



Rhode Island Al-Anon Family Group Meeting Safety Suggestions



In accordance with the Al-Anon Tradition One, *“our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity”*, safety and a safe meeting place must be considered for the individual member, individual groups, and the collective Al-Anon family. Disruptive, hostile and intimidating behaviors should not and cannot be enabled. Therefore, under the premise of Tradition Four, *“Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting another group or Al-Anon or AA as a whole”*, discerning appropriate solutions and processes rests as the group’s level of responsibility. When no resolution evolves, groups can follow their links of services; contact your District Rep for support and if further help is needed, contact the RI Area. *Meeting members may call police or other public safety officials if there is an immediate danger.*

SUGGESTIONS FOR RESPONDING TO SPECIFIC SAFETY ISSUES

- Request a group conscience from group members to assess the immediate safety concern and potential resolutions (suggested questions on following page)
- Add a short message of upholding the Traditions and maintaining a safe meeting environment in the opening or closing statement of the meeting. This can include safe sharing guidelines, prohibition of crosstalk or dominance, bullying, etc.
- Chairperson or long-time member kindly redirects the person’s sharing by reminding the group of safe sharing guidelines.
- If the person becomes argumentative, the chairperson or a meeting member meeting may call a break to diffuse the situation.
- In extreme situations:
 - authorities may be called if an offender does not cooperate; although anonymity is the spiritual foundation of Alanon, it does not supersede members’ rights to protect themselves
 - an offender can be asked to leave the meeting and not return

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROACTIVELY ASSESSING A GROUP’S SAFETY ISSUES

It is valuable for groups to assess their specific safety needs outside of immediate situations such as fire, neighborhood safety, etc. Meetings can take a group conscience to make the meeting more secure (suggestions questions on the next page).

FURTHER READING

These are a few suggestions drawn from RIAFG member experiences, however, each group can approach safety in any manner their Higher Power directs in their group conscience. Visit the world service office’s publication *“Let’s Talk About Safety”* for more suggestions:

<https://al-anon.org/pdf/Safety-in-Al-Anon-meetings.pdf>

Questions or topics for discussion within a group conscience regarding a specific disruptive situation

- **Type of offense**
Is this situation a personal or group problem? Has the behavior gone beyond tolerable? Is this a habitual behavior of the person or is it a onetime offense?
- **Effect on member recovery**
How is this behavior affecting your personal recovery? How safe do you feel attending the meeting knowing that the person may also attend? Does this person's behavior discourage you from attending the meeting?
- **Discussion**
How do we discuss the issue without it becoming gossip or biased?
- **Action**
What actions does the group take to prevent the behavior reoccurring? Who in the group would be responsible (Chairperson, Group Representative, Group Members as a Whole)? When would the responsible member confront the offender? How to handle the situation?
- **Outside Authorities**
Do group members know their rights to call the police or obligation to report illegal or threatening activity? What about anonymity?
- **Follow Up Action**
What consequences would the group implement if the offender does not refrain from the offending behavior?

Questions or topics of discussion within a group conscience proactively evaluating the meeting's general safety needs

Determining Needs

- Does our group have any significant issues that threaten group unity?
 - If yes, Is it personal to only someone, but not a group problem?
 - If it is a group problem, is it a group Safety Problem?
 - What types of behavior make members feel unsafe?
- What potential safety issues could the group have due to the location of the meeting, needed locks or alarms, parking, light or darkness?
- Would the group like to have a business meeting solely devoted to the topic of individual member and group safety?
- How to deal with predatory or unwanted targeting of members which occurs outside of the meeting room?

General meeting safety suggestions

- Compile a simple summary of group guidelines or procedures for safety, put it in writing, and put in the group binder for reference and continuity.
- The group becomes informed on how to contact the meeting location security personnel if necessary.
- Group members are given a copy of the WSO *"Let's Talk About Safety"* or directed how to locate it online.
- Allow for any person who feels somewhat unsafe to be empowered to request a willing member not involved in the situation to be their "safety or meeting buddy".