



The Al-Anon Welcome! - Back to Basics

Living Tradition Five at our Meetings

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Introduction

I am grateful for my home group and how I feel when I am there. Reflecting on that I started to think why is that? What is that all about? I know today that it is rooted in ***The Al-Anon Welcome*** both in word and deed that we offer to newcomers and regular attending members. With each new day as we distance ourselves from the severity of the pandemic and work at regaining the feel of our program of recovery that we all long for, it is good to go back to the basics and be reminded of what we are all called to do as Al-Anon Family Groups.

This document is an updated version of my earlier Memo entitled *The Art of Welcoming Today* which focused on the challenges of welcoming in the virtual world. Now, many groups have settled back to their physical locations and some have made decisions to become permanently electronic. The principles remain the same for all groups. It is important to acknowledge what we do well today. Also, it is helpful to remember the things we did before that were rewarding but we may have gotten away from. May this sharing shed light on how a warm welcome offers love, comfort, support, help and understanding to those that seek it. Alcoholism is a devastating disease. In Al-Anon, we help ourselves and others by offering the hope of our program and connecting with others

Tradition Five

Let's start with the principles in Tradition Five - it is always appropriate to think about how we are welcoming new members, visitors, and even our regular attending home group

members whether we are meeting in person, electronically, or hybrid. Our Tradition Five states – **“Each Al-Anon Family Group has but one purpose: to help families of alcoholics. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps of AA ourselves, by encouraging and understanding our alcoholic relatives, and by welcoming and giving comfort to families of alcoholics.”** So how do we welcome and give comfort to those who come ‘through our doors’? And why do we do it?

Our Al-Anon book, *Path’s to Recovery - Al-Anon’s Steps, Traditions and Concepts* (B-24) has a rich chapter on Tradition Five and all that it holds. It illustrates that a place to start in welcoming others is to ask ourselves, **“What helped me?”** (*Paths to Recovery*, p. 176) Also, at the end of the chapter there is a list of questions that we can use for personal and group exploration on this Tradition.

The art of welcoming involves us focusing on our sole purpose to help families and friends of alcoholics while allowing others to decide for themselves whether they are eligible for membership in Al-Anon. (*Paths to Recovery*, p. 180) When we offer our program undiluted it allows us to identify with each other. What a privilege to help someone find freedom from the despair of being impacted by someone else’s drinking. (*How Al-Anon Works for Families and Friends of Alcoholics* (B-22), p. 114) Tradition Five helps us keep our focus allowing us all to heal one day at a time, one meeting at a time.

Our Literature



Our message is in our literature!

Members having access to our literature can be a big part of welcoming people at our meetings. For in person meetings, having both Al-Anon and Alateen literature available can be helpful. One sure way that a new member knows they

have found the Al-Anon/Alateen meeting place, is that they see our literature when they arrive. I remember that feeling! And I still love seeing our literature on display. But what about literature for those attending online? How will your group make literature available to members attending electronically?

A couple ideas are that we can lead them to our PA literature distribution centers to purchase literature ([LDC6](#), [LDC Pittsburgh](#), for the LDC Erie (D12) email ldc.erie@pa-al-anon.org). For purchasing literature online, we can direct them to the WSO online store <https://ecomm.al-anon.org/>. Along with the printed conference approved literature (CAL), there are many pieces of our literature offered in electronic format. Check out: [Electronic Literature & Audio Books](#).

We have both a printed newcomers packet (K-10) and electronic newcomers packet (eK-10). Here is a 'short link' that goes directly to the electronic *Welcome Newcomer!* packet > pa-al-anon.link/Newcomer-Packet. This link could be posted in the chat during electronic meetings or shared with newcomers directly to help them easily find the packet online to purchase for themselves. It is offered for sale on multiple electronic platforms for a nominal fee like the printed packet. Certain electronic platforms do offer an option to those that purchase the Newcomer Packet to buy it again and then gift it to an email address.

As we offer new members the Newcomers Packet, another or additional option is to let them know that there is a webpage from the WSO that they can visit. The link is <https://al-anon.org/welcome>. We can encourage others to check it out as a way to get newcomer information electronically.

Keeping it Simple

What can your group consistently do well? When deciding how to meet, that is a question a group can ask to help them make decisions. Many newcomers find our meetings by doing online meeting searches. Is our meeting information accurate in group records? And are we consistently meeting as we have indicated we will? The courage a newcomer needs to decide to attend a meeting is the first step and us being there for them is the next important part. I would encourage all groups to operate with the idea of ***always expecting the newcomer***. With that in mind, we will go early, have our literature ready and our service positions filled so we can carry the message of recovery to all who come in search of our unique services. In addition, does our meeting have a relaxed or pleasant feel? Or are things unsettled and uncertain? What can we do to remedy that?

Unity and participation are important aspects of welcoming. For hybrid meetings it is good to ask ourselves if we have sufficient technology skills and equipment to create an atmosphere in our meeting that gives comfort and fosters safety.

Our Tradition Twelve tells us that anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our Traditions. Let us also keep in mind this important principle of anonymity and how vital it is for newcomers and all members to know they are safe in Al-Anon. Do members feel safe and do we assure them that - whom you see here, what we hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here? Many groups read an anonymity statement during their opening to help members and visitors understand this principle and some actions that support it.

The Personal Touch

Greeters and members that invite others to share in our conversions before and after the meetings is beyond measure. One of the things that was said to me at my home group when I was new in the program was, "See you next week, Lori." I am forever grateful for how I received the 'Al-Anon embrace' - they welcomed me by; telling me their name, accepting me as I was, saying my name, introducing me to our literature, explaining what Al-Anon is, listening to me, answering my questions, hugging me, offering me their number, and inviting me back!

Along with our many books and pamphlets, our [Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual](#) as well as the guideline [Beginners' Meeting \(G-2\)](#) offer guidance and ideas to welcome newcomers and members such as offering to talk with them at or between meetings which can help carry them to their next meeting.

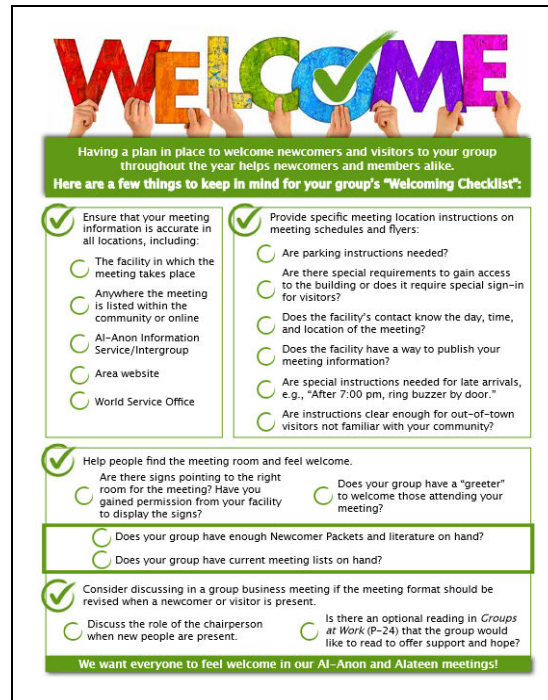
"The newcomer to Al-Anon/Alateen is often nervous, lonely, and usually desperate. In addition to the help, guidance, and literature provided by the group, individual attention and the friendship of an established member can be of great help." (2022-2025 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual v2 (P-24/27), p. 38)

Welcoming Checklist

In conclusion, I would also like to again mention the Al-Anon '**Welcoming Checklist**' that you may find helpful to use as a topic at your group's business meeting whether you are

meeting in person, electronically or hybrid. It can be downloaded free at >
<https://al-anon.org/pdf/welcoming-checklist.pdf>.

“Having a plan in place to welcome newcomers and visitors to your group throughout the year helps newcomers and members alike.” (Welcoming Checklist)



WELCOME

Having a plan in place to welcome newcomers and visitors to your group throughout the year helps newcomers and members alike.
Here are a few things to keep in mind for your group's "Welcoming Checklist":

- Ensure that your meeting information is accurate in all locations, including:
 - The facility in which the meeting takes place
 - Anywhere the meeting is listed within the community or online
 - Al-Anon Information Service/Intergroup
 - Area website
 - World Service Office
- Provide specific meeting location instructions on meeting schedules and flyers:
 - Are parking instructions needed?
 - Are there special requirements to gain access to the building or does it require special sign-in for visitors?
 - Does the facility's contact know the day, time, and location of the meeting?
 - Does the facility have a way to publish your meeting information?
 - Are special instructions needed for late arrivals, e.g., "After 7:00 pm, ring buzzer by door."
 - Are instructions clear enough for out-of-town visitors not familiar with your community?
- Help people find the meeting room and feel welcome.
 - Are there signs pointing to the right room for the meeting? Have you gained permission from your facility to display the signs?
 - Does your group have a "greeter" to welcome those attending your meeting?
 - Does your group have enough Newcomer Packets and literature on hand?
 - Does your group have current meeting lists on hand?
- Consider discussing in a group business meeting if the meeting format should be revised when a newcomer or visitor is present.
 - Discuss the role of the chairperson when new people are present.
 - Is there an optional reading in *Groups at Work* (P-24) that the group would like to read to offer support and hope?

We want everyone to feel welcome in our Al-Anon and Alateen meetings!

Let it Begin with Me

Thank you for reading, sharing and applying this document. I hope you find my thoughts helpful. Moving forward, please continue to consider the Al-Anon basics when we strive to give comfort and welcome to our members at our groups. The hope we offer may be the magnet that draws others to their next meeting. "We do want everyone to feel welcome in our Al-Anon and Alateen meetings!" (*Welcoming Checklist*)

As our Al-Anon Declaration states, ***"Let it begin with me. When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, let the hand of Al-Anon and Alateen always be there and let it begin with me."***

Let us do our part and keep each other close! As you extend the hand of Al-Anon, thank you for your service to our worldwide fellowship and its prospective members.

All my best to you and your group. For more information or if you have questions on this topic, please don't hesitate to contact me or your District Representative. **Thanks** 😊