

Ostriches and Mushrooms

AWARENESS & THE COURAGE TO CHANGE THE THINGS I CAN

-OR- Of: Ostriches and Mushrooms (and Mushroom Farmers)

I've been a bit of an 'ostrich' lately ... that is: I've kept my head in the sand. I have not shared some of what I've seen and heard. My honesty has been selective and judgmental. To me that means I've been dishonest. That sort of makes me a 'Mushroom farmer'.

Mushrooms are kept in the dark and fed manure. Mushroom farmers keep mushrooms in the dark and feed them manure. I haven't shared what I see and hear because it's not real good stuff. I want people to think that everything is OK. So I just hide my head in the sand and pretend everything is OK. By doing that I'm giving people who depend on me for information "the mushroom treatment". I'm keeping them in the dark and feeding them manure ... by default. Rationalization tells me that it's better for them to believe everything is OK. They want to believe it's OK so I tell them about the things that are OK and just avoid telling them about the things that aren't OK. I'll turn my head or bury it in the sand. I'll share some of what I see and hear just not all of it.

Some people 'farm mushrooms' intentionally. They keep us in the dark and feed us manure. That makes me mad, especially when they tell me they're doing it for my own good – they don't want to bore me with the details, they ask me to trust them (which reminds me a whole lot of "...just give me the money and I'll be right back with the drugs"). I don't like what they are doing – it's wrong, it's not

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OK but I haven't said anything about it. By not sharing what I see happening I'm just as much a 'mushroom farmer' as they are.

Others have the best of intentions, they aren't intentionally keeping us in the dark... they have just missed the point. It always seems they've got lots of energy. Things are happening where nothing was going on before. That's good, that's OK and I share about that, the only thing is the point they missed is important. Its part of what makes us what we are. By missing the point the message that's carried is incomplete, or confusing, or wrong. That's not OK, but I've failed to mention it. I've focused on the new energy and activity and failed to mention that the resulting new projects may do much more harm than good. These projects may take lots of time and energy to undo: time will be lost; lives may even be limited or lost. But I've been an ostrich and I'm farming mushrooms as a result.

I know that those who trust me will eventually learn the truth and be very angry with me for keeping them in the dark and feeding them manure. They may not trust me anymore. Right now, however, they think I'm great and everything is just OK. That feels pretty good except when self-honesty reminds me that I've lied by omission. My disease seeks to destroy me; I'll continue to live like this till I'm given the courage to change the things I can. I want to be honest. I want to be willing to try. What happened was I thought I was becoming open-minded. When I'd been honest before, others called me radical. When I acted courageously others branded me a dissenter. I lost my anonymity and yearned to be just a member

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again. So ... I compromised. I stopped sharing what I saw and heard and knew. Cowardice sort of felt comfortable, my name is no longer "in the news". But my conscience hurts. I can't stand it any longer and I must get honest. Recovery demands it – so here we go ...

First, let me tell you who I am. My name doesn't matter but my recovery experience does. I'm neither a newcomer nor an old-timer. I have five years clean. The NA program allowed me to stop using drugs. There was essentially no fellowship here when I stopped using. I surrendered to powerlessness over addiction and am recovering on that basis. There are no ties in my recovery to any fellowship or program other than Narcotics Anonymous. I attended my first WSC in 1980 at 1 year clean and participated in WSC '81, '82, '83 and '86. My life in recovery is dedicated to working the 12 steps of NA, becoming a responsible productive member of society and serving my higher power through NA. I was involved in the development of our Basic Text, our fellowship magazine, our service manual, a couple of regional service committees, area committees, NA meetings, and most important to me an active, effective, NA Home Group. I am fallible, human, talented, self-destructive, diseased, and recovering. Most of all I care desperately about Narcotics Anonymous. Now let me tell you what I see that I haven't been sharing: We have made some mistakes lately and are on the verge of repeating them. The mistakes we've made have compromised the spiritual principles in our traditions and it would be insane to repeat them and expect different results. The mistakes I speak of are

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World Service mistakes they affect all of us. Allow me to share what I've seen and ask some questions:

*In 1981 we decided to publish a quarterly world service report to the entire fellowship: the quarterly fellowship report. Before fellowship reports began coming out there was no effective system of unbiased fellowship-wide communication. Before fellowship reports began coming out very few RSR's knew what-all- would be voted on at the WSC ... which made it difficult to know how the Areas, Groups, and members they represented would have them vote. The principles guiding NA structural service: Traditions 2, 7 and 9, were just that – principles, very little had been done to really make them work. Our World Service Fellowship Report was a first giant step toward NA having real Group Conscience and Direct Responsibility. In '81 and '82 several dedicated trusted servants produced the first two fellowship reports. These early attempts were simple informative and effective. They worked to produce the **first real unity in the history of NA**. The tone of these communications was INCLUSIVE – members were led to believe that they could help with NA World services and that their help was needed and encouraged. One of the results was that a large number of members attended the 1982 World Service Conference they were encouraged to feel a “part-of”.*

Apparently those who became responsible for the quarterly fellowship report following WSC '82 were either unable or unwilling to produce it as the fellowship desired. World service fellowship reports were consistently late and not published quarterly. The tone of these

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reports became increasingly exclusive it seemed to me that members were being progressively more discouraged from participating in NA world services. Following WSC '83 more reports were published and they were more nearly on time, however the exclusive tone of the reports accelerated. The reportage itself became excessively wordy and burdensome and one report just previous to the next WSC included a massive discussion of our service structure misrepresented as input from the WSC Policy sub-committee. This single self-willed abuse of our trust cost our fellowship an excessive quantity of time because many groups felt they must study and decide upon these ideas. Because this was not what the policy committee had requested done, the whole section was withdrawn from consideration at WSC '84. This is an excellent illustration of the warnings we were given in the discussion of Tradition 9 in the Review Form of our Basic Text ...

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Tradition 9

For the purpose of this Tradition, organized means having 13
an administrative structure, and this implies management 14
and control. On this basis, the meaning of Tradition Nine 15
is clear. N.A. should never be run by bureaucracy or 16
management nor controlled by individuals within an admini- 17
strative structure. If we were to allow this, N.A. would 18
surely lose the best it has to offer and choke to death on 19
our insanities. 20

Even without this Tradition, organization such as this 21
would be in opposition to our spiritual principles. A 22
loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience 23
would find no place within an administrative structure. 24
How could a trusted servant manage and control? Service 25
and management are contradictory. Government implies control, 26
but our leaders do not govern. How could autonomy exist in 27
an administrative structure? Specialization and profession- 28
alism are the basis of any management scheme. Any admini- 29
strative structure, by its very nature, eliminated the 30
possibility of autonomy. An organized N.A. is a contra- 31
diction in terms and any attempt to force organization on 32
us would destroy us. 33

The Ninth Tradition goes on to define the nature of the 34

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1 things that we can do, outside N.A., to help N.A. It says
2 that we may create service boards or committees directly
3 responsible to those they serve. This is the basis of our
4 service structure, but keep in mind that although these en-
5 tities are created to serve our Fellowship they are not, in
6 fact, a part of Narcotics Anonymous. Our service structure
7 consists of our groups and their business sense: our area
8 service committees, regional service committees, World
9 Service Conference, World Service Board of Trustees, and
10 World Service Office. Each of these is directly responsi-
11 ble through the service structure, to the members of N.A.
12 and to  loving God as He may express Himself in our group
13 conscience.

Further evidence of the exclusive tone of the fellowship report was that there were very few members attending WSC '84 just to observe and help out with sub-committees.

Following WSC '84 the fellowship report has become increasingly burdensome, verbose, and exclusive sounding. In the last fellowship report we are informed that there will be no more quarterly fellowship reports. Furthermore, it is suggested that the NA fellowship should invest world level 'trusted servants' with the "authority to make routine business decisions" just as "a large corporation would assign corporate officers or chief employees". We are further informed that the fellowship will receive equivalent (to the fellowship report) communication through the WSO Newslines which is distributed to much of the fellowship free.

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The WSO Inc. is a business. A business in service to NA is a business all the same. A business should advertise goods and services for sale. The WSO Newslines is how our business advertises the goods and services for sale to us. It is necessary that the WSO does this and by the nature of WSO the advertisement sheet called Newslines is also very informative and service oriented. But it is an advertisement from a business all the same.

This is my perception of what has happened and is happening in NA World Service. We have created an administrative structure in NA world service that is forcing organization on us that has the capacity to destroy us spiritually. We have done this – you and I – by being ‘mushroom farmers’ and ‘ostriches’. Money, property and prestige have insidiously diverted us from our primary purpose. Unnoticed addiction in the form of deceit and manipulative communication from world services have worked to place personalities in service to NA and their opinions before the Principles of our Steps and Traditions.

MY QUESTIONS ARE SIMPLE:

DO WE WANT A WORLD SERVICE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE LIKE WE HAVE TODAY?

-OR- DO WE WANT DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE TRUSTED SERVANTS WHO ACT ON MOTIONS PASSED AT WSC THAT REPRESENT THE GROUP CONSCIENCE OF THE FELLOWSHIP?

Finally, we are offering ourselves a real choice ... this was written 22 years ago: Today we may amend our harm...