

Ask-It-Basket Questions from Spring 2024 Assembly

- 1. If a group rep or other trusted servant continues their position over the time of service and will not step down, (and a group conscience has failed to solve this issue) what can be done? Example?**

P. 21, regarding dominance, our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern. Any attempt to manage is likely to have disastrous consequences for group harmony. On page 59 under Group Representative description, the term is clearly stated as a three-year term. They are also encouraged to elect an alternate Group Rep. So going back to the Dominance section (P. 21), it further states that "Our program is based on suggestion, interchange of experience, and rotation of leadership." While group autonomy and conscience exist, you may call for an election. Guidance from the lines of service, like bringing the issue to the district rep. for guidance or using the "Al-Anon Principles To Resolve Conflicts Kit (K-70) are examples of options for resolution.

- 2. Can group members set up a group chat to communicate with each other? Only those wishing to participate would join. No reference would be made to the Group's name or Al-Anon in chat group's name.**

The following is the emailed response from WSO: "While there is no specific guidance about creating a WhatsApp group chat, our experience would suggest that it is no different than creating a group email address. The purpose would be announcements, requests for members to sign up to chair a meeting or other service within the group."

While discussing it at Ask-It-Basket, we felt we wanted to remind the group to take unity into consideration and the possibility of this separate communication tool creating cliques.

- 3. With all the online options for recovery support, how do we know if material is Al-Anon approved if members bring those thoughts into in-person meetings? Do we stress only physical material approved by WSO? How can I help group understanding with regard to this topic?**

Pg. 114 – While individuals may use whatever they find helpful as part of their personal recovery outside of the meetings, Al-Anon does not evaluate or recommend anything other than Al-Anon materials. When sharing at meetings, members limit any mention of outside material to a brief reference.

Outside literature may or may not convey the Al-Anon message. Using outside materials in our meetings can lead to dissension and affect our group unity; it can be particularly confusing to a newcomer. Members are always free to read and study whatever they wish outside meetings. Al-Anon takes no stand of approval or disapproval of any outside material. See Literature pamphlet, "Why CAL (Conference Approved Literature)" P-35

- 4. At one time the World Service Office wanted the same members to complete the survey. Is this a different survey? Is WSO still wanting the same members to complete a different survey?**

For the purpose of this survey that begins on June 20, 2024; it is open to all Al-Anon/Alateen members. Regarding the question of WSO wanting “same” members to answer survey, that may be a different survey, but this will be a question to be addressed by WSO.

- 5. Why are the Steps and Traditions read at each meeting opening? As a newcomer, it seems somewhat cumbersome.**

Page 9 of the 2022-2025 Service Manual is the Suggested Meeting Outline. It states “This format is included for your convenience. While not every group chooses to plan its meeting in this way, many find a general outline helpful”. The suggested format includes Reading of Alanon’s Three Legacies which can be found on page 13 of the Service Manual: Recovery through the Steps, Unity Through the Traditions and Service Through the Concepts. Also “This is Al-Anon” pamphlet P-32 includes Suggested Welcome and Preamble – which includes the Steps, Traditions, Concepts, and Warranties.

Following Tradition 4, Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting another group or Al-Anon or AA as a whole. Each AFG has the autonomy to decide their meeting format.

- 6. I now have 4 volumes of the best of the forum and wonder if more will be printed. To clarify - will new Forum articles be combined into further volumes?**

There are currently no plans to make additional volumes of *Forum Favorites*. Based on a 1998 recommendation from the Literature Committees, the Board of Trustees discontinued all four volumes of *Forum Favorites*, as low sales indicated minimal interest from the fellowship. Sales were so low, in fact, that it took another 11 years for the remaining inventory (considered a one-year’s supply) to be depleted. - the answer from Carol C, Editor of *The Forum*.

- 7. Tradition 11 - Should electronic devices be included? Moving with the times. (iPhones, computers, electronics)**

It seems as if the questioner is asking whether electronic devices should be included in Tradition 11 where we are asked to “maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films and TV.” The simple answer is no, since iPhones, computers and other electronics are not media platforms, they are devices. It’s a little like saying we need to maintain personal anonymity at the level of cars when we’re actually concerned about billboards.

Instead, I think the question was intended to address whether Tradition 11 specifically mention the internet, which would include social media platforms, email and other electronic communications.

The answer is that the intent of Tradition 11 is that we maintain anonymity at the public level. The Service Manual points out on p.125 that, “This principle applies to all types of visual, audio, or print media, or in any way on the internet when Al-Anon/Alateen membership is revealed.”

The obvious follow-up question is whether the internet should be explicitly added to the list of

“press, radio, films and TV” in Tradition 11. The difficulty with this is that any change to the precise wording of any of the Traditions would require a vote by 3/4 of all registered Al-Anon groups, so it seems highly unlikely to ever happen.

- 8. I have noticed that financial budgets for revenues have been consistently higher than actuals. Is there a reason that the budget is not adjusted to reflect a more realistic amount?**

Area Treasurer - Thank you for that observation. For a couple of years, I’ve wondered why budgets weren’t more in line with previous years actual numbers. We don’t know the reason, but will have discussions to make upcoming budgets more realistic.

- 9. # - 1: Does “Group Conscience” override policy or procedures of the Al-Anon Steps [and] Traditions. i.e. using outside literature (non-Al-Anon related).**

The short answer is no. From page 114 of the service manual: “While individuals may use whatever they find helpful as part of their personal recovery outside of meetings, Al-Anon does not evaluate or recommend anything other than Al-Anon materials. When sharing at meetings, members limit any mention of outside material to a brief reference.”

The use of non-Al-Anon literature at a meeting may present a distorted view of Al-Anon to the newcomer or outsider, thus affecting other groups and Al-Anon as a whole. This would conflict with Tradition Four, Tradition One and Tradition Six. Groups are encouraged to always adhere to the Traditions because, as our preamble to the Traditions points out:

“The Traditions evolved from the experience of A.A. groups in trying to solve their problems of living and working together. Al-Anon adopted these group guidelines and over the years has found them sound and wise. Although they are only suggestions, Al-Anon’s unity and perhaps even its survival are dependent on adherence to these principles.”

#-2: How much group autonomy is healthy and when is it misused?

Tradition Four is quite clear that groups are entirely autonomous “except in matters affecting another group, or Al-Anon or AA as a whole.” My personal opinion is that group autonomy is something to be celebrated. I love the diversity of meeting formats and differences in group customs that I find when I visit other groups. This stops being healthy when it starts affecting Al-Anon as a whole by injecting ideas that distort Al-Anon’s message or practices that are not compatible with Al-Anon’s unity.

- 10. Can Interested District Members attend District Meetings as well as Group Reps?**

There is nothing in the Service Manual that restricts attendance at district meetings. This would be determined by district autonomy. They would also determine which attendees have vote> Remember: Participation is the key to harmony.