

## **DA Tool #2 — Preparatory meditation and writing for conference registrants:**

Please read Tool #2 below, then spend several minutes meditating. Then go on and read and meditate on the information we have provided from our own experience, strength, and hope. If you don't have the 2020 eBook collection of ALL of DA's and BDA's pamphlets, you can request that here — <https://www.bdaworkshops.org/free-literature>.

**NOTE:** A friendly reminder that our workshops are NOT meetings, yet many of the suggestions about meeting participation on these pages apply. On the other hand, many of them don't. We have chosen to host conferences and workshops, rather than meetings, to allow us to offer more direct support, encouragement, and interaction. We're also allowed, in the workshop format, to keep everyone focused on the DA and BDA solution rather than on the problems of compulsive debting, and to be clear about the differences between inside and outside issues.

*DA Tool #2: "Meetings — We attend DA meetings at which we share our experience, strength, and hope with one another. Unless we give to newcomers what we have received from DA, we cannot keep it ourselves."*

The Q and A items below are adapted from DA's *Meetings* pamphlet, the items within quotation marks are direct quotes from the same source:

### **Q: Why is it important for newcomers to attend meetings regularly?**

**A: We gain a sense of hope; we identify with others; we meet people who can help.**

"As newcomers, we begin to recognize and absorb feelings of hope by identifying with others in the meetings. Hearing stories of recovery give us hope that the program can work for us."

### **Q: Why do we continue to attend meetings?**

**A: To maintain recovery, to break isolation, to continue to grow, to carry the message, to give service.**

"Our recovery is dynamic — we can always learn new things and grow more. We attend meetings to listen and share how to apply what we have learned."

### **Q: What guidelines are usually followed at meetings?**

**A: We don't disrupt meetings; we don't engage in crosstalk; we respect the anonymity of others.**

"When we say crosstalk, we mean interrupting or directly addressing another sharer. This guideline allows us freedom from the fear of judgment or interruption."

## **DA Tool #2 — Preparatory meditation and writing for conference registrants — continued:**

In addition to the questions, answers, and quotes from DA's *Meetings* pamphlet on the previous page, our experience has guided us to these suggested behaviors when we are in meetings and in our workshops:

**We use our real first names.** — Using fake (or “stage”) names may help some of us “feel safe,” but it does exactly the opposite for many of the rest of us. How can we build trust when we start with dishonesty? It also tends to make light of something we think is worthy of sincerity and seriousness.

**We don't lurk in the shadows.** — We attend meetings not only for ourselves, but also for others, right from the beginning. Listening to others share their stories while keeping ours a secret, keeping even our presence a secret on phone meetings, is one-sided and feels like theft of our anonymity and confidences.

**We listen, especially when we're new.** — There's been a misquote repeated ad nauseum in our recovery rooms that the most important person in the room is the newcomer. The actual quote was: “The most important person in the room is the newcomer who is willing to listen.” We even question that. We think the member who has maintained solvency, taken the 12 Steps in DA and BDA, and is willing to share their recovery with others is pretty darned important too.

**We gain, maintain, and discuss solvency.** — If we've been attending DA and BDA meetings for years (or decades) but have not been able to gain or maintain solvency (freedom from incurring new unsecured debt, no matter what, one day at a time), we don't pretend that attending meetings is enough or that it's the solution to the problem of compulsive debting. Members who are still debting are welcome to attend and share in meetings, as long as they have a desire to stop. Yet no desire for or pursuit of solvency = no DA or BDA recovery. Sorry, but we know it's true ...

**We stay focused on our only requirement for membership and our primary purpose.** — The promise of DA and BDA is a path to “a new way of living that offers recovery from compulsive debting and hope for a healthier, happier, more prosperous life.” (See <https://debtorsanonymous.org/getting-started/>.) Freedom from incurring new unsecured debt comes to most of us only if we take the Steps. Discussions of the symptoms of debting and our related liabilities or defects are often better addressed with our sponsors and via the Steps than by our one-sided sharing in meetings. This is true of all of our personal “issues” that are not directly related to our compulsion to debt *with money*, or with our recovery from that compulsion. When we're in meetings, it's suggested that we share in a general way and limit our shares to our shared “singleness of purpose”: not incurring new unsecured debt, one day at a time.

**We recognize that our meetings are NOT truly “safe places.”** — By the very nature of Step Two, we are all insane as we start the process of recovery in DA and BDA. The AA Big Book suggests that we remain insane until we reach Step Ten: “For by this time sanity will have returned.” In other words, we are constantly surrounded by a new cadre of insane compulsive debtors, and we remain insane until we take the Steps in DA and / or BDA, at least the first 10 Steps. Insane people are not safe. They may tell our secrets; they may gossip and criticize; they may lie and commit character assassination; they may jockey for position and credit in service; they may commit to do one thing and do something else entirely or nothing at all; they may take and take and take until we have nothing left to give. We shouldn't be afraid to ask our fellows if they've taken the Steps in DA and BDA, even which Steps, and then base our perception of safety on their responses.

## **DA Tool #2 — Preparatory meditation and writing for conference registrants — continued:**

Please review the group inventory questions below, then spend several minutes meditating on how you would respond to the questions based on your own behaviors when you attend meetings. (These questions and more information can be found in DA's *Group Inventory* pamphlet available for free download at <https://www.helpfordebtors.org/da-and-bda-service-literature>.) We suggest answering every question we've posed; first in writing, then reading your answers aloud, sharing with a fellow BDAer or two. No long essays are necessary, just a paragraph or two in direct answer to a question.

Taking an annual or bi-annual inventory can make the difference between stagnation and growth for any group or meeting. Just as no member should be deemed hopeless, neither should any meeting. If our group already knows it needs improvement, sharing these questions with fellow members at a business meeting or a specially scheduled time for a group inventory may help our group move forward toward the change we seek. These questions are meant to guide us toward healthy meeting characteristics and actions.

### **Questions about Meetings**

- 1) Do we have a group spending plan?
- 2) Is the principle of anonymity maintained, avoiding gossip at all times?
- 3) How can our sponsorship be improved?
- 4) Do all members take responsibility for the physical housekeeping for the group?
- 5) Do we use only conference-approved literature at our meetings, or have we allowed outside literature to creep in?
- 6) Do we focus on the positive benefits of the DA [and BDA] program, making sure to be an example of what the program can do to help us?
- 7) Do we have a clearly defined way of sharing power or does all power reside in the hands of a favored few?
- 8) Do we have an up-to-date GSO contact who keeps the group informed or do mailings from the General Service Board get ignored?
- 9) Do we donate to the Intergroup, Area Group, and General Service Office?

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As an alternative, some groups work with the outside facilitator for their group inventory — a recommendation regardless of the group inventory format or questions — to develop questions customized for their own group needs and concerns. For instance, one BDA phone group, which has since moved permanently to the zoom platform, asked themselves the questions below during their two-part, almost four-hour group inventory (visit [sundaybdaonline.org](http://sundaybdaonline.org) for more details).

- 1) What are the principles by which all DA groups function, including our BDA group?
- 2) From the Fifth Tradition, what is our BDA group's message?
- 3) Do we stay focused on our singleness of purpose?
- 4) Are we, as a group, open to change? Are we flexible and open to new ideas?
- 5) Is our meeting format working for us and attracting new members?
- 6) What are the special challenges we face as a phone meeting? How are we handling those challenges?
- 7) Are there changes we would like to make to our group or meetings? What are they and why?
- 8) Are there things we would hate to see change about our group or meetings? What are they and why?
- 9) Are we serving the newcomers who attend our meetings? How would we know? Are they coming back?
- 10) Are we living up to self-support and voluntary contributions — in terms of both money and service — as described in the 7th Tradition?
- 11) Are we filling our open positions with qualified candidates? If no, why not?
- 12) Do we want to create positions for Intergroup Representative and Public Information Representative? If yes, how will we accomplish this?
- 13) Is there anything we have not yet discussed based on the questions above?

For best results, in our experience, the purpose of the group inventory should be the development of ideas and questions for consideration by the group conscience at future business meetings. Often only a handful of group members will attend the inventory. We encourage those who do attend to enjoy the spiritual experience of reviewing our groups in-depth, without the burden of decision making.

If no one in our group can remember the last time we've had a group inventory, or if it's been more than two years, it might be time to suggest one. For most groups, it takes a small committee to plan the inventory, arrange for an outside facilitator, prepare the questions, and ensure home group members have at least two months' advance notice. All plans should be reviewed and approved at business meetings.