

**HOW WE RUN OUR AA GROUP**  
**DESIGN FOR LIVING,**  
**WHILE CONFORMING TO THE**  
**SPIRIT OF THE TRADITIONS?**

This pamphlet brings together information from approved sources - so that general misconceptions about Group Conscience meetings may be set aside – and in their place best AA practices adopted.

“Each group is as unique as a thumbprint, and approaches to carrying the message of sobriety vary not just from group to group but from region to region. Acting autonomously, each group charts its own course. **The better informed the members, the stronger and more cohesive the group** – and the greater the assurance that when a newcomer reaches out for help, the hand of AA always will be there.

Most of us cannot recover unless there is a group. As Bill said ‘realisation dawns on each member that he is not a small part of a great whole. ... He learns that the clamour of desires and ambitions within him must be silenced whenever these could damage the group. It becomes plain that the group must survive or the individual will not.’”

**GG = Group Conscience, BM = Business Meeting**

*Sources The AA Group, Twelve Concepts for world Service,*

*www.aabeginners.com*

**The Twelve Traditions**

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non professional, but our service centres may employ special workers.
9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities

## **Group membership and responsibility to AA as a whole**

“Each AA group to conduct its internal affairs as it wishes – it being merely requested to abstain from acts that might injure AA as a whole”

Who is a member of the Group?

‘The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking. Thus group membership requires no formal application. Just as we are members of AA if we say we are, *so are we members of a group if we say we are*”

Most members feel more at home in one particular group than in others and consider it their home group, where they accept responsibilities and try to sustain friendships.

*They do not take part in the business or policy of groups which they visit, but in which they would accept no service assignment.*

## Practical aspects of running a Group

When any meeting is different from those around it, there is a tendency for the differences to be eroded steadily through successive GCs and BMs until it resembles all the other meetings in the area. There are a number of things that a group can do to stop this process and protect the integrity of its message. At the BM refer to the *Group Ethos* while considering Group inventory and any proposals submitted, which will go to a GC vote This will ensure the integrity of the Group remains intact. - while at the same time allowing for some process of change and adaptation as the group develops and grows in size.

A committee of group officers in whom the group conscience has placed their trust, by their election, would normally deal with the run-of-the-mill weekly affairs of the group.

You will read in Twelve Concepts for World Service much valuable information about the practicalities of how AA works.

“... The right AA solution for this problem is to be found, however, in the latter part of Tradition two, which provides for “trusted servants”.

This really means that we ought to trust our responsible leaders to *decide*, within the understood framework of their duties, *how they will interpret and apply their own authority and responsibility to each particular problem or situation as it arises.*

This sort of leadership should be the essence of “*Right of Decision*”.

...To sum up: Let us always be sure that there is an abundance of final or ultimate authority to correct or to re-organise, but let us be equally sure that all of our trusted servants have a clearly defined and adequate authority to do their daily work and to discharge their clear responsibilities.

All of this is fully implied in AAs Tradition 2. Here we see the ‘GC’ as the *ultimate* authority and the trusted servant as the *delegated* authority. One cannot function without the other...

## **Organsing and running the Business Meeting**

Typically meetings are at regular intervals, they can be informal or along the lines of Roberts Rule of Order, an example of which we give here.

Quarterly BM are very practical and should suffice in a well run group.

Hold the BM either before or after the scheduled meeting – do not lose valuable ‘carrying the message’ time.

Two weeks ahead of the scheduled date for the BM the Secretary will announce all details and make available the agenda so that everyone has a chance to think about it and once again consult sponsors and group old-timers. This helps to ensure that the group conscience is an informed one.

Members are invited to submit in writing, items for discussion drawn from the Group Inventory questions or other matters. Such proposals need to be seconded - ensuring due consideration.

Excepting an urgent matter all additional items that arise from AOB will be considered as items for the agenda for the next BM, subject to proposal and seconding in the usual way. This helps to avoid decisions being made on the fly which are not properly considered.

The Secretary lets everyone know that while if say 1/2 of an hour is the full time allotted, it means that the Secretary must decide how long will be given to each item and keep the meeting moving, and that nobody should speak twice unless everyone who wishes to has spoken once. if necessary he should cut short debate and offer

either a vote or postponement of more discussion until the next BM, then ask for a show of hands, *without debate*, on whether to make a decision now, or delay until another time.

## **Typical agenda for Business Meeting**

1. Welcome and Reading of Traditions
2. Introduction by Secretary and explanation of who can vote and participate. Visitors may attend, they do not vote and only speak by invitation.
3. Report from the group secretary.
4. Report from the GSR
5. Report from the Treasurer
6. Report from the Literature Officer
7. Report from the Refreshments team
8. Report from the Greeters
9. Item XXX , proposed and seconded
10. Item YYY, proposed and seconded.
11. Resolutions for GC Vote
12. AOB, Items for next agenda
13. Close with Serenity Prayer.



## **Group inventory questions to be used :**

1. What is the basic purpose of the group? Are we adhering to our ethos?
2. What more can the group do to carry the message?
3. Is the group attracting alcoholics from different backgrounds? Are we seeing a good cross section of our community, including those with special needs?
4. Do new members stick with us, or does turnover seem excessive? If so why? What can we as a group do to retain members?
5. Do we emphasize the importance of sponsorship? How effectively? How can we do it better? How effective is our sponsorship? How can it be improved?
6. Are we careful to preserve the anonymity of our group members and other AAs outside the meeting room? Do we leave what they share at meetings behind?
7. Does our group emphasize to all members the value of keeping up with the kitchen, set-up, clean-

up and other housekeeping chores that are essential for our Twelfth Step efforts?

8. Are all members given the opportunity to speak at meetings and to participate in other group activities?

9. Mindful that holding office is a great responsibility not to be viewed as the outcome of a popularity contest, are we choosing our officers with care?

10. Are we doing all we can to provide an attractive and accessible meeting place? Do we have adequate signage so new members can find us?

11. Does our group do its fair share towards participating in the purpose of AA – as it relates to our Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service?

12. How is our group fulfilling its responsibility to the seventh Tradition?

*From AA the Group*

## Group conscience Vote

As we have shown arriving at a GC decision is a process which begins before and around the BM  
To recap:-

“Before a vote is taken, it is essential that all the members be given all facts relevant to the subject at hand. In many cases a few members may be asked to look into the pros and cons of the issue and present them at a further meeting.

Arriving at an informed GC in big matters and small is a process that may, and often should, take some time. But it is important that the minority or dissenting views be heard along with those of the majority. In some instances they may even turn the tide.”

"The GC is the collective conscience of the group membership and thus represents substantial unanimity on an issue before definitive action is taken” On this basis we fail to see that a “one person decision or objection can constitute a GC decision”.

We suggest that if attendance at the BM only represents a small percentage of average Meeting numbers then the resolutions which have come from the BM are put to a further vote at Group

level. Indicating whether they are unanimous or majority decision resolutions from the BM. In this manner all parties should be satisfied.

We suggest that a record be kept in the Group File of all decisions implemented.

## **Our Group Ethos – and information**

This Group, Design for Living (an expression found in the Big Book) – advocates and endorses to the fullest possible extent the 12 Steps of Recovery and the 12 Traditions. As recovered alcoholics we are dedicated to the primary purpose of a Group, to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers and, brimming with enthusiasm and gratitude for our recovery, wish to share this with all who attend our Group. AA is for alcoholics.

In support of AA's singleness of purpose our weekly meetings are "closed"\* and therefore limited to alcoholics or those who think they may have a drinking problem only. When sharing at our meetings you are requested to confine that sharing to your alcoholism.

The Meeting runs for one and a quarter hours and normally we have a speaker who shares for 30 minutes on his experience, strength and hope with emphasis on recovery.

Readings each week are from the first eleven chapters of the BB, at the end of each meeting a statement on sponsorship is read out.

*\*the Group will use its discretion of course where it is appropriate for a non AA to attend to make the Meeting 'open'.*

The Group has its own wall displays in a carrying case and the scrolls of the 12 and 12, also in a carrying case. The Literature is kept in a suitcase. The secretary and one other committee member have keys to these. We have storage space at the venue. The Group has its own urn, large teapot and 6 litre coffee percolator with about two dozen china cups.

All information and GC decisions etc are recorded and kept in the Group Folder

In addition to literature from GSO we carry, separately displayed other useful material on Alcoholism including early AA stuff, some Hazelden books and a choice of Audio CDS and DVD films.

When surplus funds are to hand these are sent direct to GSO.

see [www.designforlivingAAGroup.co.uk](http://www.designforlivingAAGroup.co.uk)

## The Twelve Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.