

A CLOSER LOOK AT CONCEPT FOUR



DOES CONCEPT FOUR REALLY APPLY TO ME OR MY GROUP?

*Pamphlet P-8, Reprinted with
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Throughout our Conference structure, we ought to maintain at all responsible levels a traditional “Right of Participation”, taking care that each classification or group of our world servants shall be allowed a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

Please keep reading!

Are you like me when I was in early sobriety or, for that matter, here for years? I would have said I’m not sure what a Concept is or how it applies to me and or my Group! It was probably year two of being around AA that I began to find out that the second half of the Twelve and Twelve had the Traditions in it. It was a number of years later before I overheard people talk about the Concepts and many more before I looked at them. (Mine and my Group’s loss.)

If your home group has a Group Service Representative (GSR), they / YOUR GROUP, has a vote at the District meeting. At the Group level, the same applies to our Intergroup and Central Service Representatives! When I was doing these jobs, I brought information back and forth between my home group and these service groups. My home group many times directed me, based on the Group Conscience, how they would like me to vote. I was proud to represent my group and I felt that my group trusted me to do what was right for the group based on the information I had. Sometimes I voted opposite of my Group’s direction because I received new or updated information prior to voting. The Concepts and Traditions allow a GSR to do this.

The District Committee Chair (DCM) is the only committee chair from the District that gets a vote at the Area. Your GSR can attend the Area monthly meeting and share their or your Group’s thoughts but a GSR cannot vote (except at the Area Assemblies). Your District’s DCM has the opportunity and right to participate in discussion at the Area and vote on Area

business. The DCM can be directed by their District how to vote based on the District’s Group Conscience. The DCM can vote opposite of the District’s direction should they receive new or updated information prior to voting.

Because of Concept IV, your GSR can participate in any Area or even a General Service meeting and share their thoughts and experiences but they cannot vote. We all know someone in AA who could be an expert on a subject being discussed, such as the website, literature, corrections, and many others. Their personal knowledge can help those who can vote, make a more informed decision.

In Concept Four, it provides that all groups within AA should be given a right

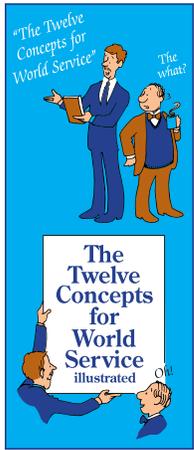
CONCEPT FOUR PROVIDES THAT ALL GROUPS WITHIN AA SHOULD BE GIVEN A RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE AFFAIRS OF AA

to participate in the affairs of AA. This Concept provides not only that members of the groups of Alcoholics Anonymous be permitted to participate, but also that General Service

Office staff that include paid staff and non-alcoholics should also be permitted the right to vote in proportion to the responsibility they discharge. This ensures that every skilled group needed to make an informed

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decision has a right to participate and provides a voice for people with knowledge of how things operate day-to-day.

Back in early A.A., the Trustees had all of the power through two committees, Policy and Administration. Bill

and Bob and the early staff members made all of the day-to-day decisions; the early Trustees could overrule decisions made by the office staff. This created many conflicts. Bill could attend meetings of the Trustees when he liked, but only to give advice or suggestions. Office staff could not attend a meeting of the Trustees, unless invited, to provide information that was requested. At that time, the two Trustee Boards were all powerful, as these two committees were in place for years. The Trustees had the authority, but the staff was responsible for day-to-day decisions. This all changed in 1955 with the Conference Charter (a copy can be found in our Service Manual).

The Conference Charter created the position of Delegate, and mandated a yearly General Service Conference to conduct A.A. business, which brings us back to Concept Four! Bill W. notes in his writing that there have been occasions that the Delegates have questioned why the General Service Staff and Trustees are allowed to vote. Volunteer Directors have asked why staff members have an equal vote, when they are a Director. Although, not all General Service Staff get to vote, but they may actively participate in General Service Board meetings.

The Delegate (the voice of the individual A.A member and the Area) attends the General Service Conference in order to conduct A.A. business. At the Area Pre-Conference Assembly, the GSRs give direction to the Delegate on how they feel the Delegate should vote on a matter. Concept Four, through the “Right of Participation” allows the Delegate to make an informed decision, based on our input and new information that may be presented at the conference. The same goes for the Delegate; if the body of the conference mandates the Trustees to follow orders from the Delegates, the Trustees would no longer have the “Right of Participation”, which also allows them to make an informed decision. Based on information the Delegate or Trustee learns at a later date, they may vote opposite of how they were directed.

Our Delegate voices our (the State of Rhode Island AA and our

local Groups) needs, concerns, and suggestions to the General Service office, as well as voting on material presented for review by the General Service office. The Delegates only meet for one week per year, which means they have limited knowledge of the day-to-day operations of the office. For this reason, the Delegates cannot have control over the day-to-day operations of the General Service office.

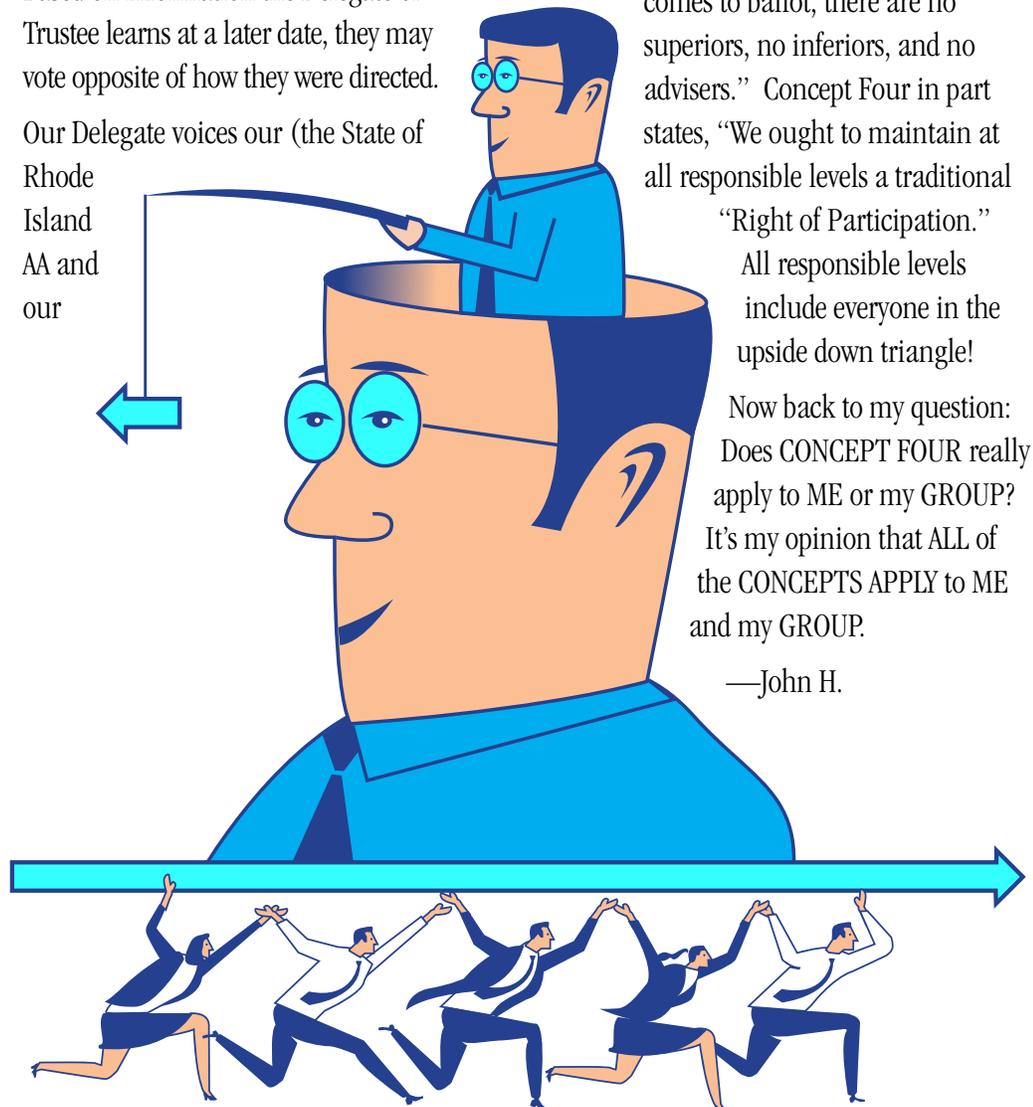
This Concept also allows A.A. World Services and Grapevine Staff, such as the General Manager, Trustees and Executive Staff, to be voting members of the General Service Conference. “All can vote, and therefore all can truly participate. When the time

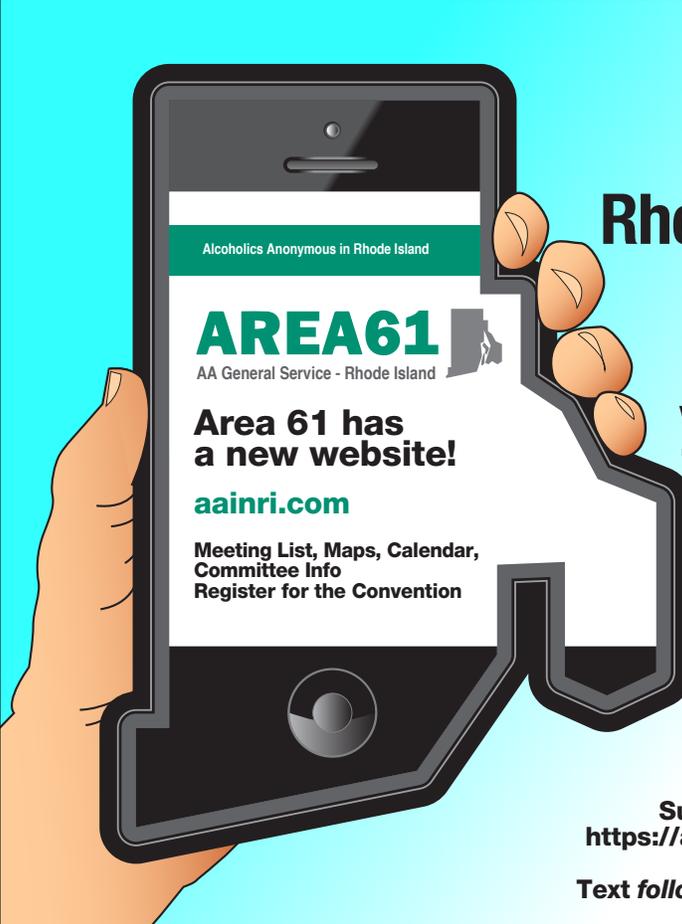
comes to ballot, there are no superiors, no inferiors, and no advisers.” Concept Four in part states, “We ought to maintain at all responsible levels a traditional

“Right of Participation.” All responsible levels include everyone in the upside down triangle!

Now back to my question: Does CONCEPT FOUR really apply to ME or my GROUP? It's my opinion that ALL of the CONCEPTS APPLY to ME and my GROUP.

—John H.





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T H E W A Y

The way puzzles me. It is actually an eponym for a spiritual thought or process by which I choose to conduct my life. There is really no distinct wording or definition by which I measure or determine my actions. Rather it is a faith that by trying to do the next right thing each time what is supposed to happen will, it is not my call what is supposed to happen.



Sometimes it is very hard for me not to get depressed or nervous because I see myself as being lazy or selfish. However, too many times I can feel the right result has occurred for me to doubt that I am on the right path. The only defense against the negative feelings is honesty. I must be truly honest with myself when deciding what the right thing to do is.

This often involves prayer. When praying I need to honestly listen and the proper course will come to me, I am a very lucky person that this approach to life has been given to me and hope I never stop this practice.

— Guy A.

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