

**Group and Member Concerns SKIT
Assembly May, 2019**

We are going to pretend that we are in a District meeting and these questions are being asked by Group Representatives.

- _____ is portraying the District Representative : (Service Manual, Many Voices)
- _____ is GR #1 : (Service Manual); May 2019 Forum
- _____ is GR #2 : (Has a laptop; Paths to Recovery; Pamphlets P-45,P-53)
- _____ is GR #3 : (Service Manual)
- _____ is GR #4 : (Service Manual; Al-Anon Focus card,M-8; As We Understood)
- _____ is GR #5 : (How Al-Anon Works; copy of prayer)

DR:

This is the time set aside in our meeting to connect with each other and share questions, concerns, and our Experience, Strength, and Hope. Does anyone have something they would like to share with the group to get some ideas, feedback?

GR #1: (*concern # 1*)

(Raise Hand) I attended a monthly speaker meeting a few weeks ago. A friend of mine was scheduled to be the main speaker. She arrived in a nice pair of slacks and a pretty blouse that complemented the pants. About 10 minutes before she was going to speak, the “seasoned-senior” member of the group told my friend that she was not dressed appropriately to be the main speaker. That she needed to wear a dress or skirt. We were both appalled that this was a “requirement”! If I return to this group, what can I say to help educate the members that there is no clothing requirement for Al-Anon?

DR:

Where do you think we might start looking for the answer to this question?

GR #2:

How about the Service Manual? Maybe under “requirements”? I’ll look on my downloaded version of the Service Manual & search “Requirements”. (Pretend to scroll)... hummm... I only see the word “requirement” use in reference to Alateens and Behavioral and Safety Requirements.

GR#3:

I know I've heard something about "requirements for membership". Oh yeah, Tradition 3. (Read Tradition 3 from the Service Manual).

"The relatives of alcoholics, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an Al-Anon Family Group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation. The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend."

GR #5:

I also have my How Al-Anon Works with me. I was looking something up yesterday and found this on page 110: "...anyone who has been affected by another's drinking is welcome in our fellowship. There is no other requirement for membership." And on page 108, "Our enduring strength may lie in the fact that we are a fellowship of equals." If this happened to me I would think that there may be issues of acceptance, judgment and control.

GR #1:

All of your input is great! There is no requirement about what we should wear. This also goes along with Tradition One, "Our common welfare should come first", Tradition Two, Our Leaders are but trusted servants—they do not govern, and Tradition Five, our primary purpose is to help families of alcoholics, and by welcoming and giving comfort to families of alcoholics.

DR:

Exactly. Telling someone what they have to wear is certainly not welcoming and accepting, and definitely distracts us from our primary purpose. One or two members of a group cannot dictate a dress code, at regular meetings or speaker meetings.

GR #2: (*concern # 2*)

This reminds me of another concern about dominance. I went to a group where in the meeting's format it said that members of A.A. weren't allowed to share at the meeting, only listen.

GR #4:

WOW! I wonder if they had had problems with A.A. members sharing their A.A. program and not keeping the focus on Al-Anon? This has happened a few times in my meetings. We have a couple of the yellow Al-Anon Focus tent cards displayed on tables, and the Chairperson knows to kindly remind members of the card if a member starts to stray down that path.

DR:

Are you aware that an Al-Anon member from Southern California came up with the idea for this card? I guess this shows that the WSO does really listen to our requests and ideas!

GR #3:

Sometimes we read pg. 39-40 from the Service Manual.

“In keeping with Tradition Three, all family members and friends of problem drinkers are welcome to attend Al-Anon meetings in order to decide for themselves whether Al-Anon can benefit them.” And “We concentrate on our own feelings and attitudes, rather than on the details of our situation. Members leave other affiliations (such as other Twelve Step programs or professional resources) outside our meeting rooms.”

GR #2:

My hope is that we make all members feel welcome, and if there is an issue, we address it in a kind way during the meeting or one-to-one after the meeting. Sometimes we've given the A.A. member a copy of P-45, The Al-Anon Focus, and P-53, Al-Anon Spoken Here. In one instance our Group held a Business Meeting reading some of the sections of those two pamphlets. It really helped to read exactly what is in those two pieces of literature.

GR #3: (*concern # 3*)

Speaking of A.A., what about groups that insist on using the A.A. Big Book? I'm not talking about using it for Step work with your Sponsor outside of the meeting, but during their meeting. I tried to bring up this concern at a group and a long time member told me -in no uncertain terms- that Al-Anon was originally part of the A.A. fellowship, we used to use the Big Book, and we have group autonomy to do what ever we want! Is this true?

DR:

Some of this is true. In *Many Voices, One Journey* it talks about the early literature that was used back in 1952. The Bible and the A.A. Big Book were listed as “Suggested readings for Al-Anon Family Groups”. (p. 52). The list also included other self-help literature. This was because we had very little material of our own. In *Many Voices* it also talks about the first World Service Conference in 1961, and the idea that Al-Anon needed to have it’s own Conference Approved Literature.

GR #4:

There’s a whole section about Conference Approved Literature in our *Service Manual*, starting on pg. 110. The best page I found about A.A. literature is on 112. (Read that quote)

“A.A. literature is not used at Al-Anon meetings because it is written for and from the viewpoint of alcoholics and is not Al-Anon/Alateen Conference Approved Literature. Reliance on opinions expressed in A.A. and other outside materials can distort the Al-Anon approach.” Plus we have a pamphlet called *Why Conference Approved Literature* (P-35). It really explains why our literature is “Conference Approved”, What is Al-Anon “Conference Approved Literature”, And how it is becomes “Conference Approved”.

GR #1:

I have the May Forum which has a great article about CAL by the WSO Associate Director of Literature. (looking at Traditions in the Service Manual) I’ve also heard that the exclusive use of CAL in Al-Anon meetings supports Al-Anon’s First Tradition: that personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity. Al-Anon’s Third Tradition states that as a group we have no other affiliation. According to our Fifth Tradition, our one purpose is to help families of alcoholics. And our Sixth Tradition states we are a separate entity that should always cooperate with A.A.

GR #2:

There’s a great quote in *Paths to Recovery* about A.A. literature on pg.172: “Then someone asks, ‘What about AA literature; is it Conference Approved?’ Yes, it is approved by A.A.’s General Service Conference for AA - but not for Al-Anon. At home I can read whatever I please, but when I come to meetings I leave those things outside.”

GR #3:

This is really helpful information for me to bring back to my group. I love how we “reason things out”!

DR:

Does anyone else have a question or concern they wish to share?

GR #4: (concern # 4)

Yes, I do. I went to a meeting that had the Al-Anon Promises on a large sign posted on the wall next to the Steps and Traditions. No one in the group seemed to know where they came from. I looked for the poster on the WSO website’s literature section, and called the AIS-LDC. There’s nothing on the website and the LDC said there are no “Promises” in Al-Anon.

DR:

This topic came up in a meeting I attend. The “Promises” idea may have been started by Al-Anon members who are also members of Alcoholics Anonymous, since A.A. has something some members label as “promises”. Some members cite certain pages from *One Day At A Time in Al-Anon* (B-6) or *From Survival to Recovery* (B-21). In recent years, some individuals members have titled and labeled one such passage without permission as “The Promises of Al-Anon”. This is actually a copyright violation, which is explained on page 114 of the *Service Manual*.

GR #5:

A while back I looked for “promises” as an index topic in all of my Al-Anon books. The only place I found the topic of “promises” was in *Many Voices, One Journey*. It was first reviewed by the Literature Committee in 1977, then at the 1989 World Service Conference, and at the Policy Committee meeting October, 1995. On pg. 305 it says: “The consensus of the Policy Committee was that the World Service Office should not reproduce the passage as a separate salable item, or grant permission for members to reprint the excerpt. It also agreed that Al-Anon does not have “promises”, and that the WSO should not promote the passage as “promises” or “gifts”.

GR #4:

This makes sense that Al-Anon doesn’t have “Promises”. There are too many variables that we cannot control, and we are each responsible for our own recovery. Heck, I have a hard time keeping a promise to myself!

GR #5: (*concern # 5*)

I know we are running out of time, but I have one more concern I want to bring up. I've been to 3 meetings that were new to me that used a prayer I've never heard of before. (Read the prayer)

GR # 1:

I think I've heard that prayer in A.A. meetings a long time ago. Is this prayer in our Al-Anon literature?

GR # 3:

I heard a group use it too, so I looked it up. This prayer is not in our literature. The Serenity Prayer is the prayer mentioned the most in our Literature, and dates back to 1945. It's the only prayer listed in the Service Manual. Some groups close with the Lord's Prayer which started in early Al-Anon because that's what the A.A. groups were using.

GR #4:

A.A.'s early beginnings were rooted in Christianity, however there have been a lot of changes since then. *As We Understood* was released in 1985, and helped me see that members share a variety of concepts for "God" and "Higher Power", and it's not just one idea.

DR:

My concern is always about the newcomer and what they might think. We read the Preamble to the Twelve Steps every week and it says:

Al-Anon is not allied with any sect, denomination, political entity, organization, or institution; does not engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any cause.

I've heard new members say that they didn't go back to the meetings because they are Jewish and decided that Al-Anon must be a Christian program since the Lord's Prayer was read.

GR #5:

But what about group autonomy? Can't we decide what prayer we want to use?

GR #2:

Once again in my favorite CAL, Paths to Recovery, I read this on page 167: “The group representative opened the discussion by reading Tradition Four. She explained that each group was autonomous, and that different groups close their meeting with different prayers and statements. What she emphasized was the second half of Tradition Four, “...except in matters affecting another group or Al-Anon or A.A. as a whole”. She stressed that our decision needed to be for the good of the group as well as for the good of Al-Anon. After lengthy discussion, we took a silent ballot. More than three-fourths of the members voted to close the meeting with the Serenity Prayer.”

GR #1:

What does it mean to do a “silent ballot”? Would this be like voting on pieces of paper where we write a simple “yes” or “no”? I’d need to do that method in my meeting because we have extremely dominant members who would “give the look” to newer members, or some members would just vote the same as the Longtimer because they think the Longtimer must know more.

DR:

My hope is that the group would have all the information first before they vote. On page 51 of our Service Manual it says:

“In order to make an informed group conscience decision, members need access to all the information about the issue they are being asked to discuss, they need clarity on what their discussions hope to accomplish and they are asked to trust each other’s motives and capabilities. By sharing information as equals, taking time for discussion, and maintaining principles above personalities during the discussions, groups are often able to reach unanimity in their decisions. If unanimity is not reached in the allotted timeframe of the meeting, discussions may continue at another time. Once a group conscience decision is made, the entire group supports the decision.”

GR #5:

I guess that’s the key. Making sure our members have the information so they can make an informed decision. Sometimes that’s the best I can do, then the rest is out of my hands.

DR:

That is so true! I’m afraid we are out of time for today. We can continue this discussion at our next District meeting, and maybe you’ll have some success stories to report! Thank you all for coming! Let’s close with the Al-Anon Alateen Declaration: Let it begin with me... (Everyone join in)

**Conference Approved Literature sited in
Group and Member Concerns Skit
May 18 Assembly, 2019**

2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27)

How Al-Anon Works (B-22)

Many Voices, One Journey (B-31)

Paths to Recovery (B-24)

As We Understood (B-11)

Al-Anon Focus/Declaration Card (M-8)

The Al-Anon Focus (P-45)

Al-Anon Spoken Here (P-53)

1. **Does Al-Anon have a dress code?**
Tradition One, Tradition Two, Tradition Three, Tradition Five
How Al-Anon Works (B-22) p. 108, 110
2. **Can A.A. members share in an Al-Anon meeting?**
Al-Anon Focus/Declaration Card (M-8)
The Al-Anon Focus (P-45)
Al-Anon Spoken Here (P-53)
Service Manual, pg.39-40
3. **Is the Big Book Conference Approved Literature?**
Many Voices, One Journey p. 52, 98-100
Service Manual, p. 110-112
Paths to Recovery, p. 172
4. **Does Al-Anon have Promises?**
Service Manual, p. 114
Many Voices, One Journey, p. 198-199; 265, 305
5. **Are there Conference Approved prayers?**
Many Voices, 22, 71, 301-302, 335
Service Manual p. 13
As We Understood
Paths to Recovery, p.167