

DA Tool #8 — Preparatory meditation and writing for conference registrants:

Please review the business meeting details below, then spend several minutes meditating on your own behaviors when you attend business meetings. Do you participate as part of a group conscience which epitomizes “a loving [Higher Power] as He may express Himself in our group conscience”? (Additional information, beyond what we’ve shared below, can be found in the TWO GSB-approved Business Meeting downloads available at <https://www.helpfordebtors.org/da-and-bda-service-literature> and <https://www.helpfordebtors.org/discontinued-da-pamphlets>.)

DA Tool #8: “Business Meetings — We attend business meetings that are held monthly. Many of us have long harbored feelings that ‘business’ was not a part of our lives but for others more qualified. Yet participation in running our own program teaches us how our organization operates, and also helps us to become responsible for our own recovery.”

- 1) Do I have a home group, a DA or BDA group, which I don’t miss unless I’m in the hospital or out of town?
- 2) Do I attend my home group’s business meetings?
- 3) Do I attend business meetings to serve myself or to serve others?
- 4) Do I still avoid the “business” aspects of DA and BDA? In other areas of my life?
- 5) Do I feel unqualified to participate in “business” or in business meetings?
- 6) What have I learned from participating in business meetings and group service?
- 7) If I’m not attending business meetings, is the problem fear? Fear of what?
- 8) Do I understand how the DA organization operates?
- 9) Have I learned anything in business meetings that has assisted me in my business or workplace?

When it comes to doing the “business” of DA and BDA, our business meetings are fertile ground for our personal growth and recovery. As we practice speaking up and being heard in business meetings, we find we are able to speak up more at work and to be heard in other areas of our lives. As we rely on our and others’ honesty in sharing experience, strength, and hope, we find we can rely on the honesty of people at work and home, too. We de-focus on our opinions, focusing instead on finding Higher Power’s will for us and for our program. As we do our best to set our opinions aside, our opinions become less important to us, and when we’re not defending our opinions, we’re more serene and cooperative.

Bottom line, business meetings can be life changing, if we approach them with humility and curiosity. When we can feel the presence of Higher Power nowhere else, we can feel the Higher Power in our service together, attempting to care for our fellow debtors, both those in program and those who haven’t found us yet. As we draw closer to Higher Power, Higher Power draws closer to us. As we move to the center of DA and BDA service, especially through business meetings, we begin to feel wrapped in a cloak of Higher Power’s love.

DA Tool #8 — Preparatory meditation and writing for conference registrants—continued:

There are countless agendas adopted for business meetings. Each group’s conscience is welcome to create and develop its own. Here is the agenda for monthly business meetings from one BDA home group, which holds their business meeting *before their regular meeting* once per month:

1. Ask for volunteer to serve as timekeeper, usually giving time checks at three 10-minute intervals for a total of 30 minutes.
2. Open with Serenity Prayer.
3. Ask participants to introduce themselves by name (*perhaps ask whether or not each person present considers themselves a home group member; membership may be used as a qualification for voting*).
4. Ask Business Meeting Record Keeper to summarize minutes from previous month. Ask if there are amendments or objections to approving the minutes. If no objections, state “the minutes have been approved.”
5. Ask Treasurer to give financial report from previous month. Ask if there are amendments or objections to approving the report. If no objections, state “the Treasurer’s report has been approved.”
6. Share an itemized agenda for the current business meeting. Service positions should always be filled first. Make sure participants know how to contribute items to the agenda for the next and future months. Ask if there are any urgent business items, that is decisions that cannot wait until the next or a future month. Address old business, then new business.
7. Close with Serenity Prayer, leaving a small gap of time before the Meeting Chair opens the regular weekly meeting.

Some groups, especially Intergroups and groups who have more than 30 minutes for business meetings, include additional ongoing topics in their monthly agendas. For example:

Events / Fundraising: Groups with GSRs often need to host events and activities to raise funds for annual expenses, or a group may want to raise funds for outreach materials and efforts. All events and fundraising plans should be presented to and approved by group conscience.

Literature: Issues such as whether to give free literature to newcomers or to sell literature in the weekly meetings are usually decided at business meetings.

Meeting Format: The group may take a look at its meeting format annually or bi-annually to ensure that it is satisfying the needs of newcomers.

Reports of Trusted Servants: Reports from the Intergroup Representative, General Service Representative (GSR), and other trusted servants can be presented monthly or as needed. This section might also include announcements about activities by other groups in the area.

NOTE: We prefer to call these decision-making opportunities and activities “service meetings” to remind us of our primary and threefold purposes when we’re providing this planned and scheduled service together.

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Here are additional business meeting details we might wish to consider for our groups (or Intergroups):

- ✓ Business meetings may be fairly informal, but the attention of the entire meeting should be on one subject at a time, without the disruptive influence of private conversations.
- ✓ As long as service position descriptions are followed, and anticipated outcomes are reached, each group trusted servant should have the flexibility to do assigned service work how they see fit. Changes to service position descriptions may be suggested by any group member, should be made by formal motion and adopted by group conscience.
- ✓ Keep the issues clear. If a motion is offered, be sure it is stated clearly and distinctly so that all know what they are voting for or against.
- ✓ If the Chair has a sense that the members of the meeting will be in agreement, they may state the business at hand as clearly as possible and then ask if there are any objections to the course of action described. If there are no objections, general consent has been reached, which is ultimately a unanimous decision.
- ✓ If there are objections, then the matter should be brought to a formal vote. To put the matter to a formal vote, this abbreviated version of the Robert's Rules procedure is most helpful:
 1. Ask to be recognized by the Chair (or leader).
 2. Make our motion.
 3. Wait for someone to second the motion. (If there's no second, there's no discussion. This step in the process is to ensure that no one can or will be allowed to hold a business meeting hostage.)
 4. Chair repeats the motion and asks for discussion, maintaining a positive atmosphere even during difficult topics.
 5. Chair calls the question, which may be a second call for objections or a request for a show of hands for those "for" or "against."
 6. Chair takes a count of the votes "for" and "against," when necessary. Record Keeper records the vote counts in the minutes.
- ✓ Our DA standard is "substantial unanimity," or a 2/3 majority of those who vote. (Abstentions are not considered in this calculation.) Our literature goes so far as to say substantial unanimity is the only true group conscience. In order to engage the minority, on important or complex matters, ask for someone who voted on the minority side of the vote to provide a minority opinion.
- ✓ Once heard, ask if anyone who voted with the majority has changed their mind as a result of the minority opinion. If no, the majority vote stands. If yes, the vote may be taken a second time.
- ✓ On sensitive issues, most groups work slowly — discouraging formal motions and / or votes until the group feels "informed" and a clear sense of the collective view of the group's members emerges. We actively encourage the qualification of group membership in order to make motions and vote. Let's make informed decisions based on active, ongoing, and committed participation in our shared recovery.
- ✓ The term "informed group conscience" implies that pertinent information has been studied and all views have been heard before the group votes. Some initiatives take several months to conclude.