



National Helpline Number: 0800 917 7650

This service pamphlet is available from
GSO PO BOX 1, 10 Toft Green York YO1 7NJ

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

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Welcoming a Newcomer to the Group

For further information call 01904 644 026

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

These suggestions result from recommendations made at the General Service Conferences in 2011 and 2015 in relation to dealing with newcomers arriving at their first AA meeting, some of whom may have had no previous contact with an AA member or a formal 12th Step call, and encourage them to “keep coming back”. They are intended to enable the Fellowship as a whole to learn how successful groups have improved their retention rates, and to encourage all groups to examine at their conscience meetings ways in which their own newcomers could have a better chance of achieving recovery.

The collective experience of the Fellowship informs us of many examples of best practice and those that follow below are by no means exhaustive or prescriptive, and not every approach will work in every situation.

- The newcomer should be welcomed in a non-judgmental manner, with warmth and understanding, respecting their anonymity.
- A strong home group is paramount, with members being aware that it is the responsibility of all of them to carry the AA message.
- Group members ought to make themselves familiar with existing literature including “A Newcomer Asks”, “Hints and Suggestions for Twelfth Steppers” and Chapter Seven of the Big Book “Working with Others”.
- The role of Greeter is important and in many Groups the Greeter is an established service position. Greeters provide a welcome to newcomers and visitors and can explain the function of the group, the format of the meeting

and point out that AA is a spiritual and not a religious organisation. Ideally there ought to be male and female Greeters at the entrance of the meeting venue.

- The tea/coffee person often acts as a secondary Greeter, letting the Secretary know if there are any newcomers. Mid-meeting breaks or post-meeting refreshments are also identified as useful opportunities for one-to-one chats. This is where Twelfth Step work can begin.
- The newcomer is given a Starter Pack and the local “Where to Find”.
- A comprehensive stock of AA-approved literature ought to be available.
- Group experience suggests that men should work with men and women with women as this helps protect newcomers.
- Many groups offer temporary sponsorship. In other groups members offer their telephone numbers to newcomers, often written on the “Where to Find” list.
- Members might offer to telephone the newcomer or meet up between meetings for a coffee, or to take them to other local meetings.
- Experience shows that keeping it simple works. Newcomers ought to be made welcome, identified but not embarrassed, overwhelmed or spotlighted: they may just want to blend in. Newcomers should not feel they are placed under any pressure to share at a meeting.

- Many groups seek to provide a safe welcoming environment, ensuring that their meeting room is set up in good time and is clean, warm and tidy and that the meeting is conducted in an orderly fashion to enable the AA message to be carried.
- When newcomers are present, Step meetings often read Step One and Big Book Study Meetings focus on Chapter 5 or The Doctor’s Opinion or Chapter 3.
- Many groups read Tradition Five before each meeting and invite newcomers to stay to talk to members over post-meeting refreshments. They might also be invited to help with the washing-up or clearing chairs, so that they can feel part of the group.
- In some areas there are meetings specifically for newcomers. Some groups hold short “newcomers meetings”, concentrating on The Doctor’s Opinion and the first three Steps, before the main meeting starts.
- Any similar examples of best practice that groups have found for working with newcomers could be communicated and discussed within the Fellowship via AA Service News, the AA GB website and Share/Roundabout magazines.

“Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends – this is the experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and each other is the bright spot of our lives”

Big Book page 89