

Oregon Area
Best Practices - Membership Retention
2014

At the beginning of the new Panel, the Membership Outreach Action Committee began a discussion on the topic of member retention. There was a general concern that in many meetings, a newcomer arrived at their first meeting and then never returned. Also, many members shared that they had attended Al-Anon years earlier, had stayed for a while, went away and then came back to stay.

We discussed what newcomers and regular members weren't receiving from Al-Anon that led them to stop attending. Was there perhaps more that could have been done to encourage the newcomer/member to "Keep Coming Back"? A subcommittee was tasked with helping answer the question, "Are we (members, groups, Al-Anon) doing all we can to retain newcomers and regular members?"

At the March 2014 Assembly, after reviewing a draft of these points, the discussion turned once again to answering the question, "Are we (members, groups, Al-Anon) doing all we can to retain newcomers and regular members?" After reviewing the list of submissions, the group conscience was overwhelmingly "Yes, we are!" We as individuals or as a group can use one, all, or any combination of the suggestions on the list we compiled. This list of suggested Best Practices - Membership Retention is offered as a checklist or reminder to be gentle with our efforts, knowing that we did not cause, cannot control and cannot cure alcoholism.

Suggested ways to retain members and newcomers

- Ask if there is anyone new to Al-Anon. The chairperson may ask newcomers to identify themselves and welcomes them. Let them know that this is so we can get to know them better.
- Give them a newcomer packet, a list of local meetings and a list of phone numbers.
- Allow the last ten minutes of the meeting for any newcomers who would like to share.
- Have a newcomers' meeting that starts ½ - ¾ of an hour before the regular meeting.
- Have a greeter at the door to welcome members, especially newcomers.
- Offer current year's Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism magazine with every newcomer packet since it covers so many areas of information not often covered in a newcomer meeting because of time and heightened emotions.
- Add to the newcomer packet a phone list, a list of temporary sponsors and other Conference Approved Literature (CAL) pamphlet(s) which may enhance sharing with others important information which the group conscience deems important.
- Provide a list of members who are willing to be temporary or interim sponsors who will follow up with newcomers for a few weeks.
- Rotate leadership of newcomer meetings using returning newcomers to witness the improvement of their lives as they apply the Al-Anon principles.
- Ask the newcomers to stay after the meeting if possible so that we may further share our experience strength and hope.
- Have a birthday meeting where the group shares a birthday cake and acknowledges the Al-Anon "birthdays" of the member(s).
- Have a member "share what Al-Anon means to them." This sharing may be easily understood by the newcomer who may be suffering from unique-itis. Things shared are frequently "Al-Anon gave me peace, serenity, an hour of quiet, the ability to sleep through the night..."
- Once a newcomer has been identified, the chairperson asks a regular member to volunteer to read Step One from a piece of CAL and then share about their own experience with Step One.
- Some members may offer their phone number to the newcomer directly.
- A newcomer is encouraged to share only if and when they are comfortable to do so.
- Before and after the meeting, regular members offer a personal one-to-one welcome and a listening ear if the newcomer has questions.
- If a group has a newcomers' meeting, newcomers are encouraged to attend. After the new members have attended a number of regular meetings, group members encourage them to express themselves, ask them to read aloud the Serenity Prayer, the Suggested Preamble, or in some small way take part in the group functions so they will feel they belong.
- Read from How Al-Anon Works at meetings
- Read Understanding Alcoholism in 2014 Service Manual, page 25.
- Once a newcomer introduces them self, the chairperson asks a regular member to share their experience, strength and hope.
- Announce "after-meeting" fellowship. Set up a table tent card that states the group meets after the meeting for fellowship. Location to be discussed after the meeting.
The member phone list can include next to the member's name an "asterisk" regarding whether someone may call early in the morning or later in the evening. A key at the bottom of the phone list can explain the "asterisk." (For example: * will take calls up to 12:00 am; will take calls beginning at 6:00 am.)