



The Group

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Definition and purpose

A Narcotics Anonymous group is any meeting of two or more recovering addicts who meet regularly at a specific time and place for the purpose of recovery from the disease of addiction. All Narcotics Anonymous groups are bound by the principles of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of NA. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.

It is important to remember our primary purpose so that addicts who come to their first meeting can relate and identify with others at the meeting. One responsibility of the group is to provide an atmosphere of recovery for the newcomer who has a desire to stop using as well as existing members. We want to make the newcomer feel welcome. We can all remember how frightened and apprehensive we were when we first came to NA. We welcomed that initial smile and learned a simple loving hug could make all the difference in the world when we felt alone. We needed to find others like ourselves who had been through what we had and would understand our feelings and experiences. From the very start we found that any addict could stay clean by following the example of others who were clean and living the NA program.

The group is the most powerful vehicle of carrying the message of hope and the promise of freedom from active addiction. Any addict can stop using, lose the desire to use, and find a new and better way to live. In meetings we hear other addicts share their experience, strength, and hope in order to stay clean themselves and help others to stay clean. We have found that the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel.

It has been our experience that when we attend meetings regularly the feelings that used to haunt us start to leave. They are replaced by feelings of hope, joy, and gratitude for the new way of life we have found through Narcotics Anonymous. And most importantly, those who keep coming to our meetings regularly stay clean.

Home group

Choosing and supporting a home group is an important part of recovery. A home group is a meeting where you are comfortable and one you will attend regularly. We call this our home group because it suggests a place where we fit in and belong. Having a home group allows us to have an anchor each week where we can get to know the people and they can really get to know us. We develop a bond with each other as we grow together.

We make a commitment to our home group, and if we are absent for some reason, we will be missed. Our home group is also the place where we celebrate each new year of clean time. We develop true friends, often for the first time in our lives, and learn to respect each other. This can be very important in our recovery.

As the members mature, so does the group. We learn to practice the spiritual principles of Narcotics Anonymous in all our affairs. We also learn to divide and share the responsibilities for the growth and well-being of the group.

Home group members should try to remain aware of problems or difficulties their group faces and be willing to help. A home group is where you vote as a member of the group conscience on matters affecting NA as a whole as well as matters concerning your home group's well-being. Home groups also participate in carrying the message of recovery at an area level. In the spirit of unity, oneness of purpose, for the good of NA as a whole, it is important that we all do our part.

The formation of a group

When starting a group* the first priority is to secure a regular meeting location. Try to find a facility that is conducive to an atmosphere of recovery and will allow room for the meeting to grow. It is important to find a location that will allow the group to practice the Sixth Tradition, which states, "An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose." This principle of nonaffiliation allows the group to develop its own autonomy. After securing a location, establish the time and day of the week, make arrangements for opening and closing the meeting space, and any other preparations necessary. Tradition Seven tells us, "Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions." In keeping with the Seventh Tradition, establish a means of paying rent for the facility; NA groups must always be self-supporting. The group responsibilities (opening doors, making coffee, providing literature, cleaning up, etc.) are best shared by two or more addicts. Some groups have lost their meeting space because they failed to properly care for the meeting facility. But if we try to leave the room better than we found it, we protect the atmosphere of recovery and the reputation of Narcotics Anonymous.

If the meeting is slow in getting started, be patient. Experience proves it will grow. Support can be generated by contacting the nearest area or regional committee, making announcements at other meetings, and by distributing flyers.

When there is enough participation and support, a group business meeting is held. At this first meeting, matters of the group are formalized (name, format, etc.) and trusted servants are elected. Though the group may seem more businesslike at this time, we must remember we are setting the foundation for carrying out our primary purpose. It is our responsibility as group members to care for NA and make an investment in our recovery. It is truly our privilege to participate in our home group.

Trusted servants

Our Second Tradition tells us, "For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." Our trusted servants, therefore, are the backbone of the group and their regular attendance at all meetings is extremely important. One of the pitfalls which has caused many NA groups to suffer or even fold has been the election of officers who were unqualified to serve or did not have a history of recovery in our fellowship. Often NA elections have seemed to be popularity contests rather than the selection of trusted servants. The officers of a group must be chosen with great care because of the responsibilities that their offices carry and the potential effect bad officers can have on the group. Fulfilling the commitment to serve is important. The following paragraphs contain a brief description of the group's trusted servants. For a more comprehensive description, refer to the approved NA service manual.

* For more information on starting an NA group, see *The Group Booklet*.

As a general guide, we have found that trusted servants are most successful if they have certain assets necessary for the performance of their responsibilities. These qualifications include:

1. The willingness and desire to serve
2. A history of recovery in NA (we suggest a minimum of one year clean time)
3. An understanding and working knowledge of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of NA
4. Active participation in the group

Secretary

The secretary is responsible for the following:

- ◆ Opening and closing the meeting facility regularly—no matter what
- ◆ Selecting a leader who will carry the NA message of recovery
- ◆ Making sure the coffee gets made
- ◆ Keeping the meeting's records
- ◆ Arranging for the group's business meetings
- ◆ Purchasing supplies and literature

The secretary carries a great responsibility, and therefore this position should not be taken lightly. The members of the home group should always be willing to help the secretary with any requests for assistance.

Treasurer

The treasurer is responsible for the following:

- ◆ Paying the group's bills
- ◆ Keeping financial records
- ◆ Carrying out group conscience decisions for the flow of funds
- ◆ Making regular reports to the group

It is helpful if the treasurer has basic mathematical skills and handles personal finances properly. One of the biggest problems we have faced has been the misuse of group money. Thousands of dollars in needed funds have disappeared. Not only does this abuse limit what Narcotics Anonymous can do, it strikes at the heart of our Fifth Tradition, which reads, "Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers." Treasurers who have abused their positions usually find that the price they pay in terms of their personal recovery is very heavy. Obviously, the treasurer has a grave responsibility and much thought should be taken in selecting a member to perform this function. For more information on serving as a group treasurer, refer to the NA Conference-approved *Treasurer's Handbook*.

Group service representative (GSR)

The GSR is responsible for the following:

- ◆ Attending the area service committee (ASC) meeting regularly
- ◆ Serving as a member on ASC subcommittees
- ◆ Serving as a liaison between the group and the area
- ◆ Sharing responsibilities with the GSR-Alternate

- ◆ Keeping the group accurately registered with the World Service Office

The most important facet of this position is to be the communicator for the group. The group service representative is the vital link between the group and the rest of the fellowship. The GSR is the formal line of communication whose purpose it is to represent the group's conscience in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole. This duty requires the representative to provide information to the group about developments in the worldwide NA Fellowship and to share with the area any activities, strengths, or problems of the group. It is important that the GSR not break the chain of NA communication.

Group service representative-alternate (GSR-Alternate)

The position of GSR-Alternate parallels that of GSR except that it is a two-year commitment, with the first year spent in training and the second year as GSR. It is imperative that the GSR-Alternate attend each ASC meeting in order to learn and to provide the GSR with support. The GSR-Alternate also acts as GSR in the absence of the GSR.

Additional ways to serve

The previously mentioned positions are elected trusted servants with definite terms of service. Another way we can serve is as a speaker or leader; these trusted servants are generally chosen by the group secretary. Throughout the worldwide fellowship there are numerous terms which are used and different ways of conducting meetings. Our Fourth Tradition promises us autonomy as long as these matters do not affect other groups or NA as a whole. This variety enriches our fellowship and increases our effectiveness. Our primary purpose is always to carry the message of recovery to addicts who still suffer.

Leader

The leader—who is also called “the chairperson” in many places—should have experience, strength, and hope to share from regular attendance at Narcotics Anonymous meetings. This person is responsible for keeping the discussion moving smoothly and following the group format. The leader must remember that it is everybody's meeting and not comment after each person shares.

The person leading the meeting is responsible for establishing an atmosphere of recovery. Although sharing problems is necessary for identification, sharing solutions is necessary for recovery. It should always be in the leader's mind that we are here for the specific purpose of staying clean and helping other addicts to find recovery from addiction.

Speaker

The NA member chosen to speak at a meeting needs to be someone who is working and living the NA program of recovery, which is the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. In areas where there is not an abundance of NA members with substantial clean time or experience with the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, there is the possibility that a group inexperienced in Narcotics Anonymous may misunderstand NA traditions and invite speakers from outside the NA Fellowship. There are several ways to avoid this situation. Our Basic Text, for instance, reminds us that NA members from other areas are willing to drive long distances to support new groups. The speaker helps fulfill the group's primary purpose, carrying the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. When speaking at an NA meeting, we should be careful to deliver a clear message of recovery by identifying ourselves as addicts recovering from the disease of addiction. It is not necessary to dwell excessively on our active addiction or “war stories,” because we all know what it was like to use. We came to Narcotics Anonymous to stop using and we are here to share our experience, strength, and hope of recovery.



To our new groups in areas that are just forming: We have found step study meetings and literature study meetings to be a very important beginning of the members' growth. We encourage you to do your best together with love and fellowship, and keep coming back: It works!

**Our gratitude speaks
when we care and
when we share
with others the NA way**