

1 Service

2 *Giving service is vital to our recovery. It is through service to others, and to the Fellowship,*
3 *that we keep what has been so generously given to us.*

4 Recovery

5 *Our primary purpose is to recover from underearning.*

6 Giving service to others and to the U.A. Fellowship is a tool vital to our recovery—we can
7 only keep what has been so generously given to us by passing it on. The direct connection
8 to other members of the fellowship that comes with service frees us from the isolation and
9 loneliness that so bedeviled us before we came into the program. We learn that we have a
10 voice—that when we speak, people not only listen but actually value our contribution. And
11 it is through service that we work the Twelfth Step, sharing our experience, strength and
12 hope with those who still suffer from compulsive underearning.

13 Underearning is, oddly, a disease of the ego: if we cannot be the biggest winners, then we
14 turn ourselves into the biggest losers. If we cannot get everything we want, then we allow
15 ourselves nothing. Through service, we learn how to put our egos aside and truly serve
16 others, thereby reaching a middle ground: we find we can be happy with what we have,
17 while still striving for more.

18 Responsibility

19 *The key to service is responsibility.*

20 We start out in service with simple tasks that entail no responsibility at all—setting out
21 chairs before meetings or putting them away afterwards, keeping time for speakers,
22 greeting newcomers. If we don't show up, it doesn't hurt anybody—another member of the
23 group steps in and no one is hurt by our absence.

24 As we grow in recovery, we start making and taking phone calls, book-ending, being action
25 partners, giving action meetings, providing sponsorship, and so on—showing up for other
26 members of UA.

27 And in these activities, we quickly come to see that the key to service is not leadership, nor
28 control, nor power, but *responsibility*. We find that we are responsible for showing up
29 consistently and on time, for coming prepared, for having the answers to people's
30 questions: we are now answerable to other people, when before we tolerated no master.

31 We take positions—chair, treasurer, literature person, *etc.*—that entail regularly and
32 reliably showing up for whole roomfuls of people. We find that we have become
33 responsible for important and complicated tasks, keeping track of meeting formats,
34 collecting and safeguarding money, negotiating with outside parties over rooms and rent,
35 printing and telephone services, and so on.

36 And we find that our role is not to build personal empires, nor to lecture people on what to
37 do, nor even to correct other people's misperceptions or punish misbehavior: our role is
38 simply to keep doing the hard work of keeping the U.A. fellowship alive, so we can help
39 ourselves and other people recover.

40 The next step, when we are ready for it, is to serve the Fellowship as a whole, as Intergroup
41 or General Service representative, where our responsibility is not just to U.A. at large, but
42 to the underearners still suffering, who have yet to find the program.

43 And we discover that, even at these exalted levels, we are *still* not leaders, not professors,
44 not police, not judges nor jury: we are merely taking responsibility for things that need to
45 be done by someone willing to do them. We are trusted servants following the wishes and
46 needs of the Fellowship, not our own.

47 It is through service at this level that we learn to be *truly* reliable, responsible to the whole
48 program for our actions.

49 Accountability

50 *We are accountable for our own words and actions, and for the outcomes of tasks that are*
51 *assigned to us.*

52 Time is money, and we value other people's time as highly as our own, so we take care not
53 to spend it frivolously. We make a point of attending all the meetings, events and calls
54 associated with the roles we have volunteered for, and we make a point of attending
55 *promptly*, so that we do not waste everyone's time by making them start over or repeat
56 what has already been said or decided.

57 We make sure we are well-prepared.

58 We double check where we are meeting sponsors, action partners or action groups, so they
59 are not inconvenienced by our mistaking locations or times.

60 When we are chairing, we make sure we are familiar with the meeting format, that we
61 come prepared and that we show early for meetings to get things ready.

62 As secretaries, we strive to take accurate and succinct notes and distribute them promptly,
63 and keep the prior minutes readily to hand during meetings, so we can refer back to them
64 as required.

65 As treasurers, we keep our accounts up-to-date, so we have the numbers at our fingertips
66 during meetings, and have copies of our reports for the secretary.

67 For board or committee meetings, we circulate the agenda ahead of time—what we are
68 expecting everyone to talk about and act upon during the meeting. If we are due to give a
69 report, we prepare it in good time so we are ready when called upon. This way, we can use
70 the group's time most effectively and have fruitful discussions at our meetings.

71 We are accountable for the tasks we have volunteered for.

72 If we discover that we cannot complete a task within the expected time, then we promptly
73 notify everyone affected, so they can incorporate the delay in their plans or, if appropriate,
74 reassign the task to someone else. And if we find that we cannot complete a task without

75 help, then we do not hesitate to ask for help, rather than soldiering on alone, suffering in
76 silence and dread.

77 If we are unable to attend a meeting, we notify the meeting chair and secretary ahead of
78 time, so they can adjust the agenda as appropriate. If we are in a leadership position, then
79 we find an alternate to take our place at the meeting.

80 **Clarity**

81 *We strive for clarity in all we do.*

82 When we are asked questions, we answer to the best of our ability, without questioning the
83 motivation of the questioner. If we do not know the answer, we are honest about that: we
84 either seek to find the answer out, or refer the questioner to someone else who is likely to
85 know. Above all when we are providing information, we are clear both to ourselves and to
86 others whether this is something that we know to be true, whether we believe it to be true,
87 or whether it is our best guess.

88 And when we provide our opinions, then we own them as our opinions, and we are
89 prepared for others to question or reject them, as is their right.

90 When we are concerned about something that another person has done in service to the
91 program, we do not leap to judgment. We ask for clarification, and base our responses on
92 facts, not fear, vagueness and guesswork.

93 And we are clear in the work efforts we undertake on behalf of U.A.. We make sure we
94 understand the nature of the role or assignment before we commit to it, and if any
95 questions arise during the course of our work, we raise them right away. We properly
96 document our activities, so that our colleagues and successors can easily pick up where we
97 leave off, and in order to provide transparency to U.A. members at large.

98 **Willingness**

99 *"If a job is worth doing, it's worth doing it well."*

100 We undertake all our service tasks willingly and professionally, with courtesy and respect
101 for all—as in all things, we apply ourselves to the best of our abilities.

102 Consistent with our vision and our time plan, we actively look for roles, areas, projects and
103 tasks where we can be of service. Sometimes we can apply a special skill or expertise,
104 sometimes all we need to offer is our time and willing energy.

105 It is likely that giving service will challenge us to grow in ways we were not expecting, in
106 order to meet the demands placed upon us. As we find we need to adopt new approaches,
107 learn new techniques, or develop new skills, we welcome these opportunities to change the
108 things we can, furthering our recovery through personal development.

109 And we make sure we are giving our full attention to the tasks we have volunteered for.
110 When we take on a role with a heavy workload—such as committee chair, treasurer or
111 secretary—then we limit our involvement with other committees and service
112 commitments, so that we can put all our energy into the matters at hand.

113 Acceptance

114 *“If a job is worth doing, it’s worth doing it badly”*

115 We have already found in recovery that there are things we must do for ourselves, however
116 well or badly we do them. The same is true in service: we accept that there are actions that
117 we need to take, but that their outcomes are not guaranteed. Things happen in God’s time,
118 not ours.

119 Sometimes we put our hearts and souls into something, but it founders and our efforts
120 seem wasted. Proposals are poorly received. Motions are rejected. Projects fail. Events fall
121 apart due to lack of interest. Or the results are not perfect, falling short of our expectations.
122 There are mistakes on our freshly printed flyers. We have to turn people away from our
123 share-a-day due to lack of space. There are not enough volunteers or funds to achieve some
124 initiative that vitally needs to be done.

125 When these things happen, we face these failures honestly but without self-recrimination.
126 We are consoled that our efforts, successful or not, flawed or perfect, are all part of our

127 recovery. We have put our loving energy out into the universe, and it will come back to us
128 in ways we may not understand.

129 Consensus

130 *The cohesion of U.A. requires not just majority rule at the service level, but consensus—*
131 *substantial agreement.*

132 We look to the Group Conscience to decide contentious issues through votes, but we need
133 only look at the world around us to see how chaotic and destructive majority rule can be.

134 In serving the U.A. Fellowship, we need to be doubly sensitive to this, placing principles
135 over personalities. We do not accept things that we know to be wrong, simply to achieve
136 group consensus. But likewise, we pay special attention to the dissenting opinions of
137 others, and do not ride roughshod over them just to achieve our own goals.

138 When others disagree with us, we take pains to understand the thinking behind their
139 opinions—we are willing to modify our own thinking when we are presented with new
140 information. And we are always happy to explain our own positions in more detail, if
141 necessary doing more research and providing more information about things that already
142 seem perfectly obvious to us.

143 When we encounter disagreements within a group or a board or a committee, we carefully
144 work through the nature of the disagreement through discussion, rather than try to come
145 to a quick decision with a vote. We design our processes to require not just majority
146 agreement but substantial unanimity. If we cannot achieve this, then we are willing to take
147 more time to consider and discuss the issue at hand.

148 In all our decisions at this level, we seek to ensure that all sides feel they have had an
149 adequate opportunity to express their views. If we do need to take things to a vote, then we
150 make sure any dissenting voices are satisfied that the outcome represents the Group
151 Conscience, that there are no important things that have been left unsaid.

152 Feedback

153 *We continue to rely on feedback as an indicator that we are providing value in service.*

154 One of the most difficult lessons we face in Underearners Anonymous is learning to accept
155 feedback. Whether it is from our sponsor, our action partners, our action groups, other
156 members in feedback meetings, or our friends and colleagues outside the program, we
157 come to see feedback for what it is: suggestions based on the experience, strength and hope
158 of others.

159 And we learn to accept feedback graciously, and treasure it, however it is framed,
160 acknowledging the desire of the other to help us in our recovery, whether or not we
161 immediately see the relevance or value of the comments.

162 Most importantly, we become able to distinguish between the suggestions offered to us,
163 contradictory as they often are: we learn to take what we need and leave the rest.

164 So as we fulfill our roles and undertake our projects in service, we continually look for
165 feedback. We look to the Fellowship to provide the guidance for our actions, through
166 mandates from the World Service Conference, through the Group Consciences of the
167 committees and boards we serve and the meetings we attend, through direct feedback from
168 other members. It is not our will that we are seeking to follow, after all, but the Higher
169 Power's.

170 Reflection

171 *We continue to take personal inventory.*

172 We understand that it is only through failing that we can grow, and that it is only through
173 understanding the nature of our successes that we can repeat them.

174 In serving as officers of meetings, committees or boards, we have a fiduciary responsibility
175 to the U.A. Fellowship to make sure that we are making the best use of the time and money
176 our fellow members so generously entrust to us. So we are always looking at ways to learn

177 from our successes, so that we may repeat them, and from our failures, so that we may
178 avoid them.

179 Perhaps there are ways to improve our meetings. Perhaps there are ways to improve the
180 structure of our service organizations. Perhaps there are ways to improve the processes we
181 use to achieve our collective goals. Perhaps some are better suited than others to take on
182 particular challenges or roles. But we explore these things with grace and without
183 assigning faults, with humility and without excessive self-congratulation.

184 In facing our failures, we look to understand how they came about and how we can grow,
185 individually or as a group, and avoid these issues in future.

186 And we examine our successes, too. What was it about the way we tackled the project that
187 helped it succeed? What can we encapsulate in our processes, so that future projects
188 benefit from these insights?

189 In our meetings, we periodically hold group inventories, to explore how well the meeting is
190 performing its primary purpose. On our committees and boards, too, when our major
191 service projects are done, we sit down as a group and review how the projects went,
192 without shame or blame, without accusation or guilt.

193 And towards the end of our board or committee terms, we devote one committee meeting
194 to a group inventory, reviewing the structure of our committee, the format of our meetings,
195 and all aspects of the work we have been doing. What ways have we done things that we
196 can recommend to our successors? What approaches can we suggest they avoid? What
197 areas seem to us to be working well? What things might they want to focus on improving?
198 What important tasks have we left undone or unfinished, that we commend to their
199 attention?

200 In an organization where service positions are by necessity transient, this self-reflection is
201 how we ensure continuity, that our colleagues and successors have a firm foundation on
202 which to continue to build.

203 **Guardrails**

204 *We use the tools of the program to place guardrails for ourselves around our service*
205 *commitments.*

206 We are always conscious that one of our underearning symptoms is compulsive
207 volunteering—we are all too ready to give away *too much* of our time, neglecting our own
208 needs. What better excuse to shirk our duties at work, to neglect our own self-care, because
209 we are serving others!

210 Unable to just say “No,” it is easy for us to find ourselves trapped on a service treadmill,
211 fearing that people will suffer if we turn down new commitments, fearing that vital work
212 will not get done, fearing that we will lose control. The costs to our recovery come to far
213 outweigh the rewards, plunging us further into underearning, not pulling us out from its
214 shadow.

215 As with everything we do, we must be careful not to give away more than we have in us to
216 give! The other tools of UA place vital guardrails around our underearning symptoms, and
217 we use them to keep our service commitments from running amok.

218 We make sure we track the time we spend on Service in our timesheets, as a category
219 separate from other program/recovery time. Some of us limit our service to so many hours
220 per week or per month; some of us merely make sure we are spending enough time on
221 income-producing work and self-care, happy to let service fill the remainder of our time.
222 Either way, we actively measure our hours spent in service against our time plan.

223 And we actively seek feedback from our sponsors, action partners and action groups on
224 how we are balancing service with the other activities in our vision, to ensure we are not
225 over-committing.

226 **Service Guidelines**

227 The guidelines below are suggestions only: please take what you need and leave the rest.

228 There are as many paths to recovery in UA as there are members, and there is no rule or
229 formula that fits everyone; we suggest that you talk things over with other people, and find
230 the approach that works best for you. And remember that each UA group needs to
231 determine its own requirements for service positions, through group conscience votes.

232 We suggest that newcomers get involved in service positions as quickly as soon as possible,
233 by volunteering for roles that have no recovery requirements—for example, helping set up
234 and put away chairs, greeting people, serving as time keeper, *etc.* Doing these simple tasks
235 is a way of becoming visible, and helps us meet other people in the program.

236 Once beginners have received two action meetings, we suggest that they start giving two
237 action meetings for every one they receive, to help others recover. Some people find that
238 they enjoy giving action meetings and can give more than that; we applaud that, but also
239 suggest that they pay close attention to the time involved, and make sure they are not over-
240 burdening themselves.

241 As recovering underearners start to meet the requirements of officer positions in meetings,
242 we suggest that they volunteer for a service position at one or two meetings. Making this
243 kind of commitment helps us keep coming back to meetings. Positions that generally have
244 few or no requirements usually include business secretary, literature person, contact list
245 coordinator, newcomer greeter, *etc.* Most groups require that meeting chairs, treasurers
246 and business chairs have had some period of experience with the program, often three or
247 six months, and that treasurers in particular be known to the meeting and have some
248 period of solvency.

249 Taking on more commitments than this will depend upon each individual's circumstances,
250 and they should be ever mindful of the time commitments involved.

251 Once UA members have recovered enough to become a sponsor, we recommend that they
252 set aside at least an hour and a half a week for each new sponsee they take on. This might
253 reflect a face-to-face meeting for one hour plus daily phone calls of five to fifteen minutes
254 each, but note that many other variations are possible, depending upon proximity and
255 circumstances! This commitment may taper off somewhat as the sponsee starts to recover,

256 but we still suggest sponsors limit the number of sponsees they take on, so they can
257 provide sufficient attention to each.

258 Service as Intergroup or General Service Representative (ISR or GSR) generally represents
259 a bigger time commitment. This entails attending monthly meetings or phone calls,
260 participating in the discussions and votes, and reporting back to our home groups. It also
261 entails attending the annual meeting; if this is in a distant town, this will involve travel and
262 raising funds to cover the expenses. Many ISRs and GSRs find they need to also work
263 outside the regular meetings on specific committees or projects to meet the needs of the
264 program.
265