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Group Conflict Workshop: Debate or discuss?

Purpose/Goal:

The purpose of this workshop is to encourage discussion within the fellowship (which can be held at group meetings, service arm meetings, or special Al-Anon events or functions) on ways to avoid as well as resolve conflict within the Al-Anon group. The goal is to provide information in a humorous way through a skit, followed by group discussion, resulting in attendees leaving the workshop with new approaches to group problems that may arise.

Spiritual Principle—Tradition One's spiritual principle of our common goal helps group members focus on unity.

Resources:

- One experienced member to introduce and narrate skit and facilitate discussion
- Four additional members to perform skit and assist in discussion
- *Talk to Each Other—Resolving Conflicts within Al-Anon (S-73)* Booklet
- *Conflict Resolution Using Our Twelve Traditions (S-72)* Cards
- *Loving Interchange to Resolve Conflict (S-71)* Wallet Card

Spiritual Principle—Tradition Two's spiritual principle of mutual respect helps members reach an informed group conscience.

The Process:

Five members perform a brief skit exemplifying the difference between debate and discussion, followed by a discussion on how to apply the ideas in the skit to a more challenging topic than the one in the skit. Those presenting the workshop can choose this topic, or it can be left up to those attending. This workshop can be adapted to accommodate any given time frame or number of attendees.

Spiritual Principle—Tradition Nine's spiritual principle of working together helps attendees focus on adhering to structure with flexibility.

The Workshop:

Opening—Open with the Serenity Prayer followed by the Al-Anon Preamble.

Introduce the Topic—Read the second paragraph of the Group section (“Resolving conflict in the Group”) of the *Talk to Each Other—Resolving Conflicts within Al-Anon (S-73)* booklet:

“The health of our group is the responsibility of all its members, not any one person. As a group, we can take

some measures to assure that we remain harmonious. These include holding regular business meetings, electing and supporting a Group Representative to serve as a link in service to our worldwide fellowship, and routinely taking a group inventory. Frequent study of the Twelve Traditions and the "Three Obstacles to Success in Al-Anon" (discussion of religion, gossip, and dominance) helps us maintain healthy boundaries. Familiarity with the Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27) is beneficial."

Introduce the skit—The five members present the skit. The setting is a group business meeting.

Narrator: When a question comes up in our group, how do we approach it? Let's have a look...

Joan: It's been proposed that we serve some cookies with coffee at our meeting. What does everyone think of this idea?

Sue: I think we should serve oatmeal raisin cookies at our meeting break.

Dave: I hate raisins. We can't serve raisin cookies. Can't we get oatmeal cookies without raisins?

Randy: I'd like chocolate chip cookies....

Sue: Don't be silly everyone loves raisins. Raisins are the best.

Randy: (continues)...without raisins.

Sue: We always put raisins in our oatmeal cookies. We have to have raisins in our cookies!

Dave: No we don't!

Sue: Yes we do!

Dave: No we don't!

Sue: Yes we do!

Dave: Don't!

Sue: Do!

Randy: I want chocolate chip!

Joan: (panic struck) HELP!!!

Narrator: Is this a productive discussion? (wait for response)

Narrator: (continues) What if we put aside the debate, and try to apply some Al-Anon principles to the discussion?

Joan: It's been proposed that we serve some cookies with coffee at our meeting. What does everyone think of this idea?

Sue: I think we should serve oatmeal raisin cookies at our meeting break.

Dave: I hate raisins. We can't serve raisin cookies. Can't we get oatmeal cookies without raisins?

Randy: I'd like chocolate chip cookies.

Joan: Wait a moment, everyone! Before we decide what kind of cookies to serve, let's talk about WHY we serve refreshments. What do we want to accomplish for our group by serving them?

(Everyone thinks a moment)

Sue: Well, we want to encourage fellowship and fun by offering a treat with coffee.

Dave: We want our members and newcomers to feel warmth and welcome at our meeting—that's our primary purpose, right? Tradition Five?

Joan: So does any particular kind of cookie give more warmth and welcome, fellowship and fun than another?

Sue: Well, when you put it that way, I guess the actual cookies aren't the real issue, are they?

Dave: We probably won't find a cookie that everyone likes all the time.

Randy: What if we rotate as refreshment chair, and each chair can pick the cookies?

Dave: Or we could make sure we have two kinds, then it would be more likely that people would eat one or the other.

Joan: How about we make refreshment chair a one month commitment, and everyone who wants to pick the cookies can take a turn. And we'll ask that there be two choices for cookies each week. Does that work for everyone?

All: Works for me. Sounds good! I like it....

Sue: I've got a big plastic container I'll bring in, so we can keep them fresh between meetings.

Joan: Thanks everyone, I think we have a plan!

Narrator: See how that works, when we look for the principles involved? (If time permits, open the floor for reactions to the skit.)

Narrator/Facilitator: Now let's see if this group can apply these ideas to a more "meaty" discussion.

Possible topics: Closing prayer; Non-CAL reading the group has always used; ask for suggestions from the floor.

Evaluation:

Distribute an evaluation form that asks for feedback on the workshop, including questions such as, "What did you find helpful about the workshop?" and "What would you change?"

Allow five minutes to complete. Collect the forms before the Closing. After the workshop, use the feedback on the evaluations to compile helpful ideas for a future workshop.

Closing:

If time permits, ask attendees if they have any questions or reflections from the workshop.

Read the following, from the second page of the Introduction in the *Talk to Each Other—Resolving Conflicts within Al-Anon* (S-73) Booklet:

“By applying Al-Anon’s spiritual principles as we work through conflicts, we listen for a Higher Power’s guidance as filtered through the voice of the members. We do our best to share as equals, presume goodwill, and separate principles from personalities. Even though opinions may differ, we learn to acknowledge that everyone involved has Al-Anon’s best interests at heart. We give ourselves permission to change our minds and to be open to compromise. As we learn to trust in other members and our Higher Power, we begin to believe that whatever decision we make together, even if it is not our first choice for a solution, can work for the good of the fellowship as a whole.”

End with the Suggested Al-Anon/Alateen Closing.