thinking, I don't care who knows I'm in AA, they all knew I was a drunk. That's a fair feeling to have about your own anonymity. But Traditions 11 and 12 aren't only about protecting you. They're about protecting everyone connected to you, and protecting the message itself from becoming about any one personality.

Reflection Questions (0:53 to 0:58)

Give the room time to sit with each of these. Don't rush through them.

Question one: Where are the subtle places we cross the line today? (Listen for answers like email signatures, social media bios, video call display names, speaking on panels, and professional introductions. These are the everyday places where anonymity quietly erodes.)

Question two: How has social media changed the challenge of anonymity? (This one often opens up. If it doesn't come up naturally, raise these points yourself: content is permanent and searchable; the audience is unlimited and unknown; friends-only settings can change or be overridden; and the 12 Traditions were written before the internet existed, but the principles still apply.)

Question three: Are we attracting people to recovery, or promoting a program? (This is the gut check question. Invite honesty. There are no wrong answers here, just awareness.)

If time allows, close with one more question: What's one thing you'll think about differently after today?

Traditions Checklist, Resources, and Closing (0:58 to 1:00)

The Traditions Checklist is a set of questions originally published in the AA Grapevine. We've made the full checklist available on our website at <https://The12Traditions.com/TraditionsChecklist>, using the password District2. It's worth going through on your own, whenever you're wondering, "Am I promoting or attracting people with my recovery?"

Read this closing passage slowly, and let the room breathe with it.

Tradition 11 can be tricky, not because we don't understand it, but because it shows up in places we don't expect. When we protect anonymity, attraction happens naturally. When we attach ourselves to the message, we start to promote it. And AA was never meant to be promoted. It was meant to be lived.

Invite a brief moment of silence, or close with the Serenity Prayer if that is your group's custom.

Thank you all for being here today. This was a pleasure and a privilege. A reminder that the resource table in the back has the Understanding Anonymity pamphlet, The 12 Traditions Illustrated, and the Traditions Checklist handout if you'd like to take a copy home.