

Countless groups have found that following the Twelve Traditions to the best of their abilities will ensure like nothing else a group's collective recovery, its unity and its ability to perform service.

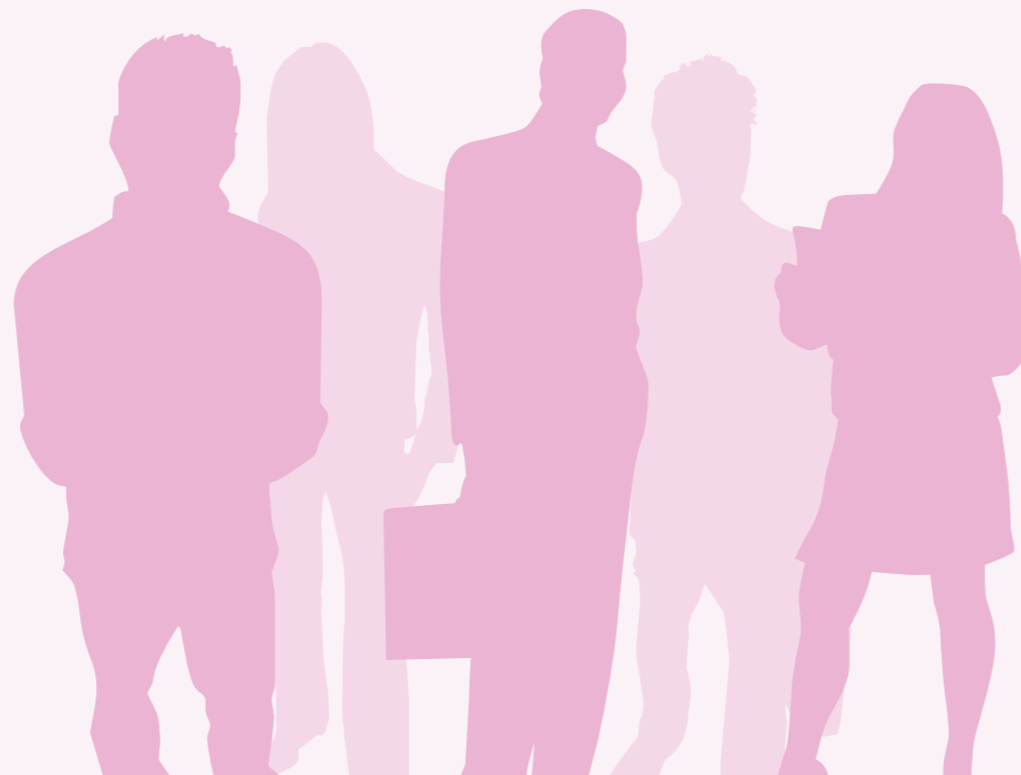
For more readings on these topics, please see:

- The Twelve Traditions
- The Twelve Traditions (Long Form)
- The Twelve Concepts for World Service
- 'The AA Group' pamphlet
- Language of the Heart, pp. 76-94
- AA Comes of Age, pp. 78-137
- The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
- The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013, pp. 74-89
- The Home Group: Heartbeat of AA and Grapevine Articles

Articles in Grapevine are written by AA members from around the world and represent their experience, strength and hope in print. These divergent opinions of AA members are not statements of AA policy and are not those of the Fellowship as a whole. The Grapevine is not Conference approved, as the articles cannot go through the process of Conference approval. The articles listed here are provided only as potential sources of information and experience shared by AA members. The book, *The Home Group: Heartbeat of AA*, is a collection of articles originally published in the Grapevine.

From The Home Group: Heartbeat of AA:

- 'Unlocking the Group Conscience' by Toni F (Originally printed February 1992)
- 'The Strength We Gained' by B.v.M. (Originally printed January 1992)
- 'Group Inventory: How Are We Doing?' by Anonymous (Originally printed July 1952)
- 'We've Made a Decision: Don't Confuse Us With the Facts' by D.L. (Originally printed February 1985)
- 'The Rise and Fall of a Home Group' by W.S. (Originally printed October 1987)
- Grapevine Articles:
 - 'What's a Group Conscience?' by J.M. and M.M., March 1987
 - 'Group Conscience in Action' by H.A. and J.M., April 1994
 - 'Finding a Voice' by Danny S., September 2004
 - 'How About a Group Inventory?' by Anonymous, August 1956 (Reprinted October 2006)



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Business Meetings, the Group Conscience and Group Conscience Meetings

At Conference 2016, Committee No 6 considered the conduct, frequency and content of Group Conscience Meetings, and requested that the Literature Sub-Committee:

“review the background information and other conference approved literature [on this topic] with a view to consolidation, and bring back their recommendations to Conference 2017”.

This recommendation was approved unanimously by Conference.

The Literature Sub-Committee has carried out its review of the material in question. The main points have been consolidated in the text which follows.

In doing so, we focused on:

- the importance of meetings to examine the Group Conscience
- the necessity of holding regular Business Meetings
- the autonomy of the Group in determining the form, frequency and conduct of such meetings
- the contents of a suggested agenda

If approved, the text which follows could form a part of the next edition of the AA Structure Handbook.

From the AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2017:

“The Group Conscience and Business Meetings are sometimes overlooked but they play an important part in our group progress. Some groups schedule these meetings several times a year. Depending on the wishes of the members, they may precede or follow the normal meeting or separate sessions may be arranged.

Business meetings provide an opportunity for group officers to report on such matters progress, future plans, intergroup matters and the financial position. The group may also take this occasion as an opportunity to appoint its officers and to conduct a group conscience meeting—which usually takes the form of a group inventory.” (p.75)

The Group Conscience, the manner by which groups at every level of the AA Service structure takes decisions, is AA’s process of ensuring that all concerned have a voice. As Bill W writes in Language of the Heart (p.78), ‘The Group Conscience will, in the end, prove a far more infallible guide for group affairs than the decision of any individual member... This is a striking and almost unbelievable fact about Alcoholics Anonymous.’”

In keeping with our Fourth Tradition, every group is of course autonomous and may conduct its internal business and take its decisions as it sees fit. AA experience, however, has shown that it is best practice to do so following the Twelve Traditions.

A group may use the terms ‘Business Meeting’ and ‘Group Conscience Meeting’ interchangeably or may use them, as AA service literature often does, to mean or suggest different types of meetings that are conducted for different (although related) purposes.

How often a group holds meetings about how it functions, what it calls such meetings and how it makes its decisions are up to the group.

Some groups have meetings for financial and officer reports, the elections of officers, intergroup matters, answering yearly Conference Questions etc. and call these meetings ‘Business Meetings’ whilst others may term them ‘Group Conscience Meetings’. Whatever they are called, AA experience has shown that regular meetings to report, discuss and take decisions according to the Traditions are most likely to ensure that the group continues, and does so effectively.

There is no prescribed frequency for how often such meetings ought to take place, although many groups find it helpful to hold them monthly. Others may decide that quarterly is sufficient.

Normally groups may choose to hold these meetings either before or immediately after their regular AA meeting. Meeting at these times may offer the best opportunity for as many of the group’s members to attend as possible, as they are likely to be attending the AA meeting already.

Other groups may however find that meeting on a different day or evening is better for broader participation and for taking decisions. Again, each group will find what suits its particular circumstance and membership best—and of course the times and frequency of these meetings can be changed by group decision at any time such a change is needed.

Group Conscience Meetings

Many groups conduct a ‘Group Conscience Meeting’ solely for the purpose of conducting a group inventory. That is something which a group may choose to do at whatever interval seems best to suit its needs.

Many groups have found that an annual inventory is useful and contributes positively to the group’s efforts to reach still suffering alcoholics.

The pamphlet, ‘The AA Group’ states the following about Group Conscience meetings:

‘These meetings usually take the form of a group inventory. An informed Group Conscience implies that all pertinent information has been carefully studied; and the views of all members who wish to contribute to the discussion have been heard before the group makes its decision.’

‘The AA Group’ pamphlet includes a list of questions that have been used by many groups for their inventories.

Business Meetings

Business Meetings that are held regularly by a group to conduct its affairs may follow whatever format or process the group chooses. AA experience has shown that decisions made by the group’s members at these meetings ought to be recorded in the minutes of the meetings.

The group will also need to determine how decisions will be taken and who may vote and to clarify voting procedures, including for the election of new Trusted Servants when positions are open or someone is rotating out. Voting is often limited to home group members. **This paragraph to be replaced by new text.**

The group may designate any member to conduct these meetings, although usually it will be one of the group’s elected Trusted Servants, most often the Chair, if a group has such a position, or perhaps the Secretary or GSR.

The group may wish to have a regular agenda format for its Business Meetings, such as the one suggested here:

- Opening
- Reading of the Traditions and / or some other reading from AA literature or AA service literature or perhaps saying the Serenity Prayer and / or having a moment of silence.
- Introductions and a determination of voting members present
- Minutes of the previous meeting read or reviewed and a vote to accept or change
- Business arising from the Minutes
- Correspondence
- Reports
 - Treasurer
 - Secretary
 - GSR
 - Other
- Any other business (‘AOB’)
- Closing

The need for regular meetings

A group is more likely to thrive and function effectively if it conducts regular meetings. Whatever names it uses, such meetings should discuss, report and take decisions on the group’s activities and the way it functions. The meetings should also ensure that the group periodically takes an inventory of its decisions and the service which it provides to carry out AA’s primary purpose of carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.