

How to Conduct a Sharing Session

Service Material from the General Service Office

The purpose of a Sharing Session is to fill a need for improved communication among Area committee, Districts, and Groups, thereby strengthening services in A.A. through cooperation. These sessions are called for a specific purpose requiring shared experience and ideas, in order to best serve Alcoholics Anonymous. Sharing Sessions are not designed to reach a conclusion as, say, at a regular A.A. business meeting. They are usually held where a problem has reached difficult proportions at the service level involved, and options to surmount the challenge need to be thought about.

The usual Sharing Session format provides for a “chairperson” who presents the problem to be discussed, and then asks for comments. Participants respond, usually going around the room, speaking for no longer than a specific time agreed upon ahead of time by everyone present (perhaps 1 or 2 minutes), after which a bell is rung to indicate “time up.” A participant may speak again on the same topic only after all others have shared once. He or she may then speak again, in turn. The sharing continues until all have said what they need to say on each go around the room. Remember, no one need ever be ashamed of his or her opinion.

While the sharing is taking place, a volunteer “secretary” takes down the essence of what is shared. This write-up should be both brief and informal. Since sharing on a specific topic may take an hour or more before it is exhausted, it is usually better to plan on having only one topic per Sharing Session. Again, no individual should attempt to sum or draw conclusions at the end of a Sharing Session. Each participant will have received “food for thought.” However, often it will be found that a group conscience has emerged.

To be effective, Sharing Sessions should include no more than 30 participants (larger groups can be broken into two sessions). These sessions may also be built into regular Area, District or Group meetings. Area Committees may find that Sharing Sessions foster greater interest and willingness on the part of G.S.R.s to participate. Districts and Groups may find Sharing Sessions a preferred way to discuss issues that are particularly sensitive or thorny.

Your General Service Office is glad to hear from you on how your Sharing Session turns out.

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