



Guidelines for Healthy Meetings

Starting a new group is an exciting endeavor. The support of other Nar-Anon members sharing experience, strength and hope leads us on our path to recovery. Whether this is a brand new group or an established group, it is important to keep our meetings as healthy as possible so that we continue to grow and help new members.

Some guidelines for healthy groups include:

- Start and end the meetings on time
- Read the steps and traditions at each meeting
- Read only from conference approved literature (CAL)
- Hold step and tradition study meetings
- Hold regular business meetings
- Become familiar with the *Guide to Local Services*
- Encourage sponsorship
- Respect each member's viewpoint

Every group may be a little different from another. Groups can choose which pieces of CAL they read at their meetings. Groups decide how many meetings they will have each week or how long the meetings will be. Each group is autonomous but still has an obligation to work within the guidelines of Nar-Anon. Imagine that all the Nar-Anon groups make up one world-wide meeting. Every member should be able to attend any meeting in the world and feel welcome and safe, knowing that they have the support of the entire Nar-Anon fellowship.

To understand how to have a healthy group, we need to be aware of what leads to unhealthy meetings.

- **Crosstalk** – In Nar-Anon, crosstalk refers to a specific type of behavior that is strongly discouraged among members during a meeting. Crosstalk typically means questioning or interrupting the person who is currently sharing, giving direct advice to others who have already shared, speaking directly to another person rather than to the group, or telling another member how to think, act or feel. To learn more about this topic see pamphlet # P116, *Appropriate Sharing & Crosstalk*.
- **Advice** – Our program teaches us that we do not give advice. What works for one person may not work for another. Telling someone else what to do deprives them of the chance to find their own solution. Some people come straight out and ask for advice. We can suggest that listening at meetings, finding a sponsor and working the steps will help them find the answers they are seeking. We can only share our experience, strength and hope. Sometimes newcomers come to our meetings looking for suggestions of treatment centers for their loved ones. Since this does not relate to Nar-Anon nor does Nar-Anon have any opinion on outside issues, we suggest that they may stay after the meeting to discuss this.



TOGETHER WE CAN

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- Outside speakers – The purpose of Nar-Anon is personal growth through applying the Twelve Steps and sharing our experience, strength and hope. It is from Nar-Anon and Narateen members that we hear the ideas and experiences that put us on the road to recovery. Outside speakers at Nar-Anon and Narateen meetings may divert the focus from our recovery.
- Dominant personalities – When one person is allowed to dominate a meeting by doing all of the talking, it hinders other members from sharing their own experience, strength and hope. We find that it works best when the chair leads with a pre-planned topic and each member has the opportunity to share on the chosen topic. Meetings should be flexible enough that a member can share on something else if they feel the need.
- Focus on the addict – Our *Blue Booklet* states, under *Keeping our Meetings Healthy*, that “we are here to help ourselves and others by sharing our experience, strength and hope while keeping the focus on ourselves.” We come to Nar-Anon for our own recovery not to discuss the addict’s problems. Sharing our feelings and how we acted about a situation with the addict is different because we are speaking about ourselves. We can go into greater detail working with a sponsor or speaking with other members outside of the meeting.
- Outside literature – At Nar-Anon meetings and events, we use only the literature found on our order form to keep our program consistent throughout the world. Reading from outside literature can be confusing to the newcomer. The list of approved literature can be found on the Nar-Anon Family Groups World Service website: www.nar-anon.org. Nar-Anon members are free to use any literature they choose in their personal recovery outside of Nar-Anon meetings and events.

What can we do to change our unhealthy meetings? In a group business meeting, members can identify areas to work on using *Taking a Group Inventory*. All members should be able to express their concerns without fear of reprisal. Members have very different personalities and sometimes it can be difficult or uncomfortable to hold these discussions. It is of the utmost importance to treat each other with respect during this process. It takes courage for a lone member to stand up for something different from what the group normally does. This member should not be dismissed. Keeping an open mind is critical. We learn by listening to one another and by trying to understand each other’s viewpoint.

With every situation, there is a solution. Reaching out to other members of the fellowship for ideas to solve a problem may be helpful. We do not have to do this alone. Sometimes it may be necessary to ask a trusted servant for help. Trusted servants include the Group Service Representative (GSR), Area Service Representative (ASR), the Regional Service Committee, the Delegate and Alternate Delegate. It may be as simple as a reminder of the traditions. Reading the *Guide to Local Services* and our CAL may help solve the problem. Members can call for a group conscience guided by their Higher Power to remedy the problems they have identified. There may be more than one answer. When we set aside our self-will, we can discover the best solutions for the group.