

MEMORANDUM

TO: Conference Members
FROM: Executive Director
DATE: October 16, 2008
RE: Question regarding reading the Steps and Traditions as written

The WSO was asked at the 2006 WSC to send a copy of questions it receives from Conference members and our responses to all Conference members so that they can share leadership by responding to recurring questions in their Areas. The WSO believes that the following question and our response might be one of those topics.

Question: In reading the Steps and Traditions around the table at our meetings, what do we say to members who change the wording? For example: "Higher Power" instead of "God," "She" instead of "He," etc. Is there specific wording to them that we do not change the wording as written when we are reading these two items in front of other members?

Answer: Our Steps were adopted almost word for word from Alcoholics Anonymous. In Al-Anon's early days, groups began using many variations and adaptations of the Steps. This resulted in confusion and disagreement within the fellowship about what most members consider its foundation. Therefore, the early groups agreed to preserve the original wording. This is why the Conference Charter (page 153 of the *2006-2009 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*, P-24/27) explains, ". . . no changes are to be made in the Traditions, Steps, Concepts of Service or General Warranties of the Conference Charter (Item 12) without written consent of three quarters of the Al-Anon groups." As our cofounder Lois W. once said, "We realized if the Steps were altered once, they could be altered again and again. Their meaning and power might be lost . . ." The difficulty of changing our Legacies is reflective of their importance.

Although we are all free to understand and interpret the Steps and Traditions for ourselves, when reading them at a meeting we hope to prevent the confusion and lack of unity of our fellowship's earliest days. Our First Tradition explains that our common welfare should come first. Our Second Tradition describes our group's one authority as a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Therefore, for the unity of worldwide Al-Anon, all members and groups are asked to honor the Legacies as written, as they reflect the informed group conscience of Al-Anon around the world.