

SAFETY AND AA WORKSHOP

April 22, 2017

WORKSHOP SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS

WORKSHOP SUMMARY/FEEDBACK

There were 30 people in attendance. Three members left feedback on how they found the workshop helpful. They all would like to see another workshop in our area. Here are their requests for future workshop subjects.

1. Safety and AA
2. The Twelve Concepts
3. Literature review of certain pamphlets and books
4. Anonymity: online, personal, group level
3. Health

One attendee requested more workshops in the Newport/Costa Mesa/Huntington Beach area.

Requested in a conclusion of one of the round table discussions:

1. A "Sponsorship Workshop", addressing the aims and purposes of sponsorship/encouraging sponsors to address safety in AA with their sponsees.

Here are comments received:

"Great workshop!"

"Great food! Liked Round Table options. Diverse groups helpful. Loved the Round Table conclusions."

"Thank you! I appreciate all the work you put into the workshop."

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

We held round tables on seven different sub-topics, all related to the main topic of "Safety and AA". Participants were able to choose two sub-topics they wanted to discuss and therefore which tables they joined.

We held two sessions with participants rotating from their first choice of topic to their second choice of topic at the break between the two sessions.

There was a moderator and a scribe at each round table. The moderator led the discussion and the scribe took notes about what was discussed. After the sessions the moderator and/or scribe for each table turned in a summary of the discussions at their table.

These summaries are reported on the following pages.

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Round Table Discussion Conclusions

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION CONCLUSIONS

AA MEMBERSHIP

Love and tolerance for all who enter

Group problems with, and solutions for, making sure all feel welcomed.

1. Religious Talks vs. AA Talks:

- a. Talk with the secretary about problem so he/she can bring it up at the next meeting.
- b. Having an informed group conscience on what our AA purpose is.
- c. Having/taking a group inventory.
- d. Having a group "statement" in the format for the beginning of the meeting, and have it read by the leader.
- e. Read AA literature-there is one literature about the AA group. Get to know the literature.

2. Confusing Rehab Facility Talk vs. AA's Purpose:

- a. Set Boundaries – this may be more effective when done with encouraging wording in the meeting opening or secretaries report.
- b. Approach and reach out - use the hand of AA to welcome newcomers and model AA proper behavior as an example to newcomers on how to share using AA talk vs. treatment talk.
- c. Educate the Treatment Facility on what AA is.

3. Homophobic talks:

- a. Have a group conscience on special circumstances. For example, a man needing a meeting goes into a women's meeting-pre-plan what that meeting would do in that situation.
- b. Talking with a person about his/her derogatory remarks or attitudes of gay and lesbian and other members to educate them.
- c. Read literature about gays/lesbian, etc. issues.

4. Sexual Harassment:

- a. Rather than talking with the perpetrator, ask someone else to talk to that perpetrator to educate on proper behavior-must be the same sex of the perpetrator.
- b. Knowing you're not above the law, if things elevate to dangerous levels don't be afraid to contact your local authorities.

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ANONYMITY

Focus on creating safety through anonymity.

1. Phone lists:
 - a. Larger groups may want to split men and women into different lists.
 - b. Put a reminder on the list that it may be seen by non-members.
 - c. Last names are not necessary unless member wants others to be able to visit them if they are in the hospital or institution. We need not be anonymous amongst ourselves.
2. How to handle stalkers:
 - a. First talk to the predator to try and resolve the issue. It may become necessary to involve authorities.
3. Shy members:
 - a. Recognize that some members may not want others to know they attend meetings.
4. New members:
 - a. Stress to the newcomer that anonymity is important. The best way to educate people on our value of anonymity is through one on one communication.
 - b. The meeting may be the only place the newcomer feels safe.
5. Outside of the rooms:
 - a. In public situations members should be aware and “others centered”.
 - b. Members may want to educate their family members on the value of anonymity when in public.
6. Publicity:
 - a. Respect anonymity by not posting AA related photos and/or posts in social media groups. Recognize that not all members may be comfortable with this.
7. On sharing:
 - a. Members might share differently in mixed meetings than they do in stag meetings.
 - b. When sharing with others, always speak with love and tolerance.
 - c. Remember that gossiping about another member’s share breaks anonymity.
8. Group conscience:
 - a. Decide who will handle anonymity breaches at meetings.

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Round Table Discussion Conclusions

GROUP SAFETY AND UNITY

Creating a group conscience about safety.

1. Decisions should be made ahead of time regarding the following.
 - a. Creating safety through anonymity.
 - b. Making sure the traditions are kept.
 - c. Formulating a plan on what to do if someone is unruly during a meeting.
 - d. Developing an understanding that sexual harassment is not tolerated, don't come here looking for "him" or "her". Develop a plan for handling violations of this in the meetings.
 - e. Creating an environment of love and tolerance for all, not just those whom we want.
 - f. Maintaining our primary purpose as most important.
2. The group may want to develop plans and procedures to keep everyone safe.
3. Discuss individual and group action if needed.
4. We have a primary purpose to get sober and stay that way, not deal with other issues, but if it comes up, there should be a plan in place to do whatever is necessary.

KEEPING THE FOCUS ON PRIMARY PURPOSE

Incorporating the Twelve Traditions and our Primary Purpose

1. Our primary purpose is to keep sober and help others achieve sobriety.
2. We are all spiritual entities.
3. We are to carry the AA message to other members.
4. The group may want to keep a 12 Traditions checklist.
 - a. This could provide a solution that he did not otherwise hear to a member.
5. How to keep a newcomer away from meetings. (What not to do.)
 - a. ignore them
 - b. rush up upon them and force yourself on them
 - c. make light of their problems
 - d. "This meeting isn't any good."
 - e. Insist on talking to them when they don't feel like talking

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Round Table Discussion Conclusions

EMERGENCIES

Develop plans and procedures to keep group safe.

There are a variety of emergency situations, which includes alcohol overdose and violence. The group may want to develop plans by group conscience on certain issues.

1. Members can get involved on a personal level.
 - a. Going to local trainings such as the local fire department C.E.R.T. (Community Emergency Response Team) program.
 - b. Obtaining agency listings ie. police, fire, ambulance.
 - c. Downloading an app called "Profiles of Hope", which gives local psychological services, to his/her phone.
2. Groups may want to keep emergency contact information in the secretary's notebook.
3. Groups may want to have a plan in place which details when group members should call police, DCFS, shelters, and/or the suicide hotline.
6. The group may want to determine if anyone in the group has professional experience with handling the situation should a lone shooter enter the meeting room. Educate those without training to run, and if he/she can't run then to protect him/herself by putting any object between him/herself and the shooter.
7. In case of fire or other emergencies, members should know the closest exits and how to keep order. Lives are saved. The group may want to take measures to educate members on how to use fire extinguishers and where they are located.
8. The group may want to determine if anyone in the group has been CPR certified through the Red Cross or other agency, as only those with current certifications can legally perform CPR.

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Round Table Discussion Conclusions

DISRUPTIVE MEMBERS AT AA MEETINGS

Handling disruptive behavior

1. We will experience disruptive members at meetings. Groups should practice Robert's Rule of Order to facilitate orderly meetings.
2. The old timers and the group's secretary are the group's strength in handling these disruptions. Old timers can teach others what they have learned from their experiences.
3. Types of disruptions that may be expected:
 - a. Cell phone use, alerts and texting
 - b. Improper use of taking photos and/or recordings
 - c. Physical altercations in meetings
 - d. Threatening and crazy shares
 - e. Mental issues outbursts
 - f. Meetings being hijacked by "meeting killers"
 - g. Personal discussions held during meeting time, these should be taken outside
4. Situations for special consideration:
 - a. Someone who is intoxicated in the room is being disruptive. More than one person should talk to the intoxicated person and ask them to calm down. If the problem persists, someone should ask the intoxicated person to step outside, and have a conversation with them about not being disruptive. If the intoxicated continues to be disruptive, they may be asked to leave. The police may need to be called.
 - b. Members on medication being disruptive
 - i. Deal with each issue on individual level
 - ii. Ask the member to leave if they become disruptive
 - c. Sexual harassment
 - i. Deal with each issue on individual level
 - ii. A woman should ask for a safe man to escort her if she feels threatened by another man.
 - iii. Point newcomers to approach representatives of same gender
 - iv. Exclude members from group if they are dangerous
5. Disruption in general service meetings should be handled similarly to disruptions in group meetings.

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WHAT CAN GROUPS AND MEMBERS DO?

Discuss individual and group action

1. Create a group atmosphere of acceptable behavior by group conscience.
 - a. Avoid problems in advance by trying to keep contentious situations (e.g. seat saving) to a minimum.
 - b. Encourage members to “Stay in your own hula hoop”.
 - c. Understand the fact that gossiping about members of A.A. can lead to situations that can be a risk to members' safety.
 - d. Reminding members that A.A. is not a dating service.
 - e. Avoid addressing “hot button” issues (eg race, politics, sexuality, etc) during sharing, conversing at meetings.

2. Communicate safety recommendations in the opening readings:
 - a. Reading of the “Safety in AA” pamphlet.
 - b. Address the need to be careful when asking for rides home, etc.
 - c. Address at meetings the fact that mental illness is often an issue with people who are recovering from drug addiction and alcoholism.

3. Be supportive of the creation of an official pamphlet on “Safety and AA”.