

RED LIGHT/GREEN LIGHT SESSION

Walt E, Gentle Journey AFG, District 4, Daytona Beach, Fl

May 5, 2017 Area 9 Assembly

QUESTION 1. First Part - How have groups prevented crosstalk within their meetings?

A. SOURCE: Inside Al-Anon, December/January 1988-89, Volume 12, No.1, "An Early Interpretation of Crosstalk"

- *Talking out of turn*
- *Advice giving*
- *Questioning the person who is sharing*
- *Holding private conversations*
- *Having an individual comment on everyone's sharing*
- *And being discourteous and intimidating*

If you want to speak on what you hear, speak of your own recovery only, addressing a topic with "I" instead of "you".

B. SOURCE: Open Forum, F.M.M., June 1995, "A 1991 WSC Workshop Definition of Crosstalk"

There seems to be varying opinions among Al-Anon members on the definition of crosstalk. Here is a simple definition formulated at a workshop at the 1991 World Service Conference: "Crosstalk occurs when one member monopolizes the meeting with one-to-one responses to another member (advice-giving). This includes the chairperson who feels the need to comment on each sharing (coming off as an expert)." Other definitions include: not using "I" statements, side conversations and mini-meetings within a meeting. Most members agree these types of sharings are not in keeping with Al-Anon principles.

C. SOURCE: WSO Executive Director in a Memorandum to Conference Members, February 26, 2010 wrote:

MEMORANDUM

TO: Conference Members
FROM: Executive Director
DATE: February 26, 2010
RE: Recurring Question: "Crosstalk"

- What is the Al-Anon policy on crosstalk?
- What is the crosstalk statement that we can read at the beginning of the meeting?
- Please clarify the term "crosstalk."

ANSWER: The word "crosstalk" has crept into our Al-Anon vocabulary, but there is no standard definition of the word within our fellowship. The Al-Anon/Alateen Suggested Welcome tells us, "The loving interchange of help among members...make[s] us ready to receive the priceless gift of serenity." The subject of "crosstalk" has been discussed at several World Service Conferences. Each time, the consensus has been that Al-Anon has no official definition of this term, and that what is important in each group is that we maintain a loving and welcoming environment for those who attend our meetings. Each group can discuss how to approach maintaining a "loving interchange" in their group meetings.

**D.SOURCE: “HOW AL ANON WORKS FOR FAMILIES
AND FRIENDS OF ALCOHOLICS”, P16 “SEARCHING FOR
ANSWERS”**

Although most of us come to Al-Anon impatient for answers to these and many other questions, there aren't always quick or simple solutions to such complicated matters. Reaching out for help in Al-Anon is unlike asking for help in most other places. In Al-Anon, we do not give advice. Nobody tells anyone else what to do about their own private situation.

Instead, we offer our own experience, strength, and hope. We talk about the problems we ourselves have encountered and how we have used the principles and practices of the Al-Anon program to help work through our problems. We share our feelings, our growth, and our pain. We listen and we learn, identifying with the stories others tell and discovering new ways to approach our particular circumstances by hearing how others have dealt with similar issues.

We suggest that you take what you like and leave the rest. Some of what we say may be helpful; some may not. Each of us is free to pick and choose, to use whatever seems useful, and to disregard the rest.

E. SOURCE: Sharon Barnes, Group Services Assistant, World Service Organization, November 22, 2016 “Al Anon Has No Policy on the Use of the Term “Crosstalk””

“Greetings again from the WSO! Please understand that the WSO doesn't prohibit the use of the term “crosstalk” nor does it involve itself in group conscience decisions. The World Service Conference has discussed the topic of “crosstalk” in Al Anon on several occasions over the years and has consistently decided that Al Anon has no policy on the use of the term ‘crosstalk’. It's entirely up to each group to discuss and decide whether or not to use it and make an informed group conscience decision that abides by the Traditions.”

F. SOURCE: Al Anon Alateen Service Manual, 2014-2017

“Conference Approved Literature”

“To keep Al-Anon's message in focus and encourage unity, only Al-Anon/Alateen Conference Approved Literature (CAL) and Al-Anon/Alateen service tools are displayed, distributed, and used at Al-Anon and Alateen meetings, including meetings at conferences and conventions...”

“Suggested Preamble to the Twelve Steps”:

“The Al-Anon Family Groups are a fellowship of relatives and friends of alcoholics who share their experience, strength, and hope in order to solve their common problems....”

“Suggested Al-Anon/Alateen Welcome”

“...The loving interchange of help among members and daily reading of Al-Anon/Alateen literature thus make us ready to receive the priceless gift of serenity...”

“Al Anon Traditions”

“...Tradition 1. Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity...”

“Three Obstacles to Success in Al Anon”

“3. Dominance:...”No member of Al-Anon should direct, assume authority, or give advice. Our program is based on suggestion, interchange of experience, and rotation of leadership. We progress in our own way and pace...”

“Beginners’ Meeting”

“...Newcomers are given the opportunity to discuss their feelings with long-time members...”

“Sharing in Al-Anon/Alateen Meetings”

“...In group meetings, we share our own experience, strength, and hope, keeping the focus on ourselves and how the Al-Anon/Alateen program has helped us change our attitudes and actions. Our discussions center on solutions for our own difficulties. We try not to tell other people’s stories...”

We concentrate on our own feelings and attitudes, rather than on the details of our situation...

More detailed discussion may take place between meetings in private conversations with another member, or a personal Sponsor...

... It is helpful to provide new members of the group with an explanation of the group’s meeting format, method of sharing..”

“Anonymity”

“...No one’s story is more important than others. We are a fellowship of equals and Al-Anon is a program of principles, not personalities...”

“Meeting Ideas”

“...Experience suggests that more can be accomplished when members share on a single topic during the meeting and all members have the opportunity to share...”

“Sponsorship”

“...A Sponsor is someone with whom a member can discuss personal problems or questions; someone who willingly shares the experience, strength, and hope of the Al-Anon/Alateen program”

“Group Problems and Solutions”

“...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...”

“Basic Terms Used in Al Anon Service”

“GROUPS: The group is the basic unit, where close personal interchanges among members take place, where Al-Anon ideas are discussed and applied to specific personal problems. The entire Al-Anon/Alateen fellowship structure exists for the sole purpose of helping the group members. The important qualification for every member is participation...”

“Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies”

“...When an individual or a group seeks clarification of any matter relating to the Al-Anon fellowship, it is the responsibility of the World Service Office (WSO) Policy Committee to make statements that interpret and encourage use of the Traditions and Concepts...”

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QUESTION 1. Second Part- Could having a statement discouraging crosstalk in the group's opening statement confuse newcomers or give them false impressions of Al-Anon as a whole?

A. SOURCE: WSO Executive Director in a Memorandum to Conference Members, February 26, 2010 wrote:

Al-Anon members are each at different stages of recovery, and experience suggests that the well-meaning actions of a member could be interpreted as "crosstalk." Whatever the intent, it is the disruption of group unity and harmony that could give a newcomer a negative view of Al-Anon.

B. SOURCE: The Caterpillar, April 2011, Baton Rouge Al Anon

"A common statement to discontinue crosstalk within a meeting is "I'd be happy to talk with you about that after the meeting". Sharing our experience one-on-one, with a newcomer or group member, is always a good alternative."

C. SOURCE: Sue Perez, Associate Director-Groups, WSO, March 10, 2017

"When we gather as a group, Tradition Three speaks of our primary requirement for membership and Tradition Five too **our one purpose which is to welcome and give comfort to families of alcoholics.** Al Anon member **don't give advice to those that come through our doors.** Our spiritual principles suggest that we **focus on our own experience, strength, and hope and share that in a "love" way to others** who come to Al Anon for help and hope. This is how we, as individuals, can recover from the effects of alcoholism and how our groups can remain focused and healthy."

D. SOURCE: Open Forum, June 1995 by F.M.M:

"Some members want to go back to the way things were before the no crosstalk rule came into existence: "There was no warmth in the meeting without crosstalk (or loving interchange). Nothing positive came out of the meeting. It was not an Al-Anon meeting as I remember them."

"Others want to continue the no crosstalk policy: "Many of us who grew up in alcoholic homes have become great fixers and controllers. If there was crosstalk we might spend the entire meeting trying to fix the first person to share a problem."

E. SOURCE: The Forum, “Crosstalk or Loving Interchange”, September 2007, p.26-27, by Martha C., Virginia:

“I’m concerned that enforcing rigid rules against crosstalk makes the atmosphere of our meetings unfriendly to newcomers as well as less than supportive to our members. We lose the “loving interchange” when we care more about the rule against crosstalk than about giving our peers emotional support.”

“My suggestion is that we should discourage groups from inserting language about crosstalk in their Welcome, because it conflicts with the “loving interchange” in the Service manual’s Suggested Welcome. Maybe it’s time to “talk to each other” to see how we can maintain that loving interchange without interrupting one another or giving advice.”

NOTICE

The following is provided as additional OPTIONAL “personal sharing” material which may be taken into consideration, as each Group Meeting can have different Group Conscience formats on this.

F. SOURCE: The Forum, “Questions and Answers on Crosstalk versus Loving Interchange”, Created on December 06, 2007

“Talk to Each Other

The opinions expressed here are strictly those of the person who gave them and do not necessarily reflect the views of *The Forum*.

Thank you to all who responded. In general, there was unanimity in everyone’s commitment to Al-Anon principles even though there was disagreement about the term “crosstalk.” It could be that the problem lies in the word itself, which has its origins in the world of psychotherapy rather than in Al-Anon literature and tradition. Perhaps Al-Anon members would be better able to focus on Al-Anon principles by avoiding the use of the term “crosstalk,” which inserts its own divisive “personality” in a place where it appears that everyone who wrote would prefer unity around our common purposes and principles.

Here’s what you had to say:”

<http://www.al-anon.alateen.org/members/crosstalk-or-loving-interchange>

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