

## DISTRICT 13 REPOSE TO DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR IN GROUPS

### INTRODUCTION

**"How should a group deal with an attendee who continually disregards group protocols and Al-Anon Traditions, especially when the person has already been spoken to gently in private?"**

A good introduction to this topic is the following excerpt from the

Al-Anon Guideline Let's Talk About Safety at Al-Anon Meetings!

([al-anon.org/pdf/safety-in-al-anon-meetings.pdf](http://al-anon.org/pdf/safety-in-al-anon-meetings.pdf))

Page two – Dealing with Disruptions

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Page Two - Group Safety and Unity

“Some groups develop their own guidelines or procedures to help keep the meeting safe. AlAnon members can speak to those who are acting inappropriately, being careful to consider everyone’s personal safety when doing so. **Situations can be discussed at business meetings, where members can come to a group conscience about how to handle concerns: a meeting on the Traditions may be all that is necessary to make the member aware of behavior that is unacceptable to the group as a whole and help the member become willing to change. As a last resort, the disruptive member may be asked to stop attending the meeting for a specific period of time.** Groups that take this drastic action do so to preserve the common welfare and to maintain the unity of the AlAnon group.”

During our research, a great deal of information on this topic was gathered. We have presented you with a Summary Outline of certain stages of conflict, together with suggestions (drawn from CAL) on how to approach solutions. We acknowledge with gratitude District 12 for providing an easy-to-follow format within which we were able to summarize our research:

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## STATUS

### **LEVEL GREEN:**

Members follow group guidelines.

### **LEVEL YELLOW:**

An individual occasionally breaks group guidelines.

### **LEVEL ORANGE:**

Individual continues to break group guidelines even after being spoken to.

### **LEVEL RED:**

Member is chronically breaking Traditions.

Group members have stopped attending meetings because of member's disruptive behaviors. Group representative has contacted District Representative that the group has a Level Red situation.

### ACTIONS:

- Group includes in their opening and closing what is and is not allowed in their meeting. Service Manual Pg. 11.
- Group has ongoing business meetings to review any issues related to the common welfare of the members. Service Manual Pg. 46.
- Group conducts regular group inventories using publications G-8a, Taking a Group Inventory and G-8b Taking a Group Inventory - Methods .
- Allow member time to grow in the program and re-evaluate after three meetings. Paths to Recovery, Pg 137 (Tradition One)
- Encourage member to speak to their sponsor about group guidelines, or encourage sponsorship. Groups at Work, Pg 38.
- Two or more members meet with individual to share their experience, strength and hope concerning the individual's disruptive behavior. Paths to Recovery, Pg 136 (Tradition One)
- Any member gently corrects the individual's behavior during the meeting directly. S-72 and S-73, Conflict Resolution Using the 12 Traditions.
- Conduct a group conscience. Let's Talk About Safety at Al-Anon Meetings! Al-Anon Guidelines [al-anon.org/pdf/safety-in-al-anon-meetings.pdf](http://al-anon.org/pdf/safety-in-al-anon-meetings.pdf)
- Notify the DR that your group has a disruptive member, and keep DR advised. Let's Talk About Safety at Al-Anon Meetings! Al-Anon Guidelines [al-anon.org/pdf/safety-in-al-anon-meetings.pdf](http://al-anon.org/pdf/safety-in-al-anon-meetings.pdf)

- Options if member refuses to comply with the group’s decision:
  - Allow member to attend, but ask member to “listen and learn” until member is prepared to share in accordance with group guidelines. [Service Manual, pg 50.](#)
  - Immediately hold a group conscience to choose what is best for the group. [Service Manual, pg. 50](#)
- The Group may call 911 if safety is an issue. [Let’s Talk About Safety at Al-Anon Meetings! Al-Anon Guidelines](#) [al-anon.org/pdf/safety-in-al-anon-meetings.pdf](http://al-anon.org/pdf/safety-in-al-anon-meetings.pdf)

**\*\*See addendum for all references to CAL literature.**

## **CONCLUSION**

**We felt that these two excerpts from [How Al-Anon Works](#) gives a final overview of the topic, emphasizing the wisdom we find in our traditions.**

p. 123 Tradition 12

“There may always be certain Al-Anon members that we dislike, and we may be tempted to judge their progress or discount their words. But a Power greater than ourselves can use anyone to communicate His or Her will for us, if we are willing to listen. If we let personalities interfere with our spiritual goals, we cheat ourselves out of important opportunities.”

p. 108-109 Tradition 2

“For our group purpose there is but one authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants - they do not govern.”

“Our enduring strength may lie in the fact that we are a fellowship of equals. No one member, regardless of education, political clout, or professional expertise, is any more valuable to the fellowship than any other member. We are all experts because of our experience, and we are all beginners because our lives are in a constant state of growth and change. Newcomers are as likely as longtime members to utter words that inspire and inform. So we have no reason to look to any one person or small group of people as authorities.”

“In fact, we recognize only one authority over our groups and our fellowship as a whole: a loving God of our understanding. We have seen that as individuals we cannot possibly contend with the effects of alcoholism without spiritual help. We turn to the same source of guidance in order to learn how best to work together toward our common goal of recovery. Just as many of us find a Power greater than ourselves in the collective wisdom of our Al-Anon group, we seek spiritual guidance for our groups in the same collective wisdom. We call this a “group conscience,” the voice of the majority of members. We believe it represents the greatest good for the greatest number.”

“We reach this majority through discussion. In Al-Anon, each of us has an equally important voice. As members, we have an obligation to express that voice and to vote according to our convictions, even if we are the only ones who believe that idea. One dissenting person may point out something essential that no one else has considered. We are strengthened by our diversity, even when we disagree.”

“Ultimately, our leaders are subject to the will of the many – the will of the group. Their job is to serve, not to dominate; to carry out the decisions made by the group, not to make those decisions themselves.”

## **ADDENDUM OF CAL CITED IN SUMMARY OUTLINE**

### **SERVICE MANUAL** page 11

“At this point in the meeting, many groups have the Chairperson say if the group has a special format... has a specific routine for calling on members, asks members of other anonymous fellowships to remain anonymous and focus on the Al-Anon program...”

### **SERVICE MANUAL** page 46

“Group business meetings are held to share information and to include all group members in the activities and concerns of the group.”

### **PATHS TO RECOVERY** page 136

“Sometime, however, members consciously or unconsciously disregard the Traditions. In such instances, each of us has a responsibility to remind them of the traditions in a caring, loving way. When making such suggestions, it helps if we remember that guidelines are for group harmony. “

### **GROUPS AT WORK** (Manual) “Sharing in Al-Anon Meetings”, page 38

### **PATHS TO RECOVERY** page 137

"Sometimes desperate newcomers may need to unburden. Allowing them some meeting time to share and making an offer of personal contact after the meeting are ways to offer loving understanding in this situation."

### **USING AL-ANON PRINCIPALS TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS (S-72 and S-73)**

Talk to Each Other - Resolving Conflicts within Al-Anon

Introduction - “As we work the Al-Anon program and begin to find recovery, we may also find that conflicts can arise within our fellowship. Given the sense of safety, help, and friendship we have found in Al-Anon, we might be shocked to find conflict among our fellow members in our Al-Anon group, district, ... or Area! We begin to realize that conflict is quite common, can happen in any setting, and that we can use our program tools in all areas of our lives. Conflict can provide an opportunity for growth.”

“By applying Al-Anon’s spiritual principles as we work through conflicts, we listen for a Higher

Power's guidance as filtered through the voice of the members. We do our best to share as equals, presume goodwill, and separate principles from personalities. ... we learn to acknowledge that everyone involved has Al-Anon's best interests at heart."

"The health of our group is the responsibility of all its members, not any one person. As a group we can take some measures to assure that we remain harmonious. These include holding regular business meetings, electing and supporting a Group Representative ... and routinely taking a group inventory. Frequent study of the Twelve Traditions and the "Three Obstacles to Success in Al-Anon" helps us maintaining healthy boundaries."

"Even in a healthy group, members may find themselves at odds over various group matters. Some members may:

- Feel that an individual is trying to control or dominate the group.
- Feel that the group is straying from Al-Anon principles and our primary purpose.
- Disagree on meeting procedures or format.
- Disagree with a group conscience decision.

"Whatever the subject of the conflict, a good place to start is with a statement of Al-Anon's primary purpose. ... to provide help and hope to families and friends of alcoholics. ... the Loving Interchange to Resolve Conflict Wallet Card, (S-71), can help ...It suggests that as members we make a commitment to:

- Participate in discussions.
- Listen to everyone's opinions.
- Presume goodwill.
- Support group conscience decisions, even if some of us don't agree.

Groups may also want to turn to the Traditions. The Conflict Resolution Using Our Twelve Traditions cards (S-72) are a valuable resource, reminding us in a conflict situation that:

- Everyone has an equal voice (Tradition One).
- Our fellow members also want the best for our program (Tradition Five).
- We need to work together to resolve our problems (Tradition Nine).
- We keep our focus on what unites us and avoid personality-related conflicts (Tradition Twelve).

When conflict remains despite our best efforts, it can be helpful to seek the experience, strength, and hope of other local groups at the district meeting. Some other tools ... include:

- “Group Problems and Solutions” in *Al-Anon and Alateen Groups at Work\** (P-24)
- “Three Obstacles to Success in Al-Anon,” from *Alcoholism, the Family Disease* (P-4, also included in *Groups at Work\**).
- Taking a Group Inventory Guideline\* (G-8a/G-8b).
- Conference Approved Literature on the Traditions, including:
  - Reach for Personal Freedom - Living the Legacies (P-92)
  - Paths to Recovery—Al-Anon’s Steps, Traditions, and Concepts (B-24).
- The “Resources” tab in the Group section of the Members’ Web site. \*

Resolving conflict through an informed group conscience

“The informed group conscience encourages us to talk to each other and reason things out. It embodies the spiritual principles found throughout our program, including our three Legacies....  
 ...When we keep our principles in mind, the group conscience helps make decisions and resolve conflicts. Without these principles, however, issues such as who can participate, or how to keep members from monopolizing the discussion, can sometimes turn it into one that causes more problems than it resolves.”

\*Available on the Members’ Website, [www.al-anon.org/members](http://www.al-anon.org/members)

**Let’s Talk About Safety at Al-Anon Meetings!**

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**2022-2023 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual** Page 50

Group Problems and Solutions

“Groups are within their autonomy to establish group behavioral guidelines in a manner that reflects their group conscience and abides by the Traditions, as long as they do not impact other groups, Al-Anon or A.A. as a whole.”

“**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 members to change the behavior in question. This can be an exercise in applying Al-Anon principals so that the message is not a personal attack, but rather a request based on what is best for the Al-Anon group.”