

A.R.T.S. Anonymous

**Special One-Day World Service Conference for the Express Purpose of Approving
Pamphlet Literature - July 15, 2023**

Facilitator: Matt B., Conference Chair

Scribe: Allegra B.

Present: Erica L., Abby B., Monika, Mort M., Dasha, Justyna K., Sharon G., Athina C., Harvey D., Eddie Ed., Marci O'B., Beryl VN, Paul G., Christine H., Donna D., Amy C., Val G., Ana M., Matt B., Vickie D., Allegra B., Cindyann W., Allegra B., Pat Q.

(One Non-delegate Participant, 17 Meeting Delegates, 6 Board members)

(Original) Motion 1: *To accept the text of On Being the Perfect Artist as presented:*

On Being the Perfect Artist

In doing our art, many of us have suffered from perfectionism. We believed that our work constituted our worth and that we could gain love through accomplishment. In our desperate quest for that love, we set impossibly high standards, judged our performance mercilessly, and compared ourselves to peers and predecessors.

Those of us who suffered from perfectionism have been insatiable, demanding, and driven. We strove to be *the best*, rather than to be the best we could be. We rarely did anything for the joy of doing it; we felt compelled to excel. Our relentlessly competitive attitudes destroyed our peace of mind and often led to avoidance, burnout, and artistic paralysis.

In order to escape the thought that whatever we did was not enough, we engaged in compulsive behaviors. Many of us defended our compulsiveness as a passion for our art, but in so doing we only deprived ourselves and our art of serenity, balance, and moderation.

Because so many of us lacked self-acceptance and so totally identified with our work, we took any criticism, whether justified or not, as a devastating personal rejection. We refused to accept our human tendency to err. Either we denied our mistakes, thereby losing the opportunity to grow from them, or we dwelt on them and blamed ourselves. Thus, when we felt inadequate in a certain area, we avoided it, losing the chance to broaden our horizon or discover an unexpected pleasure.

Some of us went so far as to withdraw entirely into avoidance.

We found that our best efforts to be the perfect artist produced only fear and desperation. Finally, we could no longer deny that our perfectionism, once worn proudly as a badge of distinction, was really a character flaw which kept us from the joy in our creative process. We became willing to ask for help.

Coming to A.R.T.S., we discovered that there was a spiritual solution to our problem. Our creative gifts came from God. We were stewards of talents over which we had no control. Yet, we had the full responsibility to develop those gifts.

As we attended A.R.T.S. meetings and experienced being listened to without interruption or contradiction, we found the acceptance we had sought. Hearing others admit their weaknesses without condemnation or ridicule, we became brave enough to share our secret shames and discovered we were not alone. As we listened to artists share their struggles with works-in-progress, we realized that value could come from process, as well as product. And when we saw service given non-competitively and appreciated at all levels, we began to view our fellow artists as partners instead of competitors.

With our newfound trust, we risked writing the story or painting the picture or composing the song. We found the courage to enroll in workshops and discovered we didn't fall apart when critiqued. When we let our inner child come forth, we learned that a playful attitude did not compromise our artistic vision. We found that letting go did not require sacrificing quality. We could continue to be single-minded, committed, disciplined, hard-working, and passionate about our art, as dedicated to excellence as ever.

By letting go and surrendering our fears, we allowed God to become our artistic manager. As our concept of a Higher Power deepened, we began to trust more and realized that we were being guided to our good without frantic effort or ceaseless striving. The mocking voices in our head faded away. Slowly the feeling of being driven left us. Instead of striving to be the richest, the most famous, or the most prolific, we focused on being authentic, speaking from the heart, and keeping ourselves open to our creative process.

We learned to be gentle and compassionate with ourselves. Days of struggle with little progress were as much a part of our process, we realized, as those when inspiration flowed freely. Instead of demanding each work be a masterpiece, we were grateful for whatever we received. Doing our best and doing what we loved became our perfection.

And our relationship with our art ripened into love.

Background and Rationale: Conference records find no indication that this pamphlet was conference approved. And yet it remained in circulation for at least four years and is still cited by some long-term members as particularly helpful and well-received. It may not be perfect, and may undergo further review, but it meets the requirements of the *Literature Development Process and Guidelines for Reviewing A.R.T.S. Literature*, A.R.T.S. World Service Conference-approved 1995 and the 2022 draft *Literature Approval Process for Conference Approved Literature*. In the interest of making conference-approved literature available for

distribution for the use of meetings and members, the Literature Committee and the Board recommend approval from the Conference.

The wording on the back of the pamphlet states: *Pamphlet written by Southern California A.R.T.S. Anonymous Intergroup 1990. Revised and accepted for general distribution by A.R.T.S. Anonymous World Service Board, 1994, pending World Service Conference Approval. © 1994 A.R.T.S. Anonymous World Services*

Final Motion 1: (After Crafting)

To accept the text of On Being the Perfect Artist as presented:

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In doing our art, many of us have suffered from perfectionism. We believed that our work constituted our worth and that we could gain love through accomplishment. In our desperate quest for that love, we set impossibly high standards, judged our performance mercilessly, and compared ourselves to peers and predecessors.

Those of us who suffered from perfectionism have been insatiable, demanding, and driven. We strove to be *the best*, rather than to be the best we could be. We rarely did anything for the joy of doing it; we felt compelled to excel. Our relentlessly competitive attitudes destroyed our peace of mind and often led to avoidance, burnout, and artistic paralysis.

In order to escape the thought that whatever we did was not enough, we engaged in compulsive behaviors. Many of us defended our compulsiveness as a passion for our art, but in so doing we only deprived ourselves and our art of serenity, balance, and moderation.

Because so many of us lacked self-acceptance and so totally identified with our work, we took any criticism, whether justified or not, as a devastating personal rejection. We refused to accept our human tendency to err. Either we denied our mistakes, thereby losing the opportunity to grow from them, or we dwelt on them and blamed ourselves. Thus, when we felt inadequate in a certain area, we avoided it, losing the chance to broaden our horizon or discover an unexpected pleasure.

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We found that our best efforts to be the perfect artist produced only fear and desperation. Finally, we could no longer deny that our perfectionism, once worn proudly as a badge of distinction, was really a character flaw which kept us from the joy in our creative process. We became willing to ask for help.

Coming to A.R.T.S., we discovered that there was a spiritual solution to our problem. Our creative gifts came from God. We were stewards of talents over which we had no control. Yet, we had the full responsibility to develop those gifts.

As we attended A.R.T.S. meetings and experienced being listened to without interruption or contradiction, we found the acceptance we had sought. Hearing others admit their weaknesses without condemnation or ridicule, we became brave enough to share our secret shames and discovered we were not alone. As we listened to artists share their struggles with works-in-progress, we realized that value could come from process, as well as product. And when we saw service given non-competitively and appreciated at all levels, we began to view our fellow artists as partners instead of competitors.

With our newfound trust, we risked writing the story, painting the picture, composing the song, finding our way onstage; doing that which our creative impulse inspired us to do. We found the courage to enroll in workshops and discovered we didn't fall apart when critiqued. We learned that a playful attitude did not compromise our artistic vision. We found that letting go did not require sacrificing quality. We could continue to be single-minded, committed, disciplined, hard-working, and passionate about our art, as dedicated to excellence as ever.

By letting go and surrendering our fears, we allowed God to become our artistic manager. As our concept of a Higher Power deepened, we began to trust more and realized that we were being guided to our good without frantic effort or ceaseless striving. The mocking voices in our head faded away. Slowly the feeling of being driven left us. Instead of striving to be the richest, the most famous, or the most prolific, we focused on being authentic, speaking from the heart, and keeping ourselves open to our creative process.

We learned to be gentle and compassionate with ourselves. Days of struggle with little progress were as much a part of our process, we realized, as those when inspiration flowed freely. Instead of demanding each work be a masterpiece, we were grateful for whatever we received. Doing our best and doing what we loved became our perfection.

And our relationship with our art ripened into love.

In Favor 16

Opposed 2

Abstention 1

Motion Passes with more than the two-thirds vote required to pass Literature at an A.R.T.S Conference.

Minority Opinion: The term 'playful attitude' refers directly to 'inner child'. The sentence loses that meaning without it.

(Original) Motion 2: *To number the questions in the 1993 Conference-approved version of Facing Avoidance in the order of the questions as approved by the Conference at that time.*

Rationale: The ability to refer to a specific question in a list of 79 is a practical means for looking up, referring to, or otherwise calling attention to a particular question in meetings and between members, aiding the work of recovery.

Final Motion 2 (After Crafting)

To number the questions in the 1993 Conference-approved version of *Facing Avoidance* in the order of the questions as approved by the Conference at that time.

In favor 17

Opposed 0

Abstentions 1

Motion passes with more than two-thirds of the vote required to pass Literature at an A.R.T.S Conference.

(Original) Motion 3: *To strike the introduction in the 1993 Conference-approved version of Facing Avoidance and replace it with a new introduction as presented:*

Blocked artists are often unable to move forward in their creative expression. Unable to nurture and feed their art, they deprive themselves of the joy of creating. The related A.R.T.S. Anonymous pamphlet, *Anorexia of Avoidance*, says we have “a desire to express... and an accompanying fear of doing so.” Each question may assist the discovery of the fear behind what is denied. Blocks can be spiritual, emotional, mental, and even physical. Yet, something overwhelming may have a simple, manageable solution.

Some of us find it useful to write a paragraph in response to each of these questions. Working with a sponsor, this could even be a basis for a fourth step inventory. Many of us find that getting the most from our recovery means working the Steps of ARTS Anonymous, and that the Serenity Prayer can teach us something about the first three steps.

God, grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change, Courage to change the things I can, and Wisdom to know the difference.

Not every question may apply to every artist, but they are certainly worth considering. Some of us find we are further along on our way than we expected; that the glass is half full

after all. We can use our strengths to move forward. Leaving behind negativity, we learn to give ourselves credit for these as well.

Rationale: As A.R.T.S. Anonymous is a 12-Step program of recovery, suggestions for how the pamphlet can be used as a basis for step work seemed appropriate. The opportunity to look at specific blocks, even in fear or avoidance, is worthy of some explanation. The suggested instruction to write responses in a notebook seemed inadequate “for getting the most out of this inventory.”

Final Motion 3 (After Crafting)

To strike the introduction in the 1993 Conference-approved version of Facing Avoidance and replace it with a new introduction as presented:

Many circumstances may cause artists to become blocked, leaving them unable to move forward. Attempts to nurture and feed their art may result in frustration. Some questions may assist in the discovery of unknown fears that obscure the joy of creating. Blocks can be spiritual, emotional, mental, and even physical. What seems overwhelming may have a simple, manageable solution.

Some of us find it useful to write a paragraph in response to each of these questions. Many of us find that getting the most from our recovery means working the Twelve Steps of A.R.T.S. Anonymous. Working with a sponsor, this could even be a basis for a fourth step inventory.

Not every question may apply to every artist, but they are certainly worth considering. Some of us find we are further along than we expected; that the glass is half full after all. We can use our strengths to move forward. Leaving behind negativity, we learn to give ourselves credit for these as well.

[Put this at the end of the questions in the pamphlet:] *God, grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change, Courage to change the things I can and the Wisdom to know the difference.*

In favor – 14

Opposed - 2

Abstentions - 0

Motion passes with more than two-thirds of the vote required to pass Literature at an A.R.T.S Conference.

Minority Opinion: I can accept the things I cannot change. I think it’s too clumsy.

(Original) Motion 4: *To revise the 29th question listed in the 1993 Conference-approved version of Facing Avoidance as presented:*

Am I using the A.R.T.S. Tools, such as Meetings, A.R.T.S. Buddies and Service?

Rationale: The wording, “tools of the program” is confusing because the program is the Twelve Steps of A.R.T.S. Anonymous. It is in our very name, Artists Recovery through the Twelve Steps. The examples of “tools of the program” that were given included the Twelve Steps, but the Steps are not a “tool,” they are the program. The proposed wording identifies that it is referring to the A.R.T.S. Tools.

Final Motion (After Crafting)

To revise the 29th question listed in the 1993 Conference-approved version of Facing Avoidance as presented:

Am I working the Twelve Steps of A.R.T.S. and using the A.R.T.S. Tools, such as Meetings, Art Buddies and Service?

In favor – 14

Opposed - 0

Abstentions – 1

Motion passes with more than two-thirds of the vote required to pass Literature at an A.R.T.S Conference.

(Original) Motion 5: *To revise the 33rd question in the 1993 Conference-approved version of Facing Avoidance as presented:*

Do I make and keep commitments to myself, to my A.R.T.S. sponsor, buddy, and/or to my meeting?

Rationale: Given the importance of the sponsor/sponsee relationship in 12-Step recovery, it seemed appropriate that self-reflection on one's commitments to a sponsor be included.

Final Motion (After Crafting) *To revise the 33rd question in the 1993 Conference-approved version of Facing Avoidance as presented:*

Do I make and keep commitments to myself, to my A.R.T.S. sponsor, art buddy, and/or to my meeting?

In favor – 14

Opposed - 1

Abstentions – 0

Motion passes with more than two-thirds of the vote required to pass Literature at an A.R.T.S Conference.

Minority Opinion not counted as it had no relevance to the motion.

Thank you, Delegates, Presenters, Scribe and Participant; and those who did service to make this Special One Day Conference a success.

Yours In Service, Matt B., Conference Chair