

## **DA Tool #5 — Preparatory meditation and writing for conference registrants:**

Please read Tool #5 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>.

*DA Tool #5: “Pressure Relief Groups and Pressure Relief Meetings — After we have gained some familiarity with the DA program, we organize Pressure Relief Groups consisting of ourselves and two other recovering debtors who have not incurred unsecured debt for at least 90 days and who usually have more experience in the program. The group meets in a series of Pressure Relief Meetings to review our financial situation. These meetings typically result in the formulation of a spending plan and an action plan.”*

Many members, especially newcomers, are unfocused in their approach to PRGs and PRMs, which we'll simply call PRGs going forward. We believe PRGs are a huge help but only when used in an intentional way. Here are some general suggestions we offer having spent many years in PRG trial and error:

**Practice the first three Steps before trying PRGs.** Ideally, PRGs are more spiritually significant than three DA members sipping coffee or tea and talking about money. PRGs are the gathering of three members and their Higher Powers — Higher Powers who will be turned to in search of answers to questions and relief of pressures. For this to work, PRG members need to have taken the first three Steps, turning over their wills and lives, and committing to their recovery from debting.

**Work with a sponsor to get categories, subcategories, and 90 days of numbers together before doing a first PRG.** If we stay in DA, and hopefully we all will, we will be giving and receiving PRGs for years to come. We say: Dive into the Steps; wade into the tools.

**Seek a sponsor's help in most things, but not on PRGs.** It's best to draw a clear boundary here. The sponsor's role is to help us get and stay solvent, especially through using the Steps, and to support us in seeking and serving a Higher Power. The PRG's role is to dig into our numbers, our day-to-day life, and our pressures. The mixing of these two roles can unintentionally cause problems, make for poor boundaries, and ruin otherwise helpful and functional relationships.

**Treat PRGs like advanced spiritual care, rather than emergency situations.** We've heard that Higher Power doesn't understand nor notice our concept of time. The thought of rushing the Higher Power, and bringing our two friends as backup, to force our and their wills upon the Higher Power and upon our lives, seems silly to us. There's likely no such thing as an emergency in Higher Power's time.

**Ignore the push to manage gender on PRGs but do seek diversity.** We are so much more than our genders and are best served by choosing the DA and BDA members we trust and who have experience with our PRG topic. We do recommend asking specific members for help on PRGs and being willing to hear “no.” When we do cattle calls — that is, to send the same personal service request to multiple members without actually choosing who we want help from and then awaiting their response — we are asking other members to self-select and to populate our PRGs. That's our responsibility, not theirs. The guidance for selecting someone to hear our Fifth Steps applies well to selecting members for a PRG.

## **DA Tool #5 — Preparatory meditation and writing for conference registrants — continued:**

Here is one more set of general suggestions we offer, specifically for creating a first personal spending plan, which we present as DA Tool #6 for this conference series, with a PRG (see BDA Tools Two and Three for development of a business spending plan):

The best preparation for a personal spending plan PRG is three calendar months of recent income and expenses, with an average of the three and a completely open mind. Spending plans, especially the first one, frequently take several hour-long meetings. Before we share our numbers with anyone, we should make sure we trust them. Then ...

Meeting one can be focused on reviewing categories, subcategories, record maintenance processes, commitment to solvency, and planning ahead for the rest of the personal spending plan development process. Most newcomers have lots of questions at this point. We shouldn't be afraid to ask them. If we are afraid, this is not the right PRG for us.

In meetings two and three, our PRG can take a deep dive into our recent and future expenses, especially ferreting out areas of over-spending and deprivation. By the end of the third meeting, we should know how much money we need each month to live on comfortably, rationally, solvently, and with abundance.

In meeting four, our income can be brought front and center. *We've described the life we want to live through our intended spending. Now how will we fund it?*

Lastly, here is a recommended PRG format we've found useful for one-hour PRGs, especially on one-time topics (such as job changes, pursuit of income, healthcare planning, major purchases, moving, etc.):

2 minutes — Clearly state the one PRG topic (see above), start on time, say the Serenity prayer, define and agree to the format, choose a timekeeper, stay present and engaged the whole time.

8 minutes — Allow the person requesting the PRG to share *uninterrupted*, describing the details of their current life and the current pressures they're experiencing.

10 minutes — The two invited PRG members give feedback and ask questions about what they've just heard. This is a period of engagement, interaction, and of inviting the Higher Power into the PRG. Most of us have a sense of pressure relief as we listen to others' experience, strength, and hope; and we often have a sense of pressure expansion as we listen to others' advice and opinions. PRGs are about sharing our recovery — specifically our spiritual recovery — not our expertise, knowledge, or ego.

2 minutes — Allow the person requesting the PRG to describe two or three goals they have brought and hope to accomplish *in this meeting* and prioritize their goals together. Goals might include requesting specific experience, strength, and hope; discussing strategy; making an action plan or an activity spending plan (see above for a multi-part approach to a whole-life spending plan); making commitments with an accountability plan; mapping out needed resources, financial and otherwise; and many more.

35 minutes — Work through the goals, in order of agreed priority, accomplishing or completing as many as possible in the time allotted. 35 minutes is a LOT of time when used with intentionality and focus.

2 minutes — Ask the person requesting the PRG to describe their current sense of pressures and their satisfaction with the progress made on their PRG goals. Set next actions and schedule future PRGs.

1 minute — Close on time with a moment of silence and the Serenity prayer.

## **DA Tool #5 — Preparatory meditation and writing for conference registrants — continued:**

Here is a suggested format for a two-hour “round robin” PRG in which all three participants both give and receive support and guidance. Reciprocity rocks! We created this format for our Help with PRGs workshop series, which we hosted annually for three years:

### **Opening**

2 minutes — Start on time, say the Serenity prayer, define and agree to the format, choose a timekeeper, choose the order of sharing, stay present and engaged the whole time.

### **Direct support and encouragement**

2 minutes — Allow the first person to share uninterrupted, describing the details of their current life and the current pressures they’re experiencing.

4 minutes — The other two members have two minutes each to provide direct support, along with their own experience, strength, and hope. Please avoid opinions and advice giving.

6 minutes — Repeat for the second person — 2 minutes of sharing, 4 minutes of support.

6 minutes — Repeat for the third person — 2 minutes of sharing, 4 minutes of support.

### **Topics and goals**

2 minutes — Allow the first person to briefly describe their PRG topic and the two or three goals they have brought and hope to accomplish in this PRG session.

3 minutes — Work together to finetune the stated goals and their order of priority.

25 minutes — Work through the first person’s two or three goals, in agreed order of priority, accomplishing or completing as many as possible in the time allotted. The intention here is to help relieve this person’s stated pressure, not to add to their pressure, not opinions, not advice.

30 minutes — Repeat for the second person — 2 minutes for topic and goals, 3 minutes for finetuning, 25 minutes of goal coverage and pressure relief.

30 minutes — Repeat for the third person — 2 minutes for topic and goals, 3 minutes for finetuning, 25 minutes of goal coverage and pressure relief.

### **Wrap up and closing**

6 minutes — Each person gets two minutes to describe the reduction of their pressures and their satisfaction with the progress made on their two or three PRG goals. Gratitude.

3 minutes — Set next steps and schedule future PRGs.

1 minute — Close on time with a moment of silence and the Serenity prayer.

## **DA Tool #5 — Preparatory meditation and writing for conference registrants — continued:**

Here is an advanced format for rotating PRGs, often held weekly, shared by one of our steering committee members, which was developed over more than a year of almost weekly PRGs. For best results, use both pages:

### **PRG Time format — 60 minutes**

A best practice is to share your PRG documents prior to the meeting, ideally within 8 to 24 hours before the meeting, with fellow participants, and to allow room for the Higher Power to step in and intervene through the group

- 2 minutes — Pray in, choose timekeeper, housekeeping
- 8 minutes — Current business and professional status (including recent successes) from the person receiving the PRG
- 10 minutes — PRG partners share feedback and questions (4-5 minutes each from the 2 people giving the PRG)
- 2 minutes — PRG topic and desired outcomes — 1 topic with up to 3 desired outcomes for today's PRG — allow PRG givers to help finetune today's goals
- 35 minutes — Discussion — work toward desired results, in agreed order, with PRG partners, accomplishing as much as possible in the time available
- 2 minutes — Check in — PRG partners check in with person receiving for current sense of pressure and satisfaction with progress — set next steps for next PRG
- 1 minute — Close with a moment of silence and Serenity Prayer

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**Current business and professional status/pressures update** (including recent successes) — 8 minutes — For the PRG recipient, share with PRG partners what is happening with you and where your pressures are — Some bullet points are sufficient; then you can add context in real time.

**Feedback/questions/notes from PRG givers** — 10 minutes

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### **PRG topic and desired outcomes — 2 minutes**

Introduce the primary topic for the day, keep it tight and brief, as well as up to 3 desired outcomes or questions you want help in achieving or answering. Here is an example:

Topic — Marketing plan — I am looking for help in creating a new direct mail and door-knocking campaign to help drive business and to create strong channel partners by highlighting them in my marketing materials and outreach actions.

Desired outcomes (answers to the following questions) — 1. Does this plan align to my goals and skills? 2. What additional tools or resources should I be considering to implement this plan successfully? 3. What is your experience, strength, and hope when implementing marketing initiatives to expand or improve your business?

### **Discussion — 35 minutes**

Work with PRG partners towards desired outcome and pressure relief directly related to your topic, creating an action plan to be pursued before your next turn as the recipient.

Notes on desired outcome 1 —

Notes on desired outcome 2 —

Notes on desired outcome 3 —

### **Check in — 2 minutes**

Did we help? Do you feel you made progress toward your desired outcomes? Has your pressure been relieved, or at least decreased? Check date and recipient for next PRG.

**Close** — 1 minute — Serenity prayer, the best PRGs begin and end on time