

For the Newcomer

Welcome to Alcoholics Anonymous. Most of us had lots of questions when we first joined. We understand your fears and hope that this information will help answer some of your questions.

ATTENDING MEETINGS

Meetings are the backbone of AA. We attend meetings on a regular basis to connect with others who are like us and to learn about the program of recovery. Most of us go to several meetings per week, and many of us go every day. You are free to choose your own schedule, but it is recommended that we put at least as much effort into our recovery as we did our drinking, especially in the beginning.

If you're nervous about going to your first meeting, don't be. Newcomers are the lifeblood of AA, and the people you'll meet at meetings are all there to help you. Most importantly, they've all been where you are. Stay after the meeting and make some friends. Ask for telephone numbers at every meeting you attend.

Open AA Meetings are open to all. While primarily for the benefit of alcoholics, anyone interested in recovery is welcome, including family members, professionals, students and others.

Closed AA Meetings are limited to those having a desire to stop drinking ONLY.

MEETING TYPES:

Discussion Meeting

Discussion meetings are for general discussion of recovery-related topics. There is usually a Chairperson and a Leader. Generally, the Chairperson reads the preamble, followed by the Serenity Prayer, and will ask if anyone present is attending their very first AA meeting. You may raise your hand at that point and give your first name if you like. This is not mandatory. Another member may read

from the Big Book on “How It Works.” The Leader then picks a topic that relates to alcoholism and anyone who wishes may talk on that topic. Usually the person speaking is not interrupted. We each share our own experience on the topic and don’t address what someone else says. Many discussion meetings are “open,” and spouses or loved ones often attend as observers.

Speaker Meeting

At a speaker meeting, a speaker tells his or her story, usually for the entire meeting, following a format of:

- What life was like when they drank
- What happened to make them stop drinking
- What sobriety means to their life now.

Big Book Study

Big Book Study meetings are generally “closed” and are specifically designed to help improve our understanding of the book, “Alcoholics Anonymous.” Big Book studies are especially valuable for newcomers.

Step Study

Step Study meetings are focused on studying the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, the core of the program. Most are conducted using the book “Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions” (also referred to as “The Twelve and Twelve”), a companion to the Big Book.

PARTICIPATE!

Get a Sponsor. A sponsor will answer questions about Alcoholics Anonymous and will guide you through the Steps. Choose a sponsor who has taken the steps themselves and with whom you can communicate. As you grow in the program, you’ll find that you can’t keep what you don’t give away, and you’ll have an

opportunity to sponsor others yourself. It is in helping others that we help ourselves.

Members of AA participate in many activities, such as conventions, seminars, dances, beach parties, cook-outs, and just about any other kind of social function you can think of. These activities are usually posted on bulletin boards of clubs or at the Intergroup office.

Study the *Big Book* and the *Twelve and Twelve*. These contain exact instructions on how to take the steps and how to recover from alcoholism.

Are You Court-Ordered to Attend AA?

If so, you are welcome to attend basically any meeting. Alcoholics Anonymous has no affiliation with any courts and no obligation to support their requests, but we honor any person's desire to stop drinking, regardless of how they find their way to our doors. So most people who lead or chair meetings are happy to sign court papers and to help you get started in AA. If someone doesn't want to do that for you, simply ask someone else.

Visiting Students and Professionals

Students and counselors who are seeking information about the program are welcome to attend "open" meetings, but not "closed" meetings. If you are called upon to speak, it is usually best to pass, and to allow those who are there seeking recovery to speak. You are also requested to respect the anonymity of those you see at meetings and not use their names in anything you write. If you need additional information on the principle of anonymity, please ask someone or refer to our bookstore for literature on the subject.