

A.A.'s "*How It Works*" and Cocaine Anonymous

It has been a long standing tradition in C.A. to read "*How It Works*" at meetings, conventions and events. Many of us grew up with it, so to speak, and feel a great devotion and love for the fellowship of A.A. We owe a great debt to them for showing us the way, and allowing us to learn from them. It can truly be said that without A.A., we as a Fellowship would not be where we are today.

Over the years, as part of our growth, C.A has borrowed and adapted several readings from A.A. *The 12 Steps and 12 Traditions* have been gifted to all fellowships, to alter as needed. The only thing A.A. has asked of any 12 Step Fellowship was to give the credit to them for the original version. "*The Promises*", "*A Vision for You*", and select other readings have been borrowed as well. Almost always, we use them in their original format, completely unaltered. The exception has been "*How It Works*".

As long as most of us have been around, the C.A. version of "*How It Works*" included the word "cocaine" instead of "alcohol", as well as the alteration of the "3 pertinent ideas". Somewhere along the way, we in CA thought that we had been granted permission to do so. Some old-timers assured us that verbal permission was granted, while others were sure that a written copy of such permission was out there somewhere. Events set in motion at the 2008 World Service Conference led the World Service Board of Trustees (WSBT) down a path to find a copy of this permission. After many hours spent diligently searching in every location we could think of, including the World Service Office (WSO), several past trustees' files, and other long standing member's personal archives, the WSBT had to face the facts that we did not have any record of A.A. granting us the rights to alter any readings.

The question became what we could do to make right the situation we found ourselves in. The WSBT approved motions to address the situation. The first motion was to cease publication and distribution of any material and or literature containing "*How It Works*" in any medium. The second was to have the Trustee At Large investigate as to whether or not we have permission to re-print with redistribution (all media) of other AA literature/phrases...i.e.: "*The Promises*", and "*A Vision for You*". The next was to have the WSO set up a meeting, face to face, with AA to address the problem and ways to solve it, make amends, ask forgiveness, and how we can make further restitution. A record of the meeting via minutes should be distributed to the World Service Office Board and World Service Board of Trustees. The meeting will include the local Regional Trustee. This meeting has now taken place, and we have received an answer from Alcoholics Anonymous.

The WSBT would like to thank Alcoholics Anonymous for their graciousness in these matters. They were happy to meet with us, and discuss the situation. The meeting was attended by John K. – A.A. WSB Chair, Valerie O. - A.A. Publications Director, Phyllis H. – A.A. General Manager, Tom P. - C.A. WSOB Chair, Trevor S. - C.A.WSBT Chair & PNR Trustee, and Robert L. - C.A. ANR Trustee. The entire matter was discussed at

length, and much was said regarding the spiritual aspect behind what we as a fellowship were trying to accomplish. Our desire to do the right thing was acknowledged, and appreciated.

During the meeting, it was expressed to us how important it was for them to preserve A.A.'s purity of message. As a fellowship, they have a desire to help other fellowships, but they must look after their own house first, as do we. As a result, we have now received written permission to continue to use all our current readings borrowed from A.A. They have asked, however, that we use them as originally written, unaltered in any way and that we include a disclaimer supplied by them as well.

One of the other topics was our current inventory of HFC II. With appreciation of our request to this fellowship, Alcoholics Anonymous has approved our selling the remaining inventory of HFC II in the United States. We have a large quantity of books, approximately \$45,000.00 worth of inventory, and every copy contains the altered version of "*How It Works*". During the meeting, we discussed ways to liquidate the supply, without undo financial hardship on the fellowship of Cocaine Anonymous. There were some ideas, but none that seemed entirely feasible. We are eternally grateful to AA for the program of recovery and their willingness to help us work towards a solution to this situation. Books are now going back out to the fellowship, and the message continues to be carried via this important tool. Unfortunately, out of respect for their wishes, future printings of HFC II will not contain "*How It Works*" in the altered format, if at all.

The WSBT started working on informing the fellowship of the outcome of this process. It was at this point, however, that a newly presented letter, addressed to a long term member, and dated November 29, 1990, was brought to our attention. We wish to assure the fellowship of Cocaine Anonymous that we will diligently pursue further the impact this document may have on the process.

As the fellowship of Cocaine Anonymous moves forward, we will realize that this outcome only helps us in our growth. Developing new readings, books, and other materials will strengthen us, and provide tools we can use to carry the C.A. message. We will never forget where we came from, and just how important A.A. and the "*Big Book*" have been to our development, but honoring them and their decision regarding "*How It Works*" will show how much we as a fellowship have grown.

Serving with love and tolerance
World Service Board of Trustees