

## District 12 Report for AWSC – July 29, 2023

District 12 has had a very active several months working on tackling a number of important initiatives.

One major initiative that began with a Thought Force followed by a Task Force was “Dealing with Disruptive Behavior in Meetings”

As a result we produced a Packet of Information and Resource for Groups to consider should they find themselves dealing with Disruptive Behaviors of Members. A complete Packet is being delivered to each Group to be kept as a reference and guide.

The packet includes:

- District 12 Response to Disruptive Behavior
- Letter template for Disruptive Behavior
- The Following CAL Literature:
- Knowledge Based Decision Overview – From Spring Assembly - 2018
  - Taking a Group Inventory – G08a
  - Taking a Group Inventory – G08b
  - Safety in Al-Anon Meetings

## DISTRICT 12 RESPONSE TO DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR IN GROUPS

STATUS	ACTIONS
<p><b>LEVEL RED:</b> Member is chronically breaking traditions. Group members have stopped attending meeting because of member's disruptive behaviors. Group Liaison has contacted District Representative that the group has a Level Red situation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>^ Group Representative or District Representative delivers letter (see template in Group Health Packet) advising member to stop attending weekly meeting for one year and include specific reason(s) why this action was taken.</li> <li>^ The group cannot file an injunction, but may call 911 if safety is an issue.</li> <li>^ Options if member refuses to comply with the group's decision:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Allow member to attend, but ask member to "listen and learn" and not to speak.</li> <li>* Immediately hold a group conscience to choose what is best for the group.</li> <li>* Lock the door if member shows up.</li> <li>* Decide in advance if member shows up to immediately end that meeting and to meet the following week as scheduled.</li> <li>* Conduct zoom meetings temporarily.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>LEVEL ORANGE:</b> Individual continues to break group guidelines after being requested by group to stop.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>^ Meeting Leader gently corrects the individual's behavior during the meeting directly.</li> <li>^ Conduct a group conscience (Guidelines can be found under the Groups Tab in Service Manual).</li> <li>^ Notify and keep updated Group Liaison that your group has a potential disruptive member.</li> </ul>
<p><b>LEVEL YELLOW:</b> An individual occasionally breaks group guidelines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>^ Two or more members meet with individual to share their strength, hope, and experience concerning the individual's disruptive behavior.</li> <li>^ Encourage member to speak to their sponsor about group guidelines.</li> <li>^ Allow member time to grow in the program and re-evaluate after three weeks.</li> </ul>
<p><b>LEVEL GREEN:</b> Members follow group guidelines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>^ Group conducts regular group inventories using publications G-8a and G-8b. (Included in Group Health Packet)</li> <li>^ Group includes in their opening what is and is not allowed in their meeting.</li> <li>^ Group has ongoing business meetings to review any issues related to the common welfare of the members.</li> </ul>

### Additional Resources:

- \* P-53 Al-Anon Spoken Here
- \* Disruptive Member Letter Template
- \* G-8a and G-8b Publications
- \* Using Al-Anon Principles to Resolve Conflict K-70 packet
- \* Knowledge Based Decision Overview -located at al-anon12.org
- \* Let's Talk about Safety Publication

## Template For Disruptive Behavior

Date:

To: \_\_\_\_\_

Regarding: Disruptive behavior in Alanon Family Group meetings( be specific regarding the behavior)

Dear Member( insert the members name)

It has come to the attention of our group that inappropriate and disruptive behavior and comments continued to be made during group meetings. These behaviors have been addressed to you personally, and the disruptive behavior continues. These behaviors include: ( list the behaviors) which are not in line with our Alanon principles, guidelines and traditions. Furthermore, due to the continued disruptions that do not follow our guidelines, other members have been damaged, and left our group. We as a group have followed our guidelines, traditions and concepts to correct this situation, unfortunately we have been forced to take the next steps. We have contacted the Group liaison in our District 12 as well as our District representative, and made them aware of the situation. We, (name your group) have decided with a group conscience that you will no longer be permitted to attend our meeting for one year. Any member who has felt personally threatened or harassed will be encourage to file legal action against you. Any attempt to attend this group meeting will be considered a direct threat and further action will be taken.

Sincerely,

GR name

Group Name

# Al-Anon guidelines

The Shared Experience of Al-Anon and Alateen Members.

## Taking a Group Inventory

G-8a

*Taking a periodic group inventory helps to keep your group healthy and invigorated. Members can use the inventory to discuss what actions have been beneficial to group and personal growth, and what actions need to be updated, discontinued, or improved. Discussions during or following an inventory can include ideas for new service opportunities, ideas for reaching out to potential members, and resolutions for major or minor concerns before the group's unity is disrupted. "The harmony and success of each group depends on shared responsibility, a warm spirit of fellowship, and individual self-improvement."(Al-Anon and Alateen Groups at Work [P24], Introduction)*

Please see G-8b for "Methods and Reflections" pages.

### My view of our Al-Anon or Alateen group

- Does the group abide by the Traditions in all of its affairs?
- Do we criticize others in the group or gossip about them?
- Are group business meetings held at regular intervals?
- Are group business meetings conducted in a manner that members feel safe to share opinions?
- Are members pressured by dominant members to accept their ideas?
- Does our group have a process for the minority voice to be heard even after we've made a decision?
- Do members purposely reveal their length of time in Al-Anon or Alateen to gain credibility during group discussions?
- Are we forming cliques or being indifferent to other members of the group?
- Is the group process adequate for informing members about local, Area, and worldwide Al-Anon/Alateen events and concerns?
- Does our group undertake service projects on its own or in conjunction with the district, Al-Anon Information Service, or Area?
- Is our group active and supportive at the district and Area levels? Do we send representatives and financial contributions to the district, the Al-Anon Information Service (AIS), and Area as well as to the World Service Office (WSO)?
- Are there ways in which the group is not fully self-supporting?
- How does the group show its support for Alateen? Is Alateen literature available?
- Are several eligible Al-Anon members certified to be of service to Alateen if a local group needs help?
- Do we have a literature display of Conference Approved Literature (CAL)? Do we regularly reorder CAL? Do we have a group lending library?
- Does our group process for selecting a Chairperson/Leader for the weekly meetings encourage members to volunteer to serve? Are the Chairpersons/Leaders prepared?
- Do all members have an opportunity to participate in service to the group?
- Is there rotation of leadership in the group?
- Does the group have a process for handling problems? If so, are members aware of the process?

### My view of our Al-Anon or Alateen weekly meetings

- Is the meeting location convenient, safe, and welcoming?
- Do members arrive early to welcome newcomers and visiting members?
- Is Al-Anon's principle of anonymity explained when newcomers or visitors are present? Do we emphasize the importance of not repeating who we see and what we hear at the meeting?
- Does the meeting follow the "Suggested Meeting Format Outline" in *Al-Anon and Alateen Groups at Work* (P-24)?
- Is there a Chairperson scheduled for each week?
- Are our meetings fresh, interesting, and helpful?
- Do we encourage everyone to participate in the discussions by sharing and listening?
- Do we refrain from giving advice?
- Are our meeting topics Al-Anon related?
- Do we make good use of our Conference Approved Literature (CAL) and *The Forum* for themes and topics for meetings?
- Do we stick to the subject of the meeting or wander off on tangents?
- Are we easily diverted from the topic in order to focus on a member's problem?
- Do we avoid discussions of the alcoholic and his/her shortcomings?

- Is the group's copy of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* available for members to use?
- Does the meeting format allow time for reports from group officers?
- Do we make an effort to give a warm welcome to newcomers?
- Do we welcome everyone to our meeting regardless of age, gender, appearance, etc.?
- Are teenagers welcomed at our meeting?
- Are newcomers encouraged to share? Do we read the "Three Obstacles to Success in Al-Anon" and explain what is appropriate to share in a meeting?
- Are newcomers given at least one member's telephone number, a schedule of meetings, and some Al-Anon/Alateen literature?
- Do we let newcomers know what sponsorship is and how to obtain a Sponsor?

### Additional for Alateens

- Do we take responsibility for the meeting or do we leave everything to the Alateen Group Sponsors?
  - Do we show respect for others at the facility where our meeting is held?
  - Is the group an attraction to Al-Anon members and others to bring their children to Alateen?
  - Do we remember that the Alateen Group Sponsors are volunteers who are being of service to the group?
  - Do we ask Al-Anon groups to support our group by providing certified Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service when our Alateen Group Sponsors are not able to serve?
  - Do we hold an annual open meeting and notify local Al-Anon groups?
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### Additional for Alateen Group Sponsors

- Do we arrive at the meeting before the Alateens and leave after they do?
  - Do we encourage the Alateens to take responsibility for their meeting?
  - Do we keep everything that is said at the meeting confidential, even when parents ask questions?
  - Do we encourage the group to use Alateen literature including *Alateen Talk* and *The Forum*?
  - Do we suggest an occasional writing meeting so the group members can submit sharings to *Alateen Talk* and *The Forum*?
  - Are we familiar with the *Alateen Safety Guidelines* (G-34) and our Area's Alateen Requirements?
  - Do we have an emergency plan if something unexpected happens at the meeting or an Alateen Group Sponsor is delayed?
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## Do I keep the focus on Al-Anon and my own recovery when I share?

### My part as a member of the Al-Anon or Alateen group

- Do I attend the meetings regularly?
- Do I usually arrive a few minutes early and/or stay a few minutes after the meeting to help setup or put away tables, chairs, literature, or refreshments, and to welcome newcomers?
- Do I periodically volunteer to chair/lead a meeting?
- Do I attend steering or business meetings and offer ideas for improvement?
- Can I accept disagreement and differing points of view good-naturedly?
- Do I keep the focus on Al-Anon by maintaining my anonymity if I am also a member of another recovery program?
- Do I volunteer for, or willingly accept, a group office for which I am eligible, such as: Secretary, Chairperson, Program Chairperson, Treasurer, or Group Representative?
- Do I understand that private, personal circumstances compel some members to limit their service to the group?
- Do I criticize others in the group or gossip about them?
- Do I criticize or gossip about other groups?
- Do I ever repeat anything personal I have heard at meetings or from another member outside of the meeting?
- Do I communicate with other members for my personal recovery and to help others, rather than to complain and gossip?
- Do I welcome new members, talk with them, suggest pieces of Al-Anon/Alateen literature, and offer my phone number or the group's telephone list and local meeting schedule?
- Do I volunteer to sponsor newcomers? Am I presently sponsoring another member?
- Do I read Al-Anon/Alateen literature every day, and apply the principles to my daily life? Do I let the group know which pieces of Conference Approved Literature (CAL) are particularly helpful as part of my sharing at meetings?
- Do I keep the focus on Al-Anon and my own recovery when I share?
- Do I interrupt or carry on a conversation while another member is speaking?
- Do I listen carefully to the speakers, the Chairperson, and other group members?
- Do I avoid giving advice to members?
- Do I try to make the fellowship known to others who need help? Do I participate in group service projects?
- When group problems arise, do I focus on the problem or the solution?
- Am I willing to support the group conscience even when I disagree with the outcome?
- Do I show interest in the group officers' reports?

Revised 2013 G-8a

# Al-Anon guidelines

The Shared Experience of Al-Anon and Alateen Members.

## Taking a Group Inventory

G-8b

### Methods and Reflections

#### Methods for taking an inventory

*Each group is encouraged to develop its own procedure for taking an inventory. It can be done at one time or over a period of time. Some groups decide to hold a special meeting before or after the regular meeting, other groups use the inventory as a meeting topic once a year. Groups can ask the District Representative or an Area officer to facilitate the inventory meeting. Regardless of the method, experience shows that the group benefits most by allowing time to openly discuss the responses, comments, and suggestions. Most members find that the answers to any questions that arise can be solved by application of the Twelve Traditions as well as by using the Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27).*

#### Here are some suggested methods for using the guideline:

1. Use the inventory questions for group discussion. In some groups the Chairperson or another trusted servant asks one question per meeting as part of the group format.
2. Distribute the forms to members at the beginning of the meeting. The Chairperson or Secretary collects the completed forms and uses the answers for a group discussion.
3. The Chairperson provides a note pad to each member. The Chairperson reads a question and encourages members to share more than just "yes" or "no" and to write down their comments.  
Pass a basket to collect the pages. Pass the basket again having each individual take out a page randomly and read the answer. (This method usually generates more honesty because of the anonymity.)
4. Give a copy of the inventory to each member and ask that they fill it out and bring it back the following week. At the next meeting have the Chairperson read a question and have others read their responses.



**Additional thoughts on my view of our Al-Anon or Alateen group:**

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**Additional thoughts on my view of our weekly Al-Anon or Alateen meeting:**

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**Additional thoughts on my part as a member of the group:**

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**Now that I have participated in taking a group inventory, I plan to take the following action(s):**

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**Additional resources for groups:**

- Groups at Work* booklet (P-24)
- Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27)
- Al-Anon Spoken Here* (P-53)
- Information for the Newcomer* (S-4)
- Anonymity* (P-65)
- Alateen Talk*
- The Forum* magazine

# Let's Talk about Safety in Al-Anon Meetings!

**Safety is an important issue within Al-Anon—one that all can address. Open discussion on the topic can aid groups in developing workable solutions to safety issues—solutions that are based on the fundamental principles of our fellowship and that will help keep our meetings safe. [This document applies only to Al-Anon meetings, groups and members: For Alateen safety, please refer to your Area Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements.]**

When members feel safe and are safe at meetings, the unity of our groups (Tradition One) is maintained.

Al-Anon groups are spiritual entities; they are made up of families and friends of alcoholics who gather and share their experience, strength and hope to solve their common problems. Yet, we are not immune to the difficulties that affect the rest of humanity.

Al-Anon is a microcosm of the larger society within which we exist. Problems found in the outside world can also make their way into the rooms of Al-Anon. As we strive to share in a spirit of trust, both at meetings and individually with our Personal and Service Sponsors and other Al-Anon members, it is reasonable for each member to expect a meaningful level of safety. Those attending Al-Anon meetings benefit other members and themselves when they provide a safe environment in which families and friends of alcoholics can focus on gaining and maintaining serenity. The group can then fulfill its primary purpose—to help families and friends of alcoholics. For this reason, groups and members discuss the topic of safety.

## Autonomy and Group Action

There is no government within Al-Anon and no central authority, legal or otherwise, to control or direct the behavior of Al-Anon members. In accordance with the Fourth Tradition, the formation and operation of an Al-Anon group is guided by the group conscience of its members. Al-Anon groups and service entities such as Areas, Districts, Al-Anon Information Service Offices and Literature Distribution Centers are autonomous, except in matters affecting another group or Al-Anon as a whole.

Recognizing that safety is an important issue to their members, many groups have taken action to keep distractions and disruptions to a minimum within the context of the group.

## Al-Anon Membership

Al-Anon membership has never been contingent on any set of behavioral or moral standards beyond those founded on common sense, courtesy and the timeless values of kindness, tolerance and love.

Al-Anon's Third Tradition states in part, "The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend." This brings an openness that helps define our character as a diverse fellowship; however, some people come into Al-Anon without an understanding of the type of behavior that is appropriate in meetings or in the company of other members. A person can find serenity in Al-Anon and yet still not understand what is acceptable behavior.



## Dealing with Disruptions

While most groups operate with a healthy balance of spontaneity and structure, there are a number of situations that can threaten group unity and challenge the safety of the group and its members. Often these can center on disruptive individuals—those who are confrontational and aggressive or those who are simply unwilling to put the needs of the group first. Such behavior can hijack the focus of a meeting and frighten members, new and old.

Some groups have developed plans for addressing disruptive behavior and have established procedures through their group consciences to ensure that the group's welfare is protected. In many cases, disruptive behavior is preempted by having the Chairperson state the expectations for behavior in the meeting.

Some groups mention in their opening announcements that illegal and disruptive behavior are not tolerated. Still other groups have asked disruptive members to leave the meeting. Additionally, groups and members always have the option to call the appropriate authorities if disruptive behavior continues or anyone's safety is at risk.

## Group Safety and Unity

Situations that groups have addressed through their group consciences include: sexual harassment or stalking; threats of violence; bullying; high-pressure controlling behavior; financial coercion; racial intolerance; sexual orientation or gender identification intolerance; and dominance that pressures Al-Anon members to accept a particular point of view or belief regarding medical treatments and/or medications, politics, religion, or other outside issues. In addition, there may be other behaviors that go on outside of typical meeting times that affect whether someone feels safe enough to return to the group.

Some groups develop their own guidelines or procedures to help keep the meeting safe. Al-Anon members can speak to those who are acting inappropriately, being careful to consider everyone's personal safety when doing so. Situations can be discussed at business meetings, where members can come to a group conscience about how to handle concerns: a meeting on the Traditions may be all that is necessary to make the member aware of behavior that is unacceptable to the group as a whole and help the member become willing to change. As a last resort, the disruptive member may be asked to stop attending the meeting for a specific period of time. Groups that take this drastic action do so to preserve the common welfare and to maintain the unity of the Al-Anon group.

In any situation, if a person's safety is in jeopardy, or the situation breaches the law, the members involved can take appropriate action to ensure their safety. Calling the proper authorities does not go against any Al-Anon Traditions. *Anonymity is not a cloak protecting criminal or inappropriate behavior.*

Inappropriate or predatory behavior, such as unwanted sexual attention or targeting vulnerable members, can be especially troublesome. These behaviors may go on outside of the meeting room. While Al-Anon members can be caring and supportive to those affected, we are not professionals trained to handle such situations. Law enforcement or other professional help may be necessary.

Victims of inappropriate behavior, harassment or predators can let the group know about such situations, often through a Sponsor or trusted friend. This way the group is informed, and members can help address the situation and curtail further problems. Group discussion should focus on how to create an environment where all family members and friends of alcoholics can find and maintain serenity.

## Al-Anon and the Law

Al-Anon membership does not grant anyone immunity under the law; being at an Al-Anon meeting does not put anyone beyond the jurisdiction of law enforcement officers. As individuals, Al-Anon members are also "citizens of the world," and as citizens, we are not above the law.

Through the group conscience process, many groups have established guidelines identifying when it may be appropriate to call authorities and handle a given situation within the legal system. No Al-Anon group has to tolerate illegal behavior, and any activity within an Al-Anon meeting is subject to the same laws that apply outside the meeting. In the past, groups have had to confront illegal acts such as violence, embezzlement, theft of property and more.

## Emergencies

Injuries, accidents, fires, etc., sometimes do occur during meetings. To accommodate these situations, groups can also develop plans and procedures, often in consultation with their meeting location or local authorities. Addressing an emergency situation is more important than continuing the meeting, and members should not hesitate to call emergency personnel in critical situations.

## Keeping the Focus on Our Primary Purpose

Tradition Five states: "Each Al-Anon Family Group has but one purpose: to help families of alcoholics. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps of AA ourselves, by encouraging and understanding our alcoholic relatives, and by welcoming and giving comfort to families of alcoholics." It is hoped that our primary purpose will transcend most issues and curtail negative behaviors. However, sometimes issues of safety jeopardize group harmony.

Safety is important to the functioning of the group. When members maintain order and safety in meetings, the group as a whole benefits, and all those involved are able to focus on recovering from the family disease of alcoholism and learning how to live a serene life.

Ultimately, the experience of how these situations are handled can be as varied as our fellowship. Using good judgment and common sense, while adhering to the Twelve Traditions, seems to provide the best guide.

## What Can Groups and Members Do?

Groups and members can discuss the topic of safety to raise awareness in the fellowship and seek through sponsorship, workshops and meetings, to create as safe an environment as possible for the newcomer and other members or potential members. This can be the subject of sharing in groups, Districts and Areas.

Here are some helpful suggestions and reminders:

- It is always a good idea to talk about issues of safety before they arise.
- Each member attending an Al-Anon meeting is responsible for being mindful of safety.
- The Chairperson of each meeting can communicate clearly what Al-Anon is and what it is not.
- Sponsorship plays an important role, and Sponsors can be helpful in pointing out warning signs or unhealthy situations to Sponsees and newcomers.
- Al-Anon members who are concerned about the words or actions of a Sponsor or another member may find it helpful to speak to someone they trust, such as their Al-Anon group or a professional, as needed.
- It may be helpful to include "Safety in Al-Anon" as a topic in a group inventory.
- Groups may benefit from developing guidelines and procedures on safety.

In all discussions about safety, keep the focus on our primary purpose and our common welfare, and place principles above personalities.

## A Special Word to Anyone Confronted with Violence

Al-Anon's gentle process unfolds gradually, over time. But those of us facing violent, potentially life-threatening situations may have to make immediate choices to ensure the safety of ourselves and our children. This may mean arranging for a safe house with a neighbor or friend, calling for police protection, or leaving money and an extra set of car keys where they can be collected at any time in case of emergency.

*It is not necessary to decide how to resolve the situation once and for all—only how to get out of harm's way until this process of Awareness, Acceptance and Action can free us to make choices for ourselves that we can live with.*

Anyone who has been physically or sexually abused or threatened may be terrified of taking any action at all. It can require every ounce of courage and faith to act decisively. But no one has to accept violence. No matter what seems to trigger the attack, we all deserve to be safe.

## Helpful Resources for Al-Anon Members and Groups

- *The Dilemma of the Alcoholic Marriage\** (B-4)
- *...In All Our Affairs: Making Crises Work for You\** (B-15)
- *From Survival to Recovery: Growing Up in an Alcoholic Home\** (B-21)
- *Sponsorship, What It's All About\** (P-31)
- *Using Al-Anon Principles to Resolve Conflicts Kit\** (K-70)
- *Sponsorship—Working Together to Recover\** (M-78)
- *Al-Anon/Alateen Is & Is Not Bookmark\** (M-44)
- *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual\** (P-24/27)
- *Taking a Group Inventory* (G-8a)
- Contact your District Representative or Area Delegate for local shared experience.

*\*May be available at your group or local Literature Distribution Center;  
is available in the Al-Anon Store at [al-anon.org](http://al-anon.org)*

Feel free to photocopy this tool to share with your meetings.  
Service arms wishing to provide access to the document from  
a website are asked to hyperlink to [al-anon.org](http://al-anon.org) to ensure  
members are provided the most current document.

World Service Office  
1600 Corporate Landing Parkway, Virginia Beach, VA 23454  
Phone: 757-563-1600; Fax: 757-563-1656;  
Website: [al-anon.org](http://al-anon.org)