

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. It is through service
8 that we work the Twelfth Step, sharing our experience, strength and hope with those who
9 still suffer from compulsive underearning.

10 Underearning is a disease of the spirit, our self-will run riot: if we cannot be the biggest
11 winners, then we make ourselves the biggest losers. If we cannot get everything we want,
12 then we allow ourselves nothing. Through service, by truly listening to and responding to
13 the needs of others, we learn how to set our own egos aside, and begin to see our true
14 worth and the value we bring to the world.

15 There are as many paths to recovery in UA as there are members, and there is no rule or
16 formula for Service that fits everyone. The guidelines below are suggestions only: please
17 take what you need and leave the rest!

18 It is especially worth understanding that there is no pecking order or priority suggested
19 here: one kind of service is not intrinsically better or more required for recovery than any
20 other. We recommend that you talk things over with other recovering underearners, and
21 find the approach that works best for you.

22 We do suggest that newcomers get involved in service as quickly as possible, by
23 volunteering for roles that are appointed meeting by meeting. As recovering underearners
24 become more familiar with the program, we suggest that they volunteer for a regular

25 service position at one or two meetings: making this kind of commitment helps us keep
26 coming back.

27 Whether we take on additional service commitments will largely depend upon our
28 individual circumstances, and we need to be ever mindful of the time commitments
29 involved.

30 **Visibility**

31 *It is through service that we become visible and find our voices.*

32 The direct connection to other members of the fellowship that comes with service frees us
33 from the isolation and loneliness that tormented us before we came into the program. We
34 learn that we have a voice—that when we speak, people not only listen but actually value
35 our contribution.

36 So many of us have struggled for years to become visible, to become present in the world,
37 to earn our living in our fields of choice. We have struggled to find our voices, to express
38 our wants and needs, to reveal our talents. Coming to meetings has brought us out of our
39 caves, but it is still easy enough for us to be invisible, sitting at the back of the room, not
40 raising our hands, slipping out quickly when the meeting ends.

41 We start out in service with simple tasks—helping set up and put away chairs, greeting
42 people, serving as time keeper, etc.—but what these activities are doing for us is making us
43 *visible*.

44 Within the serenity of the rooms, where there is no one in a position of authority, no one in
45 control, no one to judge, no one to criticize, we find our voice, becoming comfortable with
46 ourselves and our presence.

47 Greeting newcomers, we become comfortable meeting people and talking even to complete
48 strangers. Keeping time, we learn to speak up and make our gestures obvious so people can
49 see and hear us. And as we become comfortable talking to others, these things in turn help
50 us ask for the things we need: call buddies, action partners, action meetings, sponsors, and
51 so on.

52 Stepping up to regular meeting roles, we find that we are becoming even more visible. As
53 chair, it becomes routine to reach out to people we barely know, to ask them to speak at
54 our meetings. As treasurers, we become comfortable asking for money, and asking again
55 when the collection is short.

56 And our visibility carries over to the wider world. We find we are more comfortable talking
57 to prospective customers and employers, able to find common ground and form the simple
58 bonds we need for the business world. We have become comfortable asking for help, asking
59 for money, expressing our wants and needs without shame or embarrassment.

60 **Responsibility**

61 *The key to service is responsibility.*

62 So we start out in service with tasks that entail no responsibility at all—setting out chairs
63 before meetings or putting them away afterwards, keeping time for speakers, greeting
64 newcomers, etc. If we don't show up, our absence hurts no one—another member of the
65 group steps in.

66 As we grow in recovery, we start making and taking phone calls, book-ending, being action
67 partners, giving action groups, speaking at meetings, providing sponsorship, and so on—
68 *showing up* for other members of UA. And in these activities, we begin to see that the key to
69 service is not leadership, not control, not power, but *responsibility*. We find that we are
70 responsible for showing up consistently, for showing up on time, for showing up prepared:
71 we are now answerable to other people, when before we tolerated no master.

72 When we are ready, we take positions—chair, treasurer, literature person, *etc.*—that entail
73 showing up regularly and reliably for a whole roomful of people. We find that we have
74 become responsible for important and complicated tasks, keeping track of meeting formats,
75 collecting and safeguarding money, maintaining literature inventories, finding the answers
76 to people's questions, negotiating with outside parties over rooms and rent, printing and
77 telephone services, and so on.

78 But again we find that our role is not to build personal empires, not to lecture people on
79 what to do, not to punish misbehavior, not even to correct other people's perceptions: our
80 role is simply to keep doing the hard work of keeping the U.A. fellowship alive, so we can
81 help ourselves and other people recover.

82 Some of us come to serve the Fellowship as a whole, as Intergroup or General Service
83 representative, and we discover our responsibility is not just to U.A. at large, but to the
84 underearners still suffering, who have yet to find the program. And we discover that we are
85 *still* not chiefs, not professors, not police, not judges nor jury: we are merely taking
86 responsibility for things that need to be done by someone willing to do them.

87 We are always just trusted servants fulfilling the needs and wishes of the Fellowship at the
88 direction of our Higher Power as expressed through the Group Conscience. It is through
89 service that we learn to be *truly* reliable, both inside and outside the program, holding
90 ourselves responsible to other people for our actions.

91 **Accountability**

92 *We are accountable for our words and actions, and for the outcomes of tasks that are*
93 *assigned to us.*

94 Time is money and through Service, we come to see the value of time, both our own and
95 other people's, and we learn not to spend it frivolously. We find that showing up promptly
96 for meetings, events and telephone calls respects everyone's time.

97 We discover that being well-prepared helps us use our time well. We learn to double check
98 when and where we are meeting action partners or action groups, sponsees or sponsor, so
99 they are not inconvenienced by our mistaking locations or times. When we are chairing, we
100 discover the benefits of being familiar with the meeting format, and showing up early so we
101 are ready to start the meeting on time and run it smoothly.

102 When we are unable to attend a meeting we have committed to, we find that notifying
103 others ahead of the meeting allows them to step in in our place, reschedule the meeting, or
104 to adjust the agenda so it is still productive.

105 And we learn the power of our voices, the effects that the words we choose have on others.
106 We discover that we need to be accountable for this, to moderate the language that we use,
107 to be gentle with others in the program and respect their separate paths to recovery. When
108 we must act to keep a meeting serene, we find that we can do so respectfully, by using the
109 traditions and tools of the program, re-reading the cross-talk statement or the Serenity
110 Prayer, and holding group conscience votes.

111 This new-found accountability helps us in our work lives, too, earning us respect from our
112 colleagues, our vendors and clients, our employees and bosses.

113 **Clarity**

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

115 When we are asked questions, we come to realize that we only need to answer to the best
116 of our ability, without feeling attacked or questioning the motivations of the questioner. If
117 we do not know the answer, then we find the joy in being truthful about that: we can then
118 either seek to find the answer out, or refer the questioner to someone else who is likely to
119 know.

120 Above all when we are providing information, we come to be clear both to ourselves and to
121 others whether this is something that we know for a fact, something we believe to be true,
122 or something that is our best guess. And when we provide our opinions, then we own them
123 as our opinions, and we become comfortable with that, prepared for others to question or
124 reject them, as is their right.

125 When we are concerned about something that another person has done in service to the
126 program, we discover that we do not need to leap to judgment. We can ask for clarification,
127 and then base our responses on the facts, not on fear, vagueness and guesswork.

128 As secretaries for meetings or committees, we learn the value of taking succinct and
129 accurate notes, enabling everyone to be clear about what decisions have been made, what
130 actions are to be taken by whom, and what questions remain. As treasurers, we come to
131 understand the importance of keeping our accounts accurate and up-to-date, so we can

132 answer others' questions promptly during meetings, enabling the group to make good
133 decisions based on the information we provide.

134 And we discover the value of clarity around the work efforts we undertake on behalf of
135 U.A., and the importance of understanding the nature of a role or assignment before we
136 commit to it. When we have questions during the course of our work, we find that raising
137 them right away helps us and others do a better job. And we discover the lasting value of
138 properly documenting our activities, so that our colleagues and successors can easily pick
139 up where we leave off, and in order to provide transparency to U.A. members at large.

140 And this clarity helps us with our business communications: we find that being crystal clear
141 with our employers, employees, vendors and clients gains us their respect and speeds our
142 endeavors to successful conclusions.

143 **Willingness**

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

145 Because the service we provide is entirely voluntary, we can undertake all our service tasks
146 willingly and professionally, with courtesy and respect for all, applying ourselves to the
147 best of our abilities.

148 Consistent with our vision and our time plan, we discover in our recovery a willingness to
149 actively look for roles, areas, projects and tasks where we can be of service to others.

150 Sometimes we can apply a special skill or expertise, sometimes all that is needed is our
151 time and willing hands.

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

156 And we find we need to make sure we are giving our full attention to the tasks we have
157 volunteered for. When we take on a role with a heavy workload, then limiting our

158 involvement with other service commitments allows us to put all our energy into the
159 matters at hand.

160 This willingness carries over to the working world, where we can now delight in applying
161 our skills and talents to the job at hand, confident we are giving value for money. We have
162 moved from *anything but* to *no matter what*.

163 **Acceptance**

164 *"If a job is worth doing, it's worth doing it badly"*

165 We have already found in recovery that there are things we must do for ourselves, no
166 matter well or badly we do them. The same is true in service: we accept that there are
167 actions that we need to take, but that their outcomes are not guaranteed. Things happen in
168 our Higher Power's time, not ours, and all we can do is take the actions.

169 Sometimes we put our hearts and souls into something, but it founders and our efforts
170 seem wasted. Proposals are poorly received. Motions are rejected. Projects fail. Events fall
171 apart due to lack of interest. Or the results are not perfect, falling short of our expectations.
172 There are mistakes on our freshly printed flyers. We have to turn people away due to lack
173 of space. There are not enough volunteers or funds to achieve some vital initiative.

174 When these things happen, we come to face these failures honestly but without self-
175 recrimination. We are consoled that our efforts, successful or not, flawed or perfect, are all
176 part of our recovery. We have put our loving energy out into the universe, and it will come
177 back to us in ways we may not understand.

178 When we cannot complete some task within the expected time, then we learn that
179 promptly notifying everyone affected allows them to incorporate the delay in their plans,
180 find other people to help, or even lift the burden from us entirely by reassigning the task to
181 someone else. And then we discover that the simple act of asking for help has relieved us
182 from the suffering of trying to soldier on, silent and alone—there are others willing to
183 assist us!

184 And outside the program, we become unafraid to face our challenges honestly with our
185 employers, customers or clients: we no longer have to be all-knowing, all-doing
186 Superheroes. We can admit to our lack of knowledge, our failures, our shortcomings,
187 rather than hiding from our mistakes or trying to paper over them as we did before.

188 Consensus

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

191 Following the Second Tradition, we look to our Higher Power to decide contentious issues
192 through the group conscience, but we need only look at the world around us to see how
193 chaotic and destructive simple majority rule can be.

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

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

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

208 In all our decisions on substantial issues, we seek to ensure that all sides feel they have had
209 an adequate opportunity to express their views. If we do need to take things to a vote, then

210 we make sure any dissenting voices are satisfied that the outcome represents the Group
211 Conscience, that there are no important things that have been left unsaid.

212 And we find the tools we learn in coming to consensus and resolving disagreements within
213 the program help us outside the program too. We can address business disagreements with
214 openness, and a willingness to come to agreement, making sure that all parties have clarity
215 about the issues involved and an understanding of each other's goals.

216 **Feedback**

217 *We rely on feedback as a measure that we are providing value in service.*

218 One of the most difficult lessons we face in Underearners Anonymous is learning to accept
219 feedback. Whether it is from our sponsor, our action partners, our action groups, other
220 members in feedback meetings, or our friends and colleagues outside the program, we
221 come to see feedback for what it is: a suggestion based on another's experience, strength
222 and hope.

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

226 Most importantly, we become able to distinguish between the suggestions offered to us,
227 contradictory or negative as they sometimes are: we learn to take what we need and leave
228 the rest.

229 So as we fulfill our roles and undertake our service projects, we come to continually look
230 for feedback. We look to the Fellowship to provide the guidance for our actions, through
231 directions from the World Service Conference, through the Group Consciences of the
232 committees and boards we serve and the meetings we attend, through direct feedback from
233 other members. It is not our will that we are seeking to follow in Service, after all, but our
234 Higher Power's.

235 And we come to welcome feedback in our business lives as well, valuing this opportunity
236 for employers, colleagues, customers or clients to tell us how we can better serve them. We

237 even find that we can respond politely to criticism, with no need for an immediate answer,
238 retaliation or deflection, no matter how inappropriate we deem their words in the moment.

239 **Guardrails**

240 *We use the tools of the program to place vital guardrails for ourselves around our service*
241 *commitments.*

242 One of our underearning symptoms is compulsive volunteering—we are all too ready to
243 give away *too much* of our time, neglecting our own needs. What better excuse to shirk our
244 duties at work and at home, or to neglect our own self-care, than because we are too busy
245 serving the needs of others!

246 Every service position, every project, every sponsee, every action group, even every call we
247 make, represents a commitment of time and energy.

248 Unable to just say “No,” it is easy for us to find ourselves trapped on a service treadmill,
249 fearing that people will suffer if we turn down new commitments, afraid that vital work
250 will not get done, dreading how things will turn out if we are not in control. The costs to
251 our recovery come to far outweigh the rewards, plunging us further into underearning, not
252 lifting us out from its shadow.

253 Both in the outside world and in service to UA, we must be careful not to give away more
254 than we have in us to give! The tools of UA help us place guardrails around our
255 underearning symptoms, and we discover that we must consciously use them to keep our
256 service commitments from running amok.

257 So we make sure we track all the time we spend on Service in our timesheets, as a category
258 separate from other program/recovery time. Some of us limit our service to a set number
259 of hours per week or per month. Some of us merely make sure we are spending enough
260 time on income-producing work, on our vision and on our self-care, happy to let service fill
261 our free time after that.

262 We recommend that people limit the total number of service positions, action groups and
263 sponsees they take on, so that they can provide sufficient attention to each, and not over-
264 burden themselves.

265 We can also use our vision and our goals to ground our service in our recovery, consciously
266 examining, *how will taking on this role serve me, how will working on this project benefit me?*
267 And we can check in with our sponsors, action partners and action groups on how we are
268 balancing service with the other activities we are taking towards achieving our goals, to
269 ensure we are not over-committing.

270 Reflection

271 *We continue to take personal inventory.*

272 In serving as officers of meetings, committees or boards, we have taken on a responsibility
273 to the U.A. Fellowship to make sure that we are making the best use of the time and money
274 our fellow members so generously entrust to us. So we are always looking at ways to learn
275 from our successes, so that we may repeat them, and from our failures, so that we may
276 grow from them. We find we can explore these things with grace and humility, through the
277 tools and guidelines that the Program provides to us.

278 In working the Steps, we have come to understand that it is only through failing that we can
279 grow, and that it is only through understanding the nature of our successes that we can
280 build on them.

281 What was it about the way we tackled a project that helped it succeed? What can we
282 document about our processes, so that future projects can benefit from these insights? In
283 taking inventory of our failures, we look to understand how they came about and how we
284 can grow, individually or as a group, and avoid these issues in future.

285 In our meetings, the group inventory is invaluable in helping us explore how well the group
286 is performing its primary purpose, and address the issues that have arisen over the course
287 of the year, without shame or blame, accusation or guilt.

288 What ways have we done things that we can recommend to our colleagues and successors?

289 What approaches have turned out to be better avoided? What areas seem to us to be

290 working well? What things might the group want to focus on improving? What important

291 tasks have we left undone or unfinished, that we commend for future attention?

292 In an organization where service positions are transient by tradition and by necessity, this

293 self-reflection is how we ensure continuity, that our colleagues and successors have a firm

294 foundation on which to continue to build, and that we ourselves get the most benefit from

295 our service.

296 Reflection is important in the business world, too—we gain invaluable insights into ways to

297 improve our worth to the world.

298