

Group Problems and Solutions

The “Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies” section of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27) is a compilation of the World Service Conference’s group conscience on how to resolve many group questions or problems.

Al-Anon and Alateen members expect a safe and pleasant environment when they attend a meeting, and when one member causes unrest due to inappropriate or intimidating behavior, the entire group could be affected. Groups are within their autonomy to establish group behavioral guidelines in a manner that reflects their group conscience and abides by the Traditions.

When the behavior of any member impacts the group, members apply the Traditions to the problem, and determine how best to approach the individual(s) involved, to ask the member to change the behavior in question. This can be an exercise in applying Al-Anon principles so that the message is not a personal attack, but rather a request based on what is best for the Al-Anon group. Service tools on conflict resolution are available. See the *Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature Catalog* (S-15) or *CAL Order Form* (S-16).

Members may discuss specific religious tenets, forgetting that membership is open to all. One or two members may dominate the group, ignoring the principles of rotation in leadership. Members may violate our principles of anonymity and confidentiality by talking about what they hear in meetings. Every Al-Anon/Alateen member should feel bound to keep in strict confidence any personal matter heard at a meeting or from an individual. Each member should be able to feel confident that nothing said in the meeting will be repeated, by a Sponsor or other members.*

The “Three Obstacles to Success in Al-Anon” are: discussion of religion, gossip, and dominance. Study of this passage from the pamphlet *Alcoholism, the Family Disease* (P-4) has helped many groups deal with these problems. (The passage is reprinted under “Optional Readings” in the “Suggested Meeting Format.”)

The books *Al-Anon’s Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions* (B-8), *How Al-Anon Works for Families & Friends of Alcoholics* (B-22), and *Paths to Recovery: Al-Anon’s Steps, Traditions and Concepts* (B-24), give detailed suggestions on the application of the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts of Service to solve group problems.

*It is important to remember that Al-Anon/Alateen meetings are not above the law. Members need to exercise care in sharing information that could require outside reporting to local, state, provincial, and national authorities.

Lack of money may handicap the group, or its excess cause disagreements. See the pamphlet *Seventh Tradition* (S-21) and the *Reserve Fund Guideline* (G-41) for suggestions about handling and dispersing group funds. Both are posted on the Al-Anon/Alateen Members' Web site.

Taking a group inventory, a rededication of the group to its primary purpose, a study of the Traditions and Concepts of Service as they apply to the problem at hand, and seeking the experience, strength, and hope of other local groups, perhaps at district meetings, are all good methods of overcoming group difficulties. (See the *Taking a Group Inventory* Guideline [G-8a & 8b] that is posted on the Al-Anon/Alateen Members' Web site.)

Participation of members in group activities is important. This creates real involvement with the group and solidifies the relationship of the individual member to the group. Since each group has only a limited number of officers, it is best to have a policy of rotation, rather than have one member hold office for long periods of time. Other assignments may involve public outreach, bringing the refreshments for a limited period, setting up, and cleaning up. Reimbursement for refreshments from group funds is made by the Treasurer at each meeting. The more jobs available, the more members will participate and feel themselves to be an integral and important part of the group. Concept Four reminds us that "Participation is the key to harmony."