

What are closed or open meetings?

Close meetings are for A.A. members only, or for those who have a drinking problem and "have a desire to stop drinking."

Open meetings are available to anyone interested in Alcoholics Anonymous' program of recovery from alcoholism. Non alcoholics may attend open meetings as observers.

What happens if I meet people I know?

They will be there for the same reason you are. A.A.s do not disclose your identity to outsiders or even others inside our fellowship. You retain as much anonymity as you wish. That is one of the reasons we call ourselves Alcoholics Anonymous. (2)

What A.A. does not do

- Furnish initial motivation for alcoholics to recover.
- Solicit members.
- Engage in or sponsor research.
- Keep attendance records or case histories.
- Join "councils" of social agencies.
- Follow up or try to control its members.
- Make medical or psychological diagnoses or prognoses.
- Provide drying-out or nursing services, hospitalization, drugs, or any medical or psychiatric treatment.
- Offer religious services.
- Engage in education about alcohol.
- Provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money or any other welfare or social services.
- Provide domestic or vocational counseling.
- Accept any money for its services, or any contributions from non-AA sources.
- Provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers, court officials, social agencies, employers, etc.

1) (Reprinted from A Brief Guide to Alcoholics Anonymous, with permission of A.A. World Service, Inc.)

2) (Reprinted from A Newcomer Asks, with permission of A.A. World Service, Inc.)

3) (Reprinted from The A.A. Group pg. 14, with permission of A.A. World Service, Inc.)

A Declaration of Unity

This we owe to A.A.'s future:
To place our common welfare first;
To keep our fellowship united.
For on A.A. unity depend our lives,
And the lives of those to come.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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I am responsible ...

When anyone, anywhere,
reaches out for help, I want
the hand of A.A. always to be there.
And for that: I am responsible.

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PEOPLE ASK...

ANSWERING NEWCOMERS QUESTIONS



What is alcoholism?

As A.A. sees it, alcoholism is an illness. Alcoholics cannot control their drinking, because they are ill in their bodies and in their minds (or emotions), A.A. believes. If they do not stop drinking, their alcoholism almost always gets worse and worse.

Both the American Medical Association and British Medical Association, chief organizations of doctors in those countries, also have said that alcoholism is an illness. (1)

What Is A.A.?

Alcoholics Anonymous is a worldwide fellowship of men and women who help each other to stay sober. They offer the same help to anyone who has a drinking problem and wants to do something about it. Since they are all alcoholics themselves, they have a special understanding of each other. They know what the illness feels like—and they have learned how to recover from it in A.A.

A.A. members say that they are alcoholics today—even when they have not had a drink for many years. They do not say that they are “cured.” Once people have lost their ability to control their drinking, they can never again be sure of drinking safely—or, in other words, they can never become “former alcoholics” or “ex-alcoholics.” But in A.A. they can become sober alcoholics, *recovered* alcoholics. (1)

Frequently Asked Questions

Am I an alcoholic?

Not all alcoholics have the same symptoms, but many—at different stages in the illness—show these signs: They find that only alcohol can make them feel self-confident and at ease with other people; often want “just one more” at the end of a party; look forward to drinking occasions and think about them a lot; get drunk when they had not planned to; try to control their drinking by changing types of liquor; going on the wagon, or taking pledges; sneak drinks; lie about their drinking; hide bottles; drink at work(or in school); drink alone; have blackouts (that is, cannot remember the next day what they said or did the night before); drink in the morning, to relieve severe hangovers, guilty feelings and fears; fail to eat and become malnourished; get cirrhosis of the liver; shake violently, hallucinate, or have convulsions when withdrawn from liquor.

If I go to an A.A. meeting, does that commit me to anything?

No. A.A. does not keep membership files, nor attendance records. You do not have to reveal anything about yourself. No one will bother you if you don't want to come back. (2)

How do I join A.A.?

You are an A.A. member if and when you say you are. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking and many of us were not very wholehearted about that when we first approached A.A. (2)

Why do A.A.s keep going to meetings after they are cured?

We in A.A. believe there is no such thing as a cure for alcoholism. We can never return to normal drinking, and our ability to stay away from alcohol depends on maintaining our physical, mental, and spiritual health. This we can achieve by going to meetings regularly and putting into practice what we learn there. In addition, we find it helps us to stay sober if we help other alcoholics (2)

What advice do you give new members?

In our experience, the people who recover in A.A. are those who:

- stay away from the first drink one day at a time.
- attend A.A. meetings regularly
- seek out the people in AA they like who have successfully stayed sober for some time
- put into practice the simple principles of A.A.'s program of recovery (2)

About A.A. Meetings

Here are some issues a lot of us worried about before coming to our first A.A. meeting

Will I be asked a lot of questions?

No, it's not like going to a doctor or a health clinic. A.A. meetings are very informal. Just take a seat and listen to the stories members will tell about their drinking and their recovery.

Do I have to "sign up"?

No. There's nothing to sign, no oaths to make nor pledges to take. If, at some stage you want to join a particular group you just say so. If you want to keep

drinking that's your business. We just suggest that, if you want to stop drinking, you try doing what we did.

How much will it cost?

Nothing. There is no charge for attending A.A. meetings. Usually voluntary contributions are made at the end of each meeting to cover the costs of renting the hall and providing refreshments. There's no obligation to contribute but most people put a few dollars in the basket.

Do I have to get up and speak in front of people?

No. Persons new to A.A. are not called upon to speak at meetings.

Is A.A. a religious organization?

No. Some A.A. meetings are held in church halls but A.A. groups are in no way affiliated with the churches or other organizations whose meeting rooms we rent. The AA program is certainly a spiritual one, but what that means is left up to the individual to decide.

What types of meetings are there?

Here are some of the meetings held by A.A. groups:

- Contribution
 - Members who have been sober for some time share their experience, strength and hope at the meeting.
- Step, Tradition, or Big Book
 - Because the Twelve Steps are the foundation of personal recovery in A.A. many groups devote one or more meetings a month to the study of each step in rotation. These same formats may be applied to group meetings on the Big Book or the Twelve Traditions. Many groups make it a practice to read aloud pertinent material from A.A. literature.
- Beginners
 - Usually led by a group member who has been sober awhile, these are often question-and-answer sessions to help newcomers. Beginners meetings may also follow a discussion format, or focus on newcomer issues.
- Discussion
 - Whether closed or open, an A.A. member serving as “leader” or “chair” opens the meeting, using that group's format and the Group selects a topic for discussion.(3)