

Guide for New and Existing EA Groups

The following are suggestions for the operation of EA groups which have proven successful in encouraging group unity and individual recovery. This should be read carefully by the group and kept available for reference and for reading by new members. The International Service Center (ISC) staff and your regional trustee are available if you have further questions.

What is Emotions Anonymous?

EA is a fellowship of people who want to recover from mild or severe emotional illness and maintain their emotional health. The basis for recovery in the program is the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts. These are the guiding principles which individuals and groups follow for the successful functioning of Emotions Anonymous and its meetings.

What is the purpose of EA?

Emotions Anonymous has the single purpose of helping individuals with emotional problems cope with everyday life. Members meet to share their experience, strength, and hope as they learn about and use this twelve-step program. Recovering individuals help those who are still suffering.

How is EA organized? EA groups are not organized in the same way or to the same extent as other organizations. There are no requirements for membership other than a desire to become well emotionally. Groups do not keep membership lists. Groups are free to decide what is best for them as long as their decisions are based on the Twelve Traditions and do not negatively affect other EA groups or the entire EA organization.

EA is organized at the administrative level. This includes the EA International Board of Trustees, the International Service Center (ISC), and local intergroups. The Board of Trustees approves EA literature, formulates policies guiding the EA program, and authorizes the services provided to EA groups and members. The Board of Trustees is governed by the Bylaws of EA International which have been approved by the membership. The regional trustees are elected by the members they serve. The ISC publishes and distributes EA books, literature and The New Message magazine. It assists groups and members with information about the EA program.

What is anonymity?

Anonymity means: we do not divulge another member's identity, anyone's membership in EA, or anything said by another member at meetings. Anonymity is respected at all times. It is each person's own decision whether to exchange full names and phone numbers with others. Only first names are used in any news release or news article in order to maintain anonymity in the press and on radio and television.

What type of meetings are there?

EA meetings are primarily "step meetings." At step meetings, members discuss one of the Twelve Steps and how it applies to their daily lives, sharing how they have received help from the EA program. As we grow in EA, we also grow in our knowledge and understanding of the steps. With growth, these steps are always new and exciting as we see them from a fresh perspective.

Groups may hold public information meetings where the general public is invited to learn about the EA program and the availability of meetings. The Public Information Meeting Guide contains helpful information concerning how to plan and carry out this type of meeting.

Do professionals lead EA meetings?

There are no professional facilitators at EA meetings. Professionals may join Emotions Anonymous just as other people do—because they have emotional problems from which they wish to recover.

What materials are used at EA meetings?

Only EA-approved books, literature, and The New Message magazine are made available at meetings. These items can be purchased from the ISC and sold at meetings. Any other books, magazines, workbooks, etc. are not allowed at our meetings because our focus is on the EA program and not other therapies or philosophies.

Are contributions needed?

The Emotions Anonymous program and attendance at EA meetings are open to anyone seeking recovery; therefore, no dues or fees are required for membership. Contributions are requested at meetings to pay the expenses of the group and to contribute to the ISC and your local intergroup. Money is needed by the ISC to provide coordination, administration, and informational services to EA groups throughout the world. Intergroups need money to provide information, support, and referral services to groups in their area.

What is sponsorship?

Sponsorship is a mutual agreement between two people who wish to sponsor and be sponsored. The purpose of sponsorship is to assist a member in recovery and in working the Twelve Steps. Sponsorship is voluntary and sponsors are not assigned to another member.

How does EA publicize its meetings?

Groups need to inform people in their area about Emotions Anonymous. To do this groups can list meetings in the community calendar of local newspapers, distribute flyers, and inform churches, social service agencies, therapists, psychiatrists, and other professionals of their existence. Groups can also participate in Health Fairs and other community awareness projects. The ISC has a guide available on how to do these projects.

What is an intergroup?

If there are several groups in the same area, they may want to form an intergroup. An intergroup helps bring groups together to promote EA unity and understanding, and enables groups to exchange information and pool resources. Groups elect one or two members to represent them and to vote on issues at intergroup meetings. All members of the group are welcome to attend the intergroup meetings.

How is an EA Group started?

Anyone who recognizes his or her own need for this program and is willing to follow the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of Emotions Anonymous may start a group. If you wish to start a group, the following suggestions may be helpful.

Become familiar with the EA program. It is best to have some knowledge of the EA program before starting a group. This can be done by reading the book, Emotions Anonymous, and other EA literature, and by beginning to work the program on your own. The ISC can provide you with information on the EA meeting nearest you. By attending those meetings, even if they are too great a distance for your permanent attendance, you can gain experience with the program. Members of that group might help you start a new group in your area.

Obtain meeting facilities. Contact a community facility which has public meeting rooms available such as churches, synagogues, libraries, banks, community centers, or hospitals. Arrange for a specific day and time which can be available throughout the year. Discuss paying rent since Tradition Seven requires EA groups to be self-supporting. Each group has the obligation of compensating the facility for the use of their premises.

Try to find a place which is accessible to people with handicaps. Also, the meeting room should provide privacy and be easy to find. Restrooms should be available. Find out if smoking is allowed and decide if the group will permit it. If there are no facilities for making coffee, etc., make certain it is permissible for you to bring in what you might want. Inquire about a place to store meeting supplies.

Send for needed literature. The following materials are found in our "Starting A Group" packet: General instructions for forming a group, listing of EA meetings in your area, catalogue and order form for EA socks and literature, group registration form, Welcome to a New Way of Life, The Yellow Pamphlet, Suggested Format for EA Meetings, Guide for New and Existing EA Groups, News Release Information and How Our Meetings Work. This packet is complimentary and can be obtained by contacting the ISC. EA also offers a Starter Packet which contains many necessary pieces of literature at a discounted price. Included in this packet is the booklet, The Traditions, which explains in detail the Twelve Traditions on which Emotions Anonymous is based. This information will help guide your group when making decisions.

Register the group. After arranging for a meeting place, notify the ISC of your meeting day, time, location, and the contact person's full name, address, and phone number. A form for this purpose is included with the materials for starting a group. The full name and address of the contact person is used by the ISC for EA-related mailings which include the group's copy of the quarterly New Message, annual convention information, and any mailings from your regional trustee or other EA groups.

It is very important for your group to keep the ISC informed of changes in your meeting day, time, location, or contact person information. Up-to-date information will insure that people find your meeting and that all important information from the ISC is received by your group. The meeting information is printed in the EA World Directory, in the list of EA meetings for your area, once in The New Message magazine, and with meeting information on our web site. The contact person's first name and phone number are made available so people can call about specific information or with questions concerning your meeting.

Arranging the meeting room. It is best for chairs to be arranged so as to allow everyone to feel a part of the group. This usually is in a circle or around tables. Theater-style seating is not recommended because it can incorrectly indicate that the leader is the authority of the group and those sitting in rows are merely the audience. Signs are posted directing people to the meeting room. EA meeting signs can be purchased from the ISC. The Suggested Format for EA Meetings is a useful guide for conducting meetings. EA literature is sold at your group's cost with the price indicated on each item. You are a guest at this location and the room needs to be left neat and clean, and those attending the meeting must be courteous to others using the building.

Group leadership:

The person or persons who form the group accept the responsibility of regular attendance and leadership until other group members are able to share in this responsibility. When this happens group leadership should rotate. The group should not become dependent on any one person. The basic duties of the leader are to conduct the meeting, have the meeting start and end on time, and see that everyone has an opportunity to participate. Meetings usually last 1 to 1 1/2 hours. It may also be helpful to have different members in charge of setting up the meeting room, literature and refreshments. The groups decides what officers are needed and the length of their service. The only officers absolutely necessary are treasurer and contact person.

Group Conscience:

Understanding "group conscience" is important as EA decisions concerning the group and group issues are decided by it. When a issue arises, a period to discuss the issue should be set. It is important those voting are well informed and understand the issue at hand. When everyone has had an equal opportunity to speak and discuss the issue, a vote should be taken. A majority vote indicates "group conscience" and the action to be taken.

When problems arise, the literature Maintaining Group Serenity and the Group Inventory might be helpful in providing solutions.

Group Finances:

Weekly contributions should be counted by the treasurer and another member. The amount should be recorded on the Treasurer's Weekly Record Form. This form can also be used to record the group expenses. It is advisable for the group's bank account to require two signatures on all checks. The treasurer should make a monthly report to the group. If your treasurer is absent, contributions should be collected by an established member and given to the treasurer at the next meeting. For security of the group's money, it is desirable for the treasurer to be someone who has attended the group for a year or more and expects to remain involved. This person needs to be honest and trustworthy.

Steering Committee:

Once the group is established you may want to form a Steering Committee. It might consist of a coordinator, secretary, treasurer and member-at-large. Steering Committee meetings usually are held before or after the regular meeting. These meetings should be announced in advance as all members are welcome to attend. Steering committee action should be submitted to the group for approval.

The Steering Committee should lead a group business meeting every four to six weeks to discuss the treasurer's report, expenses, group activities, information from the New Message, how the meetings are progressing, group problems, etc.

We wish you and your group success and recovery.

If we can be of further assistance, contact:

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