

How Our Meetings Work

Why is this a step meeting?

Our meetings are structured to assist individuals who want to achieve and maintain emotional health by understanding and utilizing the Twelve Steps of Emotions Anonymous in their daily lives. We have found that these steps are essential for bringing about personal change, growth, and recovery. At our meetings, we discuss a different step each week, share how we use the step and how the step helps us. We learn more about each step from hearing the ideas of others.

What if we haven't worked the step being discussed?

No one is excluded from participating in a meeting because he or she is a newcomer or has not yet worked the step being discussed. We can always share our feelings about the step and what we do or do not understand about it. It doesn't matter what step the group is on when we first come to a meeting. As we listen we can usually relate to what others are sharing.

Why don't we discuss our problems?

We find it is more productive to discuss solutions rather than problems. Before coming to Emotions Anonymous, most of us spent many hours discussing our problems and, as a result, we were focused on being victims of those problems. We felt sorry for ourselves and this did not help. If our meetings are consumed with each of us describing how terrible our week has been, how unhappy we are with ourselves and the people in our lives, we will gain very little knowledge or insight. As we focus on the Twelve Steps in our sharing, we can often tie our emotional problems directly to the step being discussed and thereby gain insight into how to apply this step to our situation. We leave the meeting feeling optimistic and hopeful because we have new ideas of how to deal with our problems, and we see how we can make positive changes.

Why do we discourage cross talk and feedback during the meeting?

Cross talk is interrupting someone by breaking in with unsolicited remarks during the speaker's time for sharing. Another example is indulging in side discussions with someone while the speaker is talking. This distracts others from what the speaker is saying. By eliminating cross talk and feedback, all members have a chance to share, if they desire, without their remarks being questioned or suggestions made about what they should do. In this way, the purpose of our meeting remains to focus on ourselves and our own recovery rather than giving advice to others. Sometimes a newer member will ask for feedback on a specific problem. Taking time during the meeting to do this can deprive others of their time to share or can distract everyone from the topic of the meeting. If someone wants suggestions, it is usually better to take time before or after the meeting for such a discussion. Telephone calls between members during the week can be a good way

to share experiences in a more personal way than is possible in a meeting. The best support we can give to anyone is to listen and share our experience with the Twelve Steps.

What if someone strays from the subject of the meeting?

It is important for the entire group that a member not wander off the step into personal rambling and complaints. If this occurs very often, any member (not only the leader) may gently, politely, and respectfully remind the person to return to discussing the meeting topic. This is one instance when an interruption is appropriate.

How is the leader of the meeting chosen?

When a new meeting is started, the person establishing it will usually lead for the first few meetings and then ask if anyone would like to volunteer to lead the next meeting. Usually by that time, other members are comfortable enough and realize that the leader is not expected to have answers for everyone. The leader is simply someone who is willing to follow the suggested format and begin and end the meeting on time. No one is ever coerced into leading if they choose not to.

Why don't we discuss religion?

The Twelve Steps focus on a belief in a Higher Power *of our understanding*. We may be accustomed to being part of other groups whose goal is agreement regarding beliefs. Therefore, it can be startling at first to realize that in a room full of EA members, it is okay for every person to have a different concept of a Higher Power or no concept at all. In EA we respect one another by not trying to change another's mind. This does not mean we can never mention religion, but our focus is on our own spiritual growth and a concept of a Higher Power that is right for us.

Why do we continue to study the steps?

Each time we return to a step our understanding of it grows. Many times members have commented that in rereading a step they saw a word or phrase they had never noticed before, and this added new meaning for them. As our self-awareness grows, we see more and different ways to apply a step to our lives. We find that the steps can actually be applied to everything that is happening in our lives.

How do we work the steps?

There is no right or wrong way to work the steps, but most members find it beneficial to do them in order. Without the basis of what is learned about ourselves in the first steps, it is difficult to gain the benefits of the later steps. It is helpful to read the book, Emotions Anonymous, and the booklet, Step by Step, both of which provide a guide for working the Twelve Steps. This literature gives direction in doing the steps and when shared with

a sponsor or another EA member helps us to learn trust and **unconditional love** — **perhaps** for the first time.

What is a sponsor?

A sponsor is someone who is working the Twelve Steps and is willing to share his or her experience and knowledge with others. A sponsor is someone who is detached from our situation and can help us see how we can use the EA program in our daily lives.

How do we choose a sponsor?

Choosing a sponsor is a very personal decision. Listen to what people have to say in meetings and find someone you can trust and with whom you feel comfortable. It is beneficial to choose someone who has achieved some level of recovery from this program. Ask them to tell you how they did it. It is usually not helpful to choose someone with whom you can commiserate. It is all right to change sponsors if you find that person is not providing what you need for growth in the EA program. If a request for sponsorship is declined, this need not cause hurt feelings. No one is obligated to be a sponsor. An individual may not be in a place to provide the kind of support a sponsoree needs. Ask someone else and trust your Higher Power's decision.

How long will I need to attend meetings?

We recommend that you attend six to twelve meetings before you decide if Emotions Anonymous is for you. Most people find the steps and this program to be confusing at first, and it usually takes more than one or two meetings to actually begin the process of recovery. We encourage you to try different meetings in your area to find the one where you feel the most comfortable.

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