

Difficult Situations

Having trouble with your online group, in-person meeting or leaders?

Trouble arises from time to time. Here is a guide for groups and group leaders on how to keep a recovery focus and deal with monopolizers, cross-talk, crying, anonymity issues and suicide talk.

What is a group to do when a leader regularly engages in old (or new) addictive behavior¹ or fails the group in some significant way?

Advice for Leaders:

On Addiction: Stop the behavior. If you can't stop completely, right now, then step down. Your judgment has become affected in areas that directly impact your credibility, authenticity, and message.

On Failure of Leadership: See Steps 8 – 11.

Advice for Group Members:

On Addiction: Confront. If there is any kind of regular pattern of addictive behavior, ask the leader to step down. Recovery requires examples of freedom and joy, not misery and self-deception.

On Failure of Leadership: Confront. Then support your leader, replace the leader or start a new group.

What is an ONLINE meeting group to do when a participant regularly breaks rules that the group has established for the common safety?

Advice for Leaders:

- Post and communicate group rules regularly
- Revisit rules during regular (monthly, semi-monthly or quarterly) group conscience² meetings
- In extreme circumstances, put the meeting under moderator control or remove offenders when rules are purposefully broken

Advice for Group Members:

- Attend meetings regularly
- Attend group conscience meetings
- Support your leader, replace the leader or start a new group

What can sponsors and sponsees do to prevent difficulties?

Advice for Sponsors:

- Per its traditions, EDA shall remain forever non-professional. Sponsoring more than five people at a time, even in a volunteer capacity, verges on professionalism.
- Avoid promoting any service for the reasons given above.
- Read the "New to 12 Steps and Sponsorship" brochure on the www.4EDA.org Literature tab.
- Read the EDA Big Book, available at www.4EDA.org/EDAbigbook.

Advice for Sponsees:

- Sponsees are responsible for their own decisions, actions and recovery.
- To recover, we need honesty, open-mindedness and willingness. People new to EDA will require guidance on how to work the Steps of EDA from someone who has already worked them.
- A sponsor provides guidance on how to work the Twelve Steps to his or her sponsees. There is no other obligation. Be considerate of a sponsor's time.
- We have found it best to use a sponsor as a sounding board when planning how to handle difficult situations, rather than calling at the first sign of distress.
- Many sponsors and sponsees find it best to talk on a set schedule, as this allows the sponsee to address highly charged emotional situations directly, without undue reliance on their sponsor.
- Remember that a sponsor is not a substitute for a therapist.
- Attend meetings regularly
- Read the "New to 12 Steps and Sponsorship" brochure available on the www.4EDA.org Literature tab.
- Read the EDA Big Book, available at www.4EDA.org/EDAbigbook.

¹ Regular can mean at least twice within an interval of less than a month but the definition should be determined by group conscience (see below).

² A group conscience is a meeting during which a quorum of eligible group members considers and votes on subjects of concern to all. "Quorum" and "Eligible" are terms to be defined by the group's founders, applied after ratification by the majority of all attendees at the regular meeting, and maintained thereafter by group conscience vote.

To Meeting Leaders on “Monopolizers”

How does a chairperson refocus a meeting without hurting someone's feelings? While it is important to be gentle, it is not respectful or helpful to ignore unacceptable behavior or to pretend things are fine when they are not. If a person is over-talking their fair share of time, the chairperson is responsible for stopping this. One way to do this is to look directly at the person and say something honest like, “I apologize for interrupting, but can you please wrap it up in a sentence or two? We need to move on to make sure everyone gets a fair chance to share.” Each person should be allowed an equal share of time, no matter what they want to say. We should not cut people off for any reason other than running over time or cross-talk. If a person is focusing on issues and not solutions, encourage them to try to think about how they might work out solutions. When people ask for feedback too often, the group tends to become focused on problem-solving for that particular person. This is not good for the group. When someone asks for feedback, the chairperson should suggest, “It is important for each of us to think about how the topic applies to our own lives. Please take time to talk with _____ after the meeting if you have feedback.”

To Meeting Leaders on Suicide Talk

Chairpersons should not interrupt someone discussing suicidal thoughts. After the person finishes and before the next person speaks, the chairperson should say something like, “Wow. That's a really terrible problem. Please be sure to stay after the meeting to get some support. I know we all want to help right now, but it is important for each of us to think about how we would handle such problems in our own lives. Let's talk about that as we continue.” The chair should not allow the meeting to become focused on that individual. Talk of suicide can and should

be regarded as an automatic request for feedback after the meeting. Be sure the person has at least 2 phone numbers of meeting members to call. Talk to the person after the meeting, i.e. “Are you going to be safe? Do you need someone to stay with you? Do you have professional help? Are you using it? Do you need to call someone now?” Remember, however, that we are each responsible only for our own behavior.

Anonymity

Members of a group often enjoy fellowship after the meetings and between meetings. Such fellowship is usually a wonderful support to recovery. Sometimes, however, especially when people become concerned about a member who is struggling, such associations foster gossip. It can be hard to know what to do when someone we love is struggling, but it is important that conversations between group members be about how to be a good support for one another, rather than about a specific individual or their specific issues. When we specifically discuss a person we know from meetings, no matter how well-intentioned our motives, we are breaking their anonymity. This is not good for our recovery, and it makes meetings unsafe places to talk about issues. It is critical to mind our own business.

Triggers

If someone's issues trigger us, that is helpful in outlining our own problems, and we ought to be glad for the opportunity to deal with them. The resolution to being triggered by someone else is to change our own thinking and acting. The answer to our issues is not to flee from them or from the person who generates our discomfort, nor is it to get others to change their attitudes or behaviors. We can get well and live in peace regardless of anyone. Our job is to learn to live at ease in the world, regardless of the behavior of others.

A Guide to Groups and Group Leaders Working Through Difficult Situations



For more information please visit
our website at:

www.4EDA.org

April 2017