**October 2021 Assembly Workshop**

**Healthy Meetings Retain Newcomers Notes**

Newcomers are essential to the health and ongoing life of our meetings. They come looking for support in times of crisis. How do we capitalize on what we offer so newcomers are more likely to return - growing our numbers, bringing new perspectives and voices of experience, strength and hope to our sharing and the potential for new service members? Following are suggestion to consider in efforts to retain newcomers. Workshop time constraints limited participant sharing (see blue text). Additional suggestions culled from workshop planning are also included.

**Workshop Questions & Suggestions**

1. To retain newcomers, you have to plan for newcomers. What are some things the meeting or individual members can do to plan for newcomers?

* Identify someone(s) to greet/give newcomer packet and blue book. After meeting, approach to again welcome and ask if they have questions.
* For virtual meetings, consider having a meeting contact email and share the pamphlets New to Nar-Anon or Thinking About Attending a Meeting and Nar-Anon Offers Hope when you make your first email contact.
* Share the Carolina Nar-Anon Meeting list so they can explore other meetings
* Have newcomer packets and blue booklet to display, hand out or mail (ask if they are comfortable sharing their mailing address).
* Start a newcomer meeting (30 – 45 minutes) then facilitator accompanies newcomer to meeting easing transition to the group)
* Consider opening the meeting early and announce/invite newcomers to attend
* Individual members be aware of newcomers and include them, don’t just look for your friends.
* If you feel a connection to a newcomer, consider sharing that connection and your email or phone number.

2. What are the first things you think about giving a newcomer in terms of resources?

* Newcomer packet
* Blue booklet
* Phone/email list
* Consider sharing pamphlets mentioned under question 1.
* Explain the SESH book and how to get it
* Explain the group email listserv and ask if they would like to be added
* Explain Step work and the Nar-Anon 36
* Share information about how the group and meeting work

3. How do you include newcomers (in-person or virtual) in your meeting?

* Let the newcomer know they will have an opportunity to share at the end of the meeting, if they would like to, no pressure
* Let the newcomer know they may share during the meeting or just sit back and listen
* Invite them to come early or stay after the meeting to talk to someone or a small group
* Consider setting up a Newcomer meeting before regular meeting or give newcomers option to step out with a member to get newcomer info and rejoin meeting for the lead
* Develop list/points to share with newcomers (see a sample format following the notes)
* Share about the Three C’s (Didn’t Cause, Can’t Control, Can’t Cure)
* A fourth C – Won’t Contribute – suggestions develop a pamphlet based on the 4 C’s
* Share we used to be where you are and we understand

4. What are the most important things you would want newcomers to take away from their first meeting?

* They are not alone
* They are in a safe place
* There are things you can do to make your life better whether your addict is using or not
* Nar-Anon offers tools for building a better life
* This is not your fault
* The understanding that an addict is an addict and it doesn't matter the drug

5. Is it important to have a member share why they came to Nar-Anon, if a newcomer is present? If that needs to be structured, how would you structure it?

* It can be useful, because it helps make a personal connection
* Consider structuring this so it doesn’t consume the whole meeting; ask for one person to **briefly** share
* Use Group Conscious to develop the structure

6. If you are a newcomer, what would make you want to come back?

* A welcoming spirit about the meeting
* Not being put on the spot
* Giving the opportunity to join in as it feels right over time – no pressure
* Hearing someone’s experience of being in Nar-Anon
* Coming away with a tidbit

7. If you are a newcomer, what would scare you away?

* Pressure to speak or share
* Seeing someone you didn’t expect to see
* Being ignored or not welcomed
* Hearing a share that is off-putting; from anger, tragedy, grossly non-program (gossip about the addict, addict update)
* Sharing death of an addict may be problematic

8. If you don’t have a newcomers meeting, how do you help newcomers understand how meetings run and what they are about?

* Sharing pamphlet “New to Nar-Anon or Thinking…”
* Consider giving a few cues or build into the meeting format how meeting runs
* Ask if they have any questions after the meeting
* Encourage them to keep coming back

9. Do you follow up with a newcomer? If yes, what do you do? How much is too much?

* Trust your gut, but remember to respect where people are.
* Follow up with email, text or phone call
* I send three texts to newcomers

10. Do you follow up with no shows? If yes, what do you do? How much is too much?

* Maybe send one text or email, “just touching base, hoping you are okay. We are here.”

As much as we want to have newcomers return to our meetings, we remember to accept them where they are. We do what we can and welcome their participation, but recognize some newcomers may not be ready to hear the message and that is okay. We continue to work to keep our meetings healthy so when they are ready, we will be here to welcome them.

**From Tides of Recovery – Wilmington**

**Newcomer Meeting Format**

1. Leader: Introduce yourself – first name only, to keep our program anonymous.
2. Briefly tell a little of your personal story and what brought you to Nar-Anon.
3. Ask the newcomer: How did you hear about our group?
4. Ask: Would you like to share a little of your story?
5. Hand out the Newcomers’ packet:
6. Suggest reading and re-reading the blue book and literature during the week.
7. Bring the blue book to every meeting.
8. Point out the phone contacts on the back (add your name and number if you are willing)
9. Introduce the Serenity Prayer
10. Explain the Tools of the Program
11. The 12 Steps – *Step 1 - “We admitted we were powerless over the addict – that our lives had become unmanageable.”* We are not responsible for the addict’s behavior.
12. Slogans – 24 Hour Rule, One Day at a Time, Just for Today, etc.
13. Pamphlets - at the meeting, for free
14. Phone contacts – Don’t be afraid to reach out!
15. The Serenity Prayer
16. SESH Daily Reader – available for purchase for $18.00
17. The 3 “C”s. I didn’t Cause it; I can’t Control it; I can’t Cure it.” Addiction is a disease. Be careful not to contribute to it.
18. What to Expect at a Meeting
19. Our meeting lasts 60 minutes. Members share 3-5 minutes.
20. A leader and others will read from the blue book. A topic (i.e., serenity, resentment, fear, letting go) will be introduced then members will introduce themselves, first name only, to protect our anonymity.
21. The meeting is focused on us and our recovery, not on the addict and his/her actions.
22. We do not crosstalk – i.e., ask questions or comment on what others say.
23. You may share at any time you are comfortable or just listen.
24. We close the meeting, hand in hand, and recite the Unity Prayer.
25. Questions?

The Nar-Anon Family Groups are a worldwide fellowship for those affected by addiction. Every meeting is different so try attending several meetings. We are glad you took the courage to come tonight and hope you will keep coming back!