

Guidelines

The Shared Experience of Al-Anon Members

Welcoming Newcomers

Welcoming newcomers is an important and sensitive aspect of the work of Al-Anon Family Groups. The welcome we give serves to introduce newcomers to Al-Anon's Programme of Recovery. It opens doors to hope and support. By encouraging newcomers to attend Al-Anon meetings on a regular basis, we make the tools of our Programme available through the sharing of our experience, strength and hope. In this, as in so much of Al-Anon's work, 'attraction rather than promotion', example rather than instruction, are our guiding principles.

***Welcoming newcomers and the ways in which we do it, both as individuals and as a Group, are important in 'carrying the message'.
They are a vital part of Step Twelve ... in action.***

Their first meeting

- Remember that newcomers to Al-Anon are often nervous. They may be lonely and are sometimes desperate. Let your own experience be your guide.
- Sometimes newcomers are reluctant to talk; sometimes they are just plain shy. A newcomer's inhibitions may be eased by offering individual attention and friendship. 
- Remember your own feelings of vulnerability when you first came and respect the newcomer's. Easy does it.
- As the opportunity arises, emphasise our message of hope.
- Take time to explain that whilst they are unlikely to understand everything at the first meeting, experience suggests that it is worth attending at least six meetings before deciding whether or not to continue in Al-Anon.
- Share appropriate examples of how the Programme helps you in coping with problems and of how helpful it can be to keep in touch by telephone between meetings.
- Tell newcomers about sponsorship, including the possibility of taking a temporary Sponsor until they are ready to choose a Sponsor for themselves. 
- Point out the benefits of reading Al-Anon literature and ensure you have appropriate CAL to give to them or to post to them if online.
- Tell them about our e-zine, *Al-Anon Today*, that is available to download from our website.
- After they have attended a few meetings, encourage newcomers to share and to take an active part in the Group. This can strengthen a sense of belonging. 
- Some Groups may wish to hold separate newcomers' or beginners' meetings. It is suggested that these be 'Sponsored' by at least two experienced members of the main Group. Other Groups may choose to set aside a period of time, a specific newcomers' slot, within the regular meeting. Both or either of these can be beneficial and lie within the Group's autonomy.

General suggestions for meeting at which newcomers are present.

- Open the meeting with the Suggested Welcome, the Preamble and read the Twelve Steps and Traditions.
- Explain who attends Al-Anon/Alateen meetings and what newcomers may expect at a meeting.
- For an in-person meeting, have Al-Anon table cards (Alateen, Anonymity, the Al-Anon Focus, Al-Anon Spoken Here, Tradition Seven and The Serenity Prayer) and the Slogans on display.
- Stress the importance of attending six meetings and give the reasons why.
- Encourage newcomers to attend other Al-Anon meetings and offer details of local Groups.
- Explain how Alateen is part of Al-Anon and that it offers help to 12 to 17 year olds who are affected by someone else's drinking.
- Briefly explain that Al-Anon is a spiritual programme; we do not discuss specific religions.
- Point out the importance of anonymity and confidentiality, emphasising that gossip is detrimental to ourselves, to others and to Al-Anon as a whole.
- Encourage newcomers to express their feelings so that they will be able to concentrate on their own recovery. This may be an ideal time to emphasise the benefits of individual sponsorship.
- Explain Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature (CAL) and the benefit of reading it. Inform them about what is available and mention our quarterly e-zine *Al-Anon Today*.
- Suggest an occasional visit to an open AA meeting when they feel ready.
- Stress the benefit of talking to other members, offer your telephone number if you feel comfortable doing so.
- End the meeting with the Suggested Closing and the Serenity Prayer card.

