

## **DA Tool #10 — Preparatory meditation and writing for conference registrants:**

Please review the details below, then spend several minutes meditating on your own relationship with anonymity in DA and BDA, both your anonymity and the anonymity of your fellows. Do you feel safe to share your truth in DA and BDA meetings, by phone, online, and face-to-face? (Additional information, beyond what we've shared below, can be found in the *Anonymity* pamphlet available for free download at <https://www.helpfordebtors.org/discontinued-da-pamphlets>.) Then take a look at the next page and consider the difference between anonymity and secrecy.

*DA Tool #10: "Anonymity — We practice anonymity, which allows us freedom of expression by assuring us that what we say at DA meetings or to other DA members at any time will not be repeated."*

Most of us come to DA and BDA isolated with our secrets. We must let those secrets out if we want to recover. Yet, in order for that to happen, our newcomers desire safe places, *which our meetings usually are not*, in our experience (see DA Tool #2 in these workshop materials). We can usually promise physical safety, but not much more; we have to surrender our emotional and spiritual safety to our Higher Powers and our own recovery and growth processes, including outside help when necessary. We can, individually and collectively, promise anonymity, though. If newcomers and solvent, recovering members are to be able to share what they need to share, we must do our best to protect their anonymity before, during, and after our meetings. Not repeating what others have shared at our meetings is a bare minimum and just the beginning.

**Our favorite anonymity statement comes from DA's *Notes to Newcomers*:** "We suggest that you practice the principle of anonymity. Who we see and what we hear at meetings and in private conversation is kept confidential. This principle allows all members the freedom to speak openly and honestly without fear that our words or deeds may be used to harm us. Please respect the anonymity of all DA members."

Some of the DA tools take longer to adopt and absorb than others. For instance, anonymity seems quite simple at first glance, but over time we notice nuances. At first, we may only recognize the need for anonymity at meetings and with other DA members when at meetings. Next, we might notice our desire for anonymity related to business meetings and service. Next, we might notice when we gossip about or criticize fellow members and then we do the work necessary to stop those behaviors.

One subtle form of breaking anonymity is the advice giving that happens before and after meetings. Sharing is not an open invitation to feedback, input, or approval. Often sharing is just an opportunity for us to say aloud something that's been rumbling around in our head and to hear our own thoughts in our own voices, without talking to ourselves — and feeling crazy — at home.

If we want help, we can ask for it during or after the meeting. But accepting unsolicited help should not be a requirement of sharing. We each have the option and responsibility of creating relationships with sponsors and sponsees as part of the general 12-Step recovery model. In DA and BDA, we also have PRGs, action partners, bookending buddies, and folks we make outreach calls to. Those are the folks we usually go to for input and feedback. Random people in meetings, not so much.

In order to respect other members' anonymity, we are well-served by pursuing our desire to solve others' problems and to fix other people somewhere else besides meetings and other DA and BDA interactions. Perhaps we should begin by looking in the mirror, instead of trying to help others without their permission.

**DA Tool #10 — Preparatory meditation and writing for conference registrants — continued:**

Besides our need and desire to speak freely in meetings, we also have a need to be able to maintain our privacy. In all of our DA and BDA relationships — meetings, sponsors, PRGs, outreach calls, service committees, etc. — we share intimate details of our lives. We share what we earn and what we spend; we share our debts and our payment plans; our resentments and our fears; our pasts and our presents; our visions and our dreams. This sharing would be impossible for most of us if our personal or business information were repeated to others inside or outside of the fellowship.

However, anonymity is not secrecy, at least related to our membership in DA and BDA. If we’ve reached Step Ten and have grown comfortable talking about our membership in the DA and BDA program, outside the rooms, we’re right on time! If we have not gained the honesty, openness, and willingness needed to share about both our debting and our recovery, we may need to “dig deeper” into why we are potentially withholding our life-saving message of hope from still-suffering debtors who need to hear exactly what we have to say. We’ll be talking about carrying the message more and more as we wind down these latter principles of the program.

<b>Why do we keep our DA membership a secret ... ?</b>							
	<b>No Secrets Here</b>	<b>Shame</b>	<b>Fear</b>	<b>Worry</b>	<b>Resentments</b>	<b>Debts</b>	<b>Other Reasons (explain)</b>
<b>In Our Business or Work Life</b>							
<b>With Our Friends</b>							
<b>With Our Family</b>							
<b>In Our Other Program(s)</b>							
<b>In Our Spiritual Community</b>							
<b>With Our Healthcare Providers</b>							