

Al-Anon guidelines

The Shared Experience of Al-Anon and Alateen Members.

Members Interested in Speaking

G-1

When you are asked as a member of Al-Anon or Alateen to share your recovery story at a meeting, convention, or other event for the first time, you may experience a momentary sensation of panic. But after this perfectly normal reaction passes and you have heard yourself saying, "Yes," you will find that a wonderfully enlightening adventure is in store for you. With a little encouragement, everyone can tell their story. The only ingredients needed are the willingness to try and a reliance on a Higher Power. Sharing your story is an opportunity to discover a new side of yourself, one you may not have realized existed. Members report that speaking before a group adds another dimension of growth to their Al-Anon experience.

When Asked to Speak, Find Out:

- If you are expected to tell your personal recovery story or to discuss a particular topic of the Al-Anon program.
- If your audience is only Al-Anon members, or if it will include others who are not members of Al-Anon Family Groups (such as professionals or students). This will help you decide in advance how best to direct your talk.
- If there is a suggested time limit.
- If you will be expected to participate in a question and answer or open discussion session after your talk is concluded.
- If you are expected to explain some of Al-Anon/Alateen's history.

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Plan What to Say

- Bear in mind that the purpose of your talk is to carry the Al-Anon/Alateen message of recovery by sharing your experience, strength, and hope.
- Give a brief description of yourself before you came to Al-Anon/Alateen, concentrating on your behavior and not that of the alcoholic or others.
- Describe how you have changed your life by using the tools of the program.
- Share on a particular Step, slogan, or Al-Anon/Alateen book or pamphlet that was especially helpful.
- Tell what Al-Anon/Alateen means to you.
- Share how you are applying the Al-Anon/Alateen program to your life and attitudes.
- Focus on your recovery from living with the effects of someone else's drinking in your life today or in the past.
- Avoid using professional or other outside terminology when speaking as an Al-Anon/Alateen member.
- Express your views on the topic as it relates to your own experience, if asked to speak about a particular subject such as a Step, a slogan, or a topic from Al-Anon or Alateen Conference Approved Literature.
- Use resources (such as the guideline *Suggested Programs for Meetings* [G-13]) if you are asked to choose a subject.
- Stress the need for and role of Alateen Group Sponsors, particularly when an Alateen is asked to speak at an Al-Anon group.

Audio Recordings

During open Al-Anon functions, the speakers are often recorded. Therefore, it is up to members who consent to having their talk recorded to protect their anonymity by using first name only or a pseudonym, as they see fit, and to maintain the anonymity of other Al-Anon and A.A. members in their talk. These recordings become the property of the recording company, and may be distributed via multi-media outlets, including the Internet, and sold on the company's Web site, unless the speaker specifically prohibits this when signing the release.

Tips on Talking in General

- Some members find that preparing a brief outline helps.
- Others use an index card with an opening sentence, some key phrases they can call upon in case they get lost somewhere in the middle, and a closing statement for a graceful conclusion.
- Try using the technique of looking at a few individuals in different parts of the room, if facing an audience is a problem.
- Speak so you can be heard in the back of the room.

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Speaking Before a Non-Al-Anon Audience

- Make it clear that you are expressing your own views and not necessarily those of Al-Anon and Alateen as a whole.
- Keep in mind the public image of Al-Anon/Alateen is gained in part from your appearance. Try to give a good account of what Al-Anon and Alateen are, what they do, and the services they offer to the community.
- Remember to mention Alateen.
- Preserve anonymity by protecting the identity of all Al-Anon, Alateen, and A.A. members.
- Tell the inviting organization and the press that only first names should be used in public and from the platform.
- Emphasize the importance of attending Al-Anon and Alateen meetings regularly.

Keep in Mind

- You are interesting — so be yourself and speak from the heart; don't be afraid to let others know you.
- You have an important message. Al-Anon Family Groups has brought you some peace of mind; let everyone know it.
- You will be successful if your talk helps just one person. Remember, wherever you go, most people are friendly and receptive.
- You're there to carry the message that Al-Anon Family Groups offers a new way of life to those suffering from the effects of someone's drinking.

For Members with Other Affiliations

There are no separate instructions for Al-Anon and Alateen members who belong to other anonymous groups (e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, etc.) or who are professionals in the alcoholism field.

When you speak as an Al-Anon/Alateen member, whether before a fellowship or professional audience, keep the focus of your talk on:

- Al-Anon/Alateen
- Yourself
- Your interpretation of the Al-Anon/Alateen Twelve Steps

It is confusing both to potential Al-Anon or Alateen members and professionals to hear our message diluted by referring to other programs.

Share Joyfully

- Describe the effect Al-Anon or Alateen has had on your life. Concentrate on your growth and not that of the alcoholic or others.
- Take some literature along for reference and perhaps some extra pieces to hand out.
- Take the time to talk to potential newcomers on a one-to-one basis. Be sure to have names and phone numbers for referrals.

For further ideas and suggestions on speaking, see our Al-Anon/Alateen Conference Approved Literature.