

Reasoning Things Out: In-Person, Electronic and Hybrid Meetings

Southern California World Service
Al-Anon Workshop
June 26, 2021
(revised December 2021)

Opening

1. Serenity Prayer
2. Workshop Committee Introductions
3. Procedures:
 - Members will remain muted until time for questions/comments (at end of presentation)
 - Chat questions to Alternate Delegate (Donna). They will be held to the end of presentation.
 - Chat to anyone named “TECH” for technical support.

Purpose of Workshop

To share with members information from several sources...

- *Current* information from the April 2021 World Service Conference (WSC), and the World Service Office (WSO)
- Conference Approved Literature (CAL) resources
- Experience, Strength and Hope from members in our Southern California World Service (SCWS) Area

Purpose of Workshop

Why are we doing this?

- To present the issues for your Group's members to reason out with one another as you move forward, post-pandemic!
- We (SCWS) are not the “experts” but we are here to assist!
- Many of the questions that follow *do not have “set” answers!* You will reason them out with your members!
- And be sure to leave space in your business meeting for your Higher Power!

Agenda and Format

For each general topic we will share “What we know...”

1. What WSO and our Area members are telling us.
2. “External Factors”:
 - a. County/City regulations
 - b. Facility requirements
 - c. Technical requirements

Agenda/Format (continued)

3. “Internal Factors”:
 - a. Who are the “members” of your group? Voice/vote?
 - b. How are decisions made?
 - c. Finances
 - d. Service positions
 - e. CAL support

4. Registration of this meeting:
 - a. SCWS/WSO website: Group Records Coordinator (GRC)
 - b. Local Al-Anon Information Service (AIS)/ Intergroup

Agenda/Format (cont'd)

And we will share “What we don’t know...” such as:

- How WSO will change various procedures based on Area feedback
- How our World Wide Fellowship will keep changing
- How our Group Representatives (GRs) will vote regarding the Area Electronic Meeting Work Group’s recommendations.
(Target: November 2021 Assembly)

Resources We Will Be Using

1. *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual, 2018-2021 (v-2)* (“SM”) and other CAL (references on slides)
2. *Conflict Resolution Using our Twelve Traditions (S-72)*
3. *Al-Anon Guidelines: Taking a Group Inventory (G-8a/b)*
4. Knowledge-Based Decision-Making (KBDM): information located on scws-al-anon.org website.
5. “What is a Healthy Meeting?” May 15, 2021 Assembly presentation located on scws-al-anon.org website.

Terms We Will Be Using

- **Group Business Meetings:** are held to share information and to include all group members in the activities and concerns of the group. Decisions a group makes are determined by an informed group conscience. (SM, p.49-51)
- **Group Conscience:** is *the result* of the group's business meeting discussions. The group conscience is the will of the group. "It is by taking the time necessary to hear from all members who want to participate that a group conscience evolves." (SM, p.51)
- **Substantial Unanimity, Warranty Three:** "That all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote and whenever possible by substantial unanimity." The group decides what "substantial" is, "whether two-thirds, three-quarters or an even greater majority." (SM, p. 215-216)
- **Knowledge-Based-Decision-Making (KBDM):** research, information-gathering and substantial discussion before a decision is made. (scws-al-anon.org--"KBDM")

Relevant Traditions

- 1: Common welfare
- 2: Group purpose
- 3: Membership
- 4: Autonomous, except in matters affecting another group, Al-Anon or AA as a whole
- 5: Primary purpose
- 7: Fully self-supporting
- 8: May create committees directly responsible...
- 11: Attraction rather than promotion
- 12: Anonymity and principles above personalities (SM, p. 15)

Relevant Concepts of Service

- 4: Participation is the key to harmony
- 5: Ensuring minority voices are heard
- 9: Good personal leadership at all levels
- 10: Double-headed management avoided (SM, p. 17)

...and General Warranties of the Conference

- (1) sufficient operating funds, including an ample reserve
- (2) no member placed in unqualified authority over other members
- (3) all decisions reached by discussion, vote and whenever possible by unanimity (SM, p. 18)

Spiritual Principles to Remember

- The guiding principles for business meetings are the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts of Service. (SM, p. 49)
- **Three Obstacles to Success:** discussions of religion, gossip, and dominance; “All Al-Anon discussions should be constructive, helpful, loving, and understanding.” (SM, p. 22)
- **Presume Good Will:** An Al-Anon saying that became more commonly accepted at the WSC (2003) and throughout the fellowship whenever there is disagreement: “Presume good will”. *Many Voices, One Journey* (B-31, p. 330)

Returning to Face-to-Face Meetings

(No virtual component)

Returning to Face-to-Face (FTF) Meetings

External Factors

1. Are there any City/County restrictions/requirements?
2. Are you able to return to the same facility as before COVID?
Is it available? Is the rent the same?
3. Are there facility restrictions/requirements?
 - Wearing masks?
 - Checking temperatures?
 - COVID Vaccinations?
 - Room capacity/social distancing?
 - Liability waivers or “Hold harmless” requirements?
 - Cleaning?
 - Insurance?
 - Contact tracing?

Returning to FTF Meetings (continued)

Internal Factors

1. How do you hold a business meeting while meeting virtually?
 - Plan in advance and notify all members, 2-3 weeks prior. (SM, p.50)
 - “Business meetings can be held before, after, or during the group meeting.” (SM, p. 49)
 - May require several business meetings to reach an informed group conscience.
2. How do you ensure that all voices, including minority, are heard?
 - What do you do if there are members trying to dominate?
 - Is there a way to vote anonymously? (Polling feature on Zoom)
 - Is there outside support if you get “stuck”? (GR/DR/Area)

Returning to FTF Meetings; Internal Factors (continued)

3. Who is making the decision for returning FTF?
 - Who has a “voice”? All regularly attending members?
 - Who has “vote”?
 - Members who reside in the same county as the FTF?
 - Members who do not live in the SCWS Area?
 - Members who previously attended FTF, but didn't attend virtually?
 - Only those who attend business meeting, or OK to vote by proxy?

4. Is the group deciding with
 - “simple majority” (50% + 1)?
 - “substantial unanimity” (two-thirds, three-fourths)?

Returning to FTF Meetings; Internal Factors (continued)

5. What happens if your group gets stuck--can't get to substantial unanimity?
 - Do you want to table the decision and schedule another business meeting?
 - Do you need more information--adding more “Knowledge” to KBDM?
 - Do you want another member (DR/Area) to help facilitate discussion?

Returning to FTF Meetings; Internal Factors (continued)

6. You've had multiple business meetings, used KBDM and more, and you are still "stuck." What do you do?
 - Has your group considered Hybrid? (FTF plus virtual component)
 - You can "decide not to decide" and put all on hold until _____.
 - You can decide to temporarily split the group--some members return FTF, some members meet virtually. (Schedule business meeting in future to discuss how this is working.)
 - You can decide to permanently split. Things to think about...
 - Do you have enough members to maintain both meetings?
 - How do you fairly split the group's treasury and literature?
 - Which group retains original WSO ID#?

Keeping Up With Group Registration Changes

1. Why is this **so important**?
 - Newcomers need to find your meeting!
 - Members might go to the listed FTF location and find a locked door and no one there!
 - There may be facility restrictions members need to know about.

You can check to see how your meeting listing looks now at:
<https://al-anon.org/al-anon-meetings/find-an-al-anon-meeting/>

Keeping Up With Group Registration Changes

2. How do I make changes to our Group Registration?

- All FTF meeting changes (location, day, time, etc.) **go directly to our SCWS Group Records Coordinator (GRC) by way of our SCWS website:**

<https://www.scws-al-anon.org/alanon-group-registration-records-change-form/>

- Our Area GRC enters your group's changes on the WSO database *and* forwards that information to your local AIS/Intergroup.

Returning to Face-to-Face Meeting (no virtual component)

Whom do you notify?

- Go onto the SCWS website and fill out the Group Registration Change Form: <https://www.scws-al-anon.org/alanon-group-registration-records-change-form/>

Where on the form do we type our meeting information to let Newcomers and all members know that we are meeting in person?

- Go to #4, “Location Meeting Place” and type: **RESUMED IN-PERSON MEETING**

Where on the form do we type our meeting information *if there are covid-related instructions from the facility that members need to know about?*

- Any special instruction regarding your group: Go to #8, “Comments” box
- Type in: **Any requirements from the facility**

Is your Group not meeting (in-person or virtually) and you don't know when you will?

PLEASE think about the newcomer or other Al-Anon members who think that your meeting is actively meeting because you are listed on the WSO website!
They will go to your meeting place and find a dark room!

- Go onto the SCWS website and fill out the Group Registration Change Form:
<https://www.scws-al-anon.org/alanon-group-registration-records-change-form/>
- Go to #4, “Location Meeting Place” and type: **NOT CURRENTLY MEETING IN PERSON DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC.**

When you start meeting again, go onto the form and type in #4:
RESUMED MEETING IN PERSON.

Remaining a Temporary Electronic Meeting (TEM)

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External Factors

1. REMINDER: The TEM was created to replace a pre-COVID registered Face-to-Face (FTF) meeting.
2. Is the virtual platform working for our group?
3. How long can we remain a TEM?

Remaining a Temporary Electronic Meeting (TEM)

Internal Factors

1. Same as for a FTF meeting:
 - Conduct business meeting(s)
 - All voices heard
 - Who has voice and vote?
 - What is your substantial unanimity for a Group Conscience?
 2. How are we handling rotation of leadership?
 3. Who can be the Group Representative (GR)*--resides in SoCal
 4. Who can be the Current Mailing Address (CMA)--resides in SoCal
 5. Sharing of CAL on the screen?
- * Al-Anon members who are also members of A.A. may not serve as GRs.

Listing a **Temporary Electronic Meeting** (TEM)

1. Reminder: TEMs were created to temporarily replace registered FTF meetings due to state/facility restrictions in 2020.
 - If you continue to meet virtually without returning to FTF, you don't have to *register* anywhere!
 - You cannot currently *register* a new TEM.

Listing a **Temporary Electronic Meeting (TEM)**

2. How do Groups share Virtual (ZOOM) information so **Newcomers can find you on the WSO & AIS websites?** These are *some* of the options for how you may want your group listed:
 - Provide your group's **Zoom ID/passcode** for the WSO website (SCWS-GRC forwards this information to local AIS)
 - Request that on the WSO website, **only your local AIS office website link** is listed for your meeting, (where members will find the details your meeting's information)
 - **Create a special group name email** to receive meeting inquiries (instead of a member's phone number or personal email) and/or designate one member to contact (via phone or email). This provides a personal/private link to the newcomer who wants to attend your meeting.

Instructions for Listing a **Temporary Electronic Meeting** (TEM)

- If virtual information on the WSO (or AIS) website is not current, go to SCWS website, online Group Registration Records Change Form:
<https://www.scws-al-anon.org/alanon-group-registration-records-change-form/>
- Fill out the top of the form (include your WSO ID#) then scroll down to #8, the “Comments” box on bottom of the SCWS form and type in:
 1. If you want the information to **match** on the WSO & the AIS websites:
Type: “Add to the WSO and my AIS website: Not currently meeting in person.” Next, enter your Zoom ID, passcode, group’s email and/or any other specific entry instructions.
 - OR**
 2. If you **only** want your specific Zoom information/email on the local AIS:
Type: “Only list specifics on local AIS.” The GRC will then only add the AIS website link for your group on the WSO site.

What Don't We Know About TEMs?

1. How much longer can our group remain a TEM?
2. Will our TEM have to become a Permanent Electronic Meeting eventually (PEM)?
3. If our TEM becomes a PEM, will we be able to stay with the Area?
4. The SCWS Area is forming a Workgroup to study the possibility and process of incorporating Electronic Meetings into our Area structure.

Hybrid (aka Concurrent) Meetings

Hybrid Meeting: Face-to-Face + Virtual Component

The FTF and Virtual components (ZOOM, etc.)

- are *meeting simultaneously* (i.e., same day, same time),
- and they are connected throughout the meeting time.

That is, those members on the virtual platform are meeting at the same time, **together with** those members participating at the physical location.

Hybrid Meetings: Can We Be Successful? (Part 1)

External Factors

1. What types of technology are being used?
 - Connectivity: WiFi available? Hotspotting? Laptop/cellphone?
 - Audible: Cellphone/laptop? External speaker/mic?
 - Visible: Cellphone/laptop/projector & white screen/tv monitor?
2. Do we have a FTF location that will work for the size of the group and our technology needs?
 - Church/room rental requirements for spacing?
 - Group decision for spacing?
 - Maximum capacity of room with/without spacing?
 - How many are expected to come back to F2F?

Hybrid Meetings: Can We Be Successful? (Part 2)

External Factors

3. What are some of the technology challenges and successes?
 - Cell phone use - all members must have one, potential volume and sonic dissonance issues.
 - Laptop with factory camera/mic/speaker - will it see/hear everyone?
 - Laptop with external camera/speaker/mic - cord and sync issues?
 - Laptop with projector/white screen - set up time/clarity of video?
 - Laptop with tv monitor - set up time, visibility from a distance?
 - ANY OF THESE OPTIONS WILL WORK! DON'T FORGET TO ASK FOR HELP!

4. Who can we contact to help walk through the technology needs?
 - Tech person in the meeting? Member who is passionate about service? Myself or others in this workshop! We are here to help.

Hybrid Meetings: Can We Be Successful?

Internal Factors

1. How do we handle service positions for both the virtual and FTF components? Can we still have Business meetings?
2. How do we handle the financial obligations/7th Tradition for both?
3. Do we have enough members to support both components?
4. How do we ensure equal participation for members of both components?
5. How do we ensure anonymity for members of the FTF and Virtual components?
6. Can we try it on a trial basis?

Where/How do we list **Hybrid Meeting information** so that newcomers can find us?!

1. Whom do we contact to list a Hybrid meeting? (see slide 20)
2. What information do we share regarding the FTF and Virtual components?
 - Do you want the virtual component listed on the WSO website (along with the FTF information)?
 - Do you want the virtual component listed only on your local AIS office's site (only the FTF information on WSO's site)?

What Don't We Know About Hybrid Meetings?

1. How long can we remain a Hybrid meeting?
2. Will Hybrid meetings be accepted and incorporated into the WSC/WSO structure?*
3. Are there more groups considering becoming Hybrid?
(Survey)

*Yes. If Hybrid works for a group, they can continue it indefinitely. (Determined after this workshop was presented. Revision made Dec. 2021)

“Split/Separate” Meetings

“Split*/Separate” Meetings

1. “Split/Separate” (*not* hybrid) meetings: Some members of the original group meet FTF, while other members of the group meet virtually, separate from each other. That is, although they are meeting on the same day, at the same time, the two meetings are *split* or *separate* because they are not connected electronically in real time.
2. All of the “internal” factors in slide 34 apply.
3. While this solution *could* work temporarily, this will not be a viable solution in the future because a registered FTF group and a *separate* virtual group cannot share the same WSO ID number in the WSO database.

*For a short amount of time we used the word “concurrent” to mean split/separate. We then learned that the WSO uses the term concurrent (instead of hybrid) - therefore the update. These words are interchangeable, although our Area prefers using. hybrid.

Split Meetings

Challenges for Split Meetings:

1. How could the members “share” a business meeting that equally represents both components?
2. How could one GR realistically represent both components?
3. How would the treasury and literature be “shared” by two meetings? Would you have two sets of service positions, one for each meeting?

Permanent Electronic Meetings (PEM)

Permanent Electronic Meetings (PEM)

1. What are Permanent Electronic Meetings?
 - Pre-dated the pandemic (1990's). Electronic meetings were originally thought of as a supplement to regular attendance at “face-to-face” Al-Anon groups. (*Electronic Meetings Fact Sheet*, S-60)
 - These are WSO registered Al-Anon meetings (independent of any existing in-person group).
 - Groups can “register as an Al-Anon electronic meeting with the World Service Office (WSO), provided that, as a meeting they have no other affiliation, their meetings are open to all Al-Anon members, and they abide by the Traditions.” (*Electronic Al-Anon Meeting Guideline*, G-39)
 - Platform examples: Conference Call; Chat Room; Skype; Bulletin Board; Zoom; Al-Anon Family Groups mobile app; Email; and more.

Permanent Electronic Meetings (PEM) (continued)

2. What is the current service structure for PEMs?
 - A PEM is not connected with a geographic Area, therefore they are not part of a District and do not have a Group Representative (GR).
 - They are connected to WSO by way of a group member who is their Current Mailing Address (CMA).
 - The CMAs meet quarterly with a WSO staff member. This staff member helps carry their “voice” to the World Service Conference.

Permanent Electronic Meetings (PEM) (continued)

3. What does the future look like for the PEM service structure?
 - **2021 World Service Conference (WSC):** Motion to eliminate the restriction for an Area to be defined by geographic boundaries and simplify language in our *Service Manual* to incorporate both physical and electronic meeting locations.
 - PEMs may now start the process to form their own Permanent Electronic Meeting Area. There will only be one “Electronic”(Virtual) Area. This Area will have Districts, and Groups will elect GRs. They will elect an Area Delegate. The new Electronic Area will petition World Service Conference to be added as a new Area at the April 2022 WSC.

Permanent Electronic Meetings (PEM) (continued)

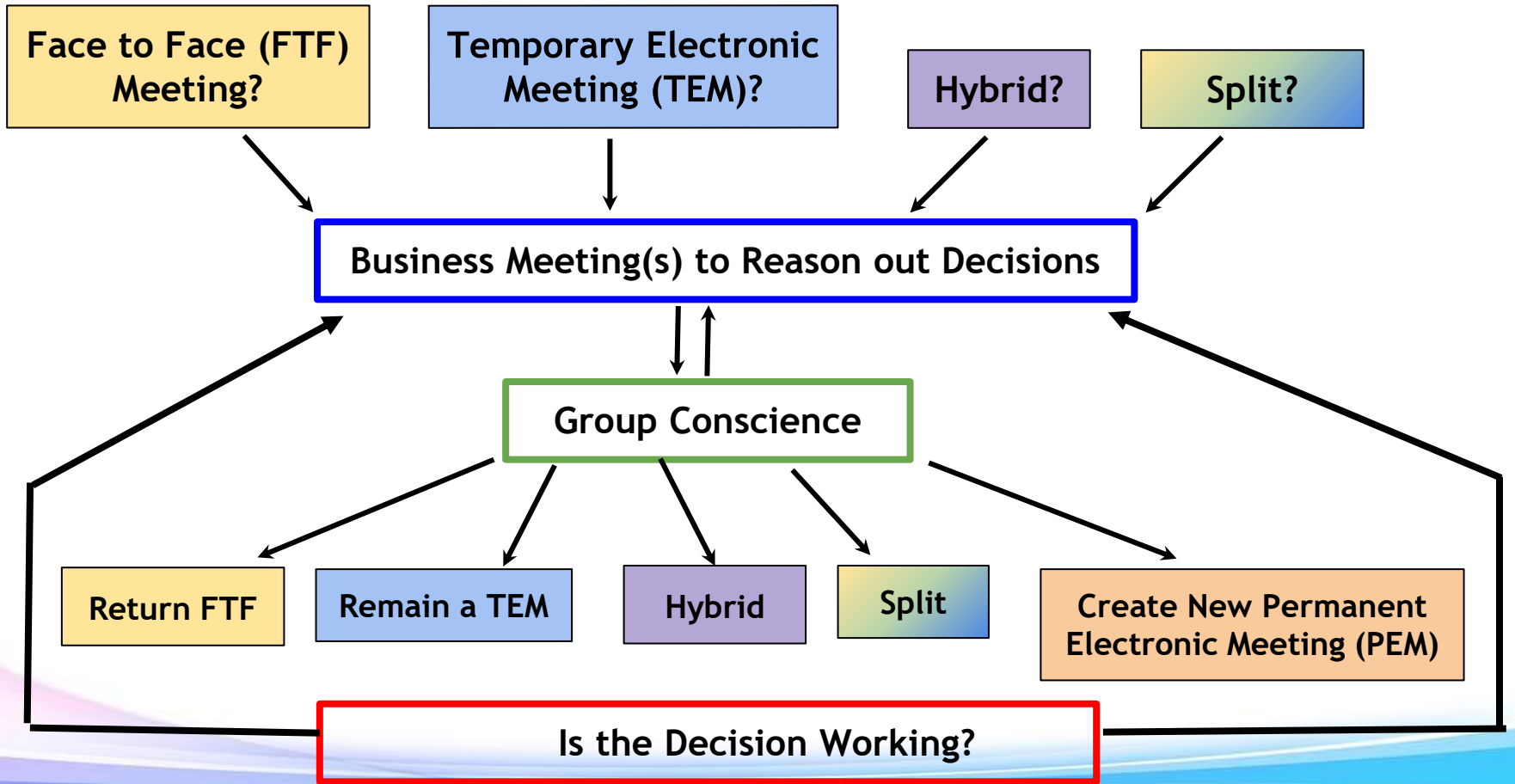
4. Can a Permanent Electronic Meeting join a geographic Area?

Not yet!

2021 World Service Conference (WSC): Each geographic Area can decide if they want Electronic Meetings to have the choice to join a geographic Area instead of staying with the Electronic Meeting Area.

Permanent Electronic Meetings (PEM) (continued)

- Our Southern California World Service (SCWS) Area is forming a **Work Group (WG)** to explore the possibility of adding **PEMs** into our geographic Area (next year).
- The **WG** will be charged with...
 - Using the KBDM process for information-gathering, discussion
 - Creating criteria for a PEM to be registered with SCWS (such as a % of members attending the PEM that reside in our geographic area)
 - Creating a process for the PEM to join our Area and a District.
 - Bringing a KBDM presentation to the Assembly for GRs to decide.



Questions / Comments

1. Timer: 1 minute for questions/comments
2. We will alternate between questions/comments sent through Chat to Donna and members who have raised their ZOOM hand. (Similar questions sent to Chat will be grouped together.)
3. If someone asks your question/makes your comment, please lower your hand. We want to give as many members as possible the chance to participate.
4. Please keep your questions “general.”
5. Group questions with lots of specific details may be sent to: groupandmemberconcerns@scws-al-anon.org.

Wrap-up and Closing

1. Survey: Please go to scws-al-anon.org to click on link.
2. Questions: groupandmemberconcerns@scws-al-anon.org

Next Area workshop: Saturday September 11, 10am

Al-Anon Declaration

Let It Begin with Me

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help,
let the hand of Al-Anon and Alateen
always be there, and—*Let It Begin with Me.*

(SM, p. 4 and p. 20)