

BONUS — Concept Four — OPTIONAL meditation and writings for conference registrants:

Please read Concept Four in our “12, 12, and 12” book, then spend several minutes meditating on each of the questions below. For those questions which are most resonant for you, please do some writing. No long essays are necessary, just a paragraph or two in direct answer to a question. These questions are posed by the author and editors of the workshop materials based on our own experience, strength, and hope and a deep read of Concept Four. Most if not all of the questions below can be applied to our personal and business lives, as well as to our interactions with our fellow DAers.

Concept Four: “Throughout our Conference structure, we maintain at all levels a traditional ‘Right of Participation,’ ensuring a voting representation.”

- 1) Do you consider most people your equal? At home? At work? In DA and BDA?
- 2) At work or in your business, do you operate as a democracy? If yes, is everyone’s vote equal?
- 3) Do you have difficulty waiting for or trusting others’ participation in decision making?
- 4) Do you ever use tricks or manipulations to get your way in groups making decisions?
- 5) Do you truly appreciate diversity and variety when it comes to opinions and viewpoints? At home? At work? In service?
- 6) Do you help ensure that everyone gets a chance to speak up and be heard? Do you make sure that you speak up and get heard?
- 7) How would you define meaningful participation?

Throughout history, the most expedient way to control outcomes and decisions has been to silence those who disagree. Character assassination often works. Some may think we are talking about governmental politics, but we are not. Most everywhere decisions are being made, someone or some affiliated group is undermining the democratic process. “But that could never happen in DA service,” some might be saying. We shouldn’t kid ourselves.

The difference, though, is that we know better. Unlike the Steps, the Traditions and Concepts did not appear to Bill W, AA’s co-founder, through prayer and meditation. The latter two sets of God-given principles came to that fellowship, and much later to ours, through 20 years of hard-won, sometimes hard-fought, experience. Yet they are still just principles, not rules and not laws.

If we want to ensure that every member is offered the “Right of Participation,” every one of us must be ready to stand up and defend that right. If we see someone silenced at a business meeting or in a committee, regardless of the level of service — group, Intergroup, or World Service — we must speak up. To take away any member’s right to participate is to risk the loss of the same right for every other member.