

interrogates, debates, criticizes, answers, or talks about what someone else has shared, regardless of whether they're doing so during their own share time. We're each here to talk only about our own "stuff," not anyone else's "stuff."

The only time someone may be interrupted while sharing is if the chairperson or a senior group member feels that these guidelines are being ignored to the extent that group safety and harmony are at risk. This also includes asking people to "wrap up" when they monopolize share time.

#### **How to Get Feedback**

We understand that not getting feedback can be frustrating for people when they want input from others. That's why our guideline is specifically "no unsolicited feedback" which is for everyone's protection and benefit. Anyone can ask for feedback, but it will only be given when the meeting is over. At the end of your sharing, you can just say something like, "If anyone would like to give me feedback at the end of the meeting, I want to hear what you have to say." If you only want feedback from certain individuals, you can approach them after the meeting and ask them if they'd feel comfortable giving you feedback.

They won't solve your life's problems; that job is for you and your Higher Power. They can only offer suggestions which are solely

their opinions. That's why you'll often hear us say, "Take what you want and leave the rest."

#### **Hugs**

Before or after the meeting you may see some of us giving each other hugs. We know that not everyone enjoys giving or receiving hugs; therefore, you will only be given hugs if you let us know that's what you'd like. You or anyone else can say "yes" or "no" to a hug; therefore, don't be offended if someone declines a hug from you. It's not rejection; that person is being healthy by respecting their own needs and wants. If you ask for hugs, you'll likely receive all the hugs you can handle.

So once again, welcome to our EA group. We hope we help you feel as if you're already a member of our "EA family."



## **Newcomer Orientation**

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## **Our Guidelines for a Productive Meeting**

As a newcomer to our meeting, we wish to extend a warm welcome to you. If this is your first 12-step meeting, we applaud you for your courage. Every one of us attended a 12-step meeting for the first time, and we know it can be intimidating.

Our goal here is to ensure that this is a safe place for everyone to both share and listen. We find we can accomplish this by practicing the following principles:

### **“I” Language**

It’s the language that’s spoken when sharing. Please avoid making “you” or “we” statements. Newcomers may find this difficult to do at first, but they usually find they can comfortably adapt to it after a few meetings. “I” language is used even when expressing the obvious. Therefore, while a statement like, “We all need to take care of our bodies,” might be perceived as lecturing, the problem is avoided if expressed as “I need to take care of my body.”

We also use “I” language because recovery involves taking responsibility for one’s own life and thoughts. Saying “you” or “we” is a way to avoid taking full responsibility.

### **Equal Time for All to Share**

In order to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to share equally, please be conscious of how long you talk. Once

everyone has shared or passed, people can share again if time permits. We understand that occasionally someone may need extra time to share, and we support that when it’s done within reason. People needing even more time can join us for coffee after the meeting.

### **We Don’t Advertise Our Religious or Political Beliefs**

This is a spiritual program, not a religious program. **“We never discuss religion, politics, national or international issues, or other belief systems or policies.”** We talk about a Higher Power. We might share whether or not religion and religious services are important in our lives.

We avoid, however, identifying our particular religion, or political beliefs, because when it comes to these topics, the line becomes too easily blurred between sharing and preaching. At our meetings we try to explore our commonality, not what separates us. Our goal here is harmony. Please be aware that people from all of the world’s faiths attend our meetings. Part of our recovery is knowing that we can only decide what works for us, not for others. In EA we show respect for everyone’s right to have a belief system different from our own.

### **Having a Positive Outlook**

This is what working an EA program is all about. We attend meetings to either find

ways to be at peace with unsolvable problems or find solutions to them by being open to possibilities and staying focused on the positive aspects of our circumstances. No one benefits if a meeting turns into a pity-party or complaint club.

Newcomers, though, are encouraged to share their problems as best as they can. They quickly see that meetings are healthier when what is shared is no more important than how it’s shared.

### **No One Is Forced to Participate**

No one is ever under any obligation to either share or read out loud. If you don’t wish to do so, just say “Pass.” We want you to participate only when you’re ready. You are welcome to just listen for as many meetings as you like.

### **Unsolicited Feedback and Crosstalk**

They are strongly discouraged at our meetings. No crosstalk means that when a person shares at a meeting, the group’s job is to be totally silent and give that person their undivided attention. Any distracting behavior that might make the person speaking lose their train of thought is considered crosstalk.

A person is to be allowed to share without editorial quips, one-liners or interruptions from others, including advice or comments that are intended to help. It’s also crosstalk when anyone judges, preaches,