

ASK-IT-BASKET-QUESTIONS

Q: On page 82-83 [of the Service Manual], "...for these reasons AA members do not serve as GRs, DRs, Area Coordinators, Newsletter Editors, Delegate and/or any of their alternates..."

If an Al-Anon member is also a member of another Twelve Step program that is not A.A., like Narcotics Anonymous, are they eligible to serve in these positions?

A: Yes. The manual specifically says A.A. members cannot hold these positions as correctly noted.

Also on page 11, under the suggested Al-Anon Welcome, many groups add:

... Only in this way can we feel free to say what is in our minds
and hearts, for this is how we help one another in Al -Anon/
Alateen.

*At this point in the meeting, many groups have the Chairperson
say if the group meeting has a special format (Step-study,
speakers, or discussion group), has a specific routine for calling
on members, asks members of other anonymous fellowships to
remain anonymous and focus on the Al -Anon program, and
clarifies if the meeting is open* or closed.** Members are also
told how they can obtain Al -Anon and Alateen Conference
Approved Literature.*

Q: How do we deal with a "difficult, dominant" member in the program who does not have a sponsor other than at looking at Tradition 1 and Tradition 12?

A: As you've correctly identified the pertinent parts in the manual – namely – the Three Obstacles #3 Dominance on Page 24, the Twelve Traditions on pages 15-16, and the Group Inventory on pages 53-55,(also the guidelines G8a and G8b from the website), other options are for the Group Rep and another member to discuss the situations with the individual, possibly bring in the District Representative and/or have a Business Meeting.

Q: Hi, If Al-Anon is a Spiritual Program and not a Religious Program, why is the name of the Christian divinity, "God" used in our Steps, as well as the pronouns "he & him"?
Background to question – 3 people have asked me about this in the last few weeks. One had been abused in the church. All 3 would have nothing to do with Al-Anon because of this when it could have helped them, as they had a problem drinker in their families. Thanks so much.

A: Suggestions were to:

1. Have a beginner meeting or at the very least when a newcomer is present, read the Optional Reading on pages 23 and 24 of the manual both **A.** which discusses the choices for anonymity and B. ***The Twelve Steps suggest acceptance of four primary ideas*** - which highlights the God of our understanding; as well as the Three Obstacles on page 24 – #1, Discussion of Religion, etc., and
2. Explain the History of Al-Anon by referring to information on pages 28 and the top of 29.

Q: Is there anywhere in CAL that addresses the importance of punctuality at meetings? (i.e. arrival?; length of meeting?; closing on time?).

A: How a group handles these questions is a matter of Group Autonomy (page 101) and can be addressed by having a Group Inventory (starting at the bottom of page 53 and refer to Guidelines G8a & G8b).

Q: Where in our traditions are the “have to”; traditions are suggestions; We have people in our area that are more than qualified to hold certain positions, but are told they “have to” for example be a Group Rep to be District Rep.

A: The guidelines for Group Reps (G-11) and District Reps (G-37) explain the roles of each position and the importance of membership and service before attaining the next level, also described in the Links of Service brochure (S-28) all of which are available as electronic downloads on both the area and WSO websites. For even further clarification please refer to pages 146-148 as to the process followed and why.

The G-37 District Representative guideline says under the title "Requirements"

Requirements Any incoming, outgoing, or active past Al-Anon or Alateen Group Representative (GR) who is willing to represent the district at Area World Service Committee meetings (AWSC) and Area Assembly, and who is not also a member of A.A., is eligible to serve as DR. A DR should have basic knowledge of Al-Anon and Alateen Traditions and the Concepts of Service, and how to apply them in the links of service. See the “World Service Handbook” section of the Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27).

Q: Why? Why? Does the hosting group or District not let the café or restaurant know that when we all arrive we all or most of us use the café for our supper on arrival so they are more prepared with food and staff?

A: Typically the hosting committee for Assembly arranges the weekend with the Banquet/Catering Manager. Assembly weekend consists of 5 meals, starting Saturday breakfast. Friday evening meal is up to the attendee. Many times the hotel restaurant is a separate entity from the Banquet/Catering.

We will strive in the future planning to ask the Banquet/Catering manager to communicate to the Hotel restaurant that many of our attendees may be utilizing their restaurant Friday night.

Q: Further to the conversation about increasing contributions: Is it within Al-Anon principles to start a "Pay it Forward" campaign? So we give/pay for the next person when we give Tradition 7 at meetings?

A: Pg 57 of the Service Manual. "In keeping with Traditions 6 and 7, the group does not provide financial aid to members in need or to any outside enterprise. Individuals are free to help others in need as they choose : however it is always without involving Al-Anon's name or other group members".

Pg 21 of the Service Manual. "We have no dues or fees..... According to our 7th Tradition, Al-Anon/Alateen groups ought to be fully self-supporting through our own voluntary contributions. We are encouraged to contribute in gratitude for what Al-Anon/Alateen has given us. The amount is not important; what is important is that we give whatever we can."

Q: How do we deal with a long time member who attends more than one group, and has become so controlling that they drive newcomers and seasoned members away, some who never attend Al-Anon again? This member has been made aware that he/she is causing problems but refuses to take responsibility for their behaviour. Please help!

A: Pg 54 of the Service Manual. "Al-Anon and Alateen members expect a safe and pleasant environment when they attend a meeting, and when one member causes unrest due to inappropriate or intimidating behaviour, the entire group could be affected. Groups are within their autonomy to establish group behavioural guidelines in a manner that reflects their group conscience and abides by the Traditions. When the behaviour of any member impacts the group, members apply the Traditions to the problem, and determine how best to approach the individual(s) involved, to ask the member to change the behaviour in question. This can be an exercise in applying Al-Anon principles so that the message is not a personal attack, but rather a request based on what is best for the Al-Anon group. Service tools on conflict resolution are available. "

Pg 24 of the Service Manual. Three Obstacles to Success in Al-Anon. #3 Dominance. "Our leaders are trusted servants; they do not govern. No member of Al-Anon should direct, assume authority, or give advice. Our program is based on suggestion, interchange of experience, and rotation of leadership. We progress in our own way and pace. Any attempt to manage or direct is likely to have disastrous consequences for group harmony."

Q: Anonymity was broken in my group and it was taken to a group conscience. The issue was not addressed. I took the issue to the District Rep but she was too new at the position to know what to do. What is the next step in establishing trust within the group? (What a member said in a meeting became the subject of conversation outside the meeting.)

A: Recommend chairing meetings on Anonymity at least once a year using the pamphlet P-33. Ensure the Anonymity card sign is on your meeting table and stress the meaning of anonymity to your group and to Al-Anon as a whole.

Pg 54 and 55 of the Service Manual talks about Group Problems and Solutions. . “Al-Anon and Alateen members expect a safe and pleasant environment when they attend a meeting, and when one member causes unrest due to inappropriate or intimidating behaviour, the entire group could be affected. Groups are within their autonomy to establish group behavioural guidelines in a manner that reflects their group conscience and abides by the Traditions. “ “Taking a group inventory (Group Inventory Guidelines G8a & G8b), a rededication of the group to its primary purpose, a study of the Traditions and Concepts of Service as they apply to the problem at hand, and seeking the experience, strength, and hope of other local groups, perhaps at District meetings, are all good methods of overcoming group difficulties.”

Q: If someone in Al-Anon attends open A.A. meetings frequently but is not an A.A. member, is he/she still eligible to be a group rep or alternate group rep?

A: Al-Anon members do not determine membership of others in Al-Anon or other twelve step programs. As stated in Tradition Three, “The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend.” And on pg 146 of the Service Manual, “An Al-Anon/Alateen member who is also a member of A.A. is not eligible” so if this individual is not a member of A.A. , then the individual is eligible to serve as a group representative.

Q: Does Service equal Recovery? My understanding is recovery through the 12 Steps and Service is through the 12 Concepts. Can someone please explain as I am confused?

A: Service does not equal recovery but many Al-Anon members have felt that doing service work has aided in their recovery. As described on page 179 of the Service Manual,” One theme welds the Three Legacies together-Pass Along Understanding:

1.Recovery- The Twelve Steps urge the individual to carry the message to others.

2.Unity- The Traditions protect the groups from distracting or disrupting influences, so they can be free to pass along the Al-Anon word.

3.Service- The Concepts show how Twelfth Step work can be done on a broad scale; how members of a World Service Office can relate to each other and to the groups to spread Al-Anon’s message across the world; and how a Conference of Delegates from all parts of the United States and Canada can supervise such a World Service, so it will always conform to the Traditions. The 1984 Conference voted that the Twelve Concepts are to be accorded the same stature as the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.”

Also recommendation to read Paths to Recovery-Al-Anon’s Steps, Traditions and Concepts (B-24) may aid one’s understanding .

Q: If someone who is heavily involved in service tends to be controlling a group for the sake of keeping the group healthy, is this right or wrong?

A: Pg 24 of the Service Manual. Three Obstacles to Success in Al-Anon. #3 Dominance. "Our leaders are trusted servants; they do not govern. No member of Al-Anon should direct, assume authority, or give advice. Our program is based on suggestion, interchange of experience, and rotation of leadership. We progress in our own way and pace. Any attempt to manage or direct is likely to have disastrous consequences for group harmony."