

ANONYMITY

Why is anonymity so often a topic at meetings? We guard the anonymity of all Al-Anon/Alateen and AA members. This means not revealing to anyone what we hear or whom we see at meetings, not to our relatives, friends or other Al-Anon/Alateen members. Our free expression – so important to our recovery – rests on our sense of security, knowing that what we share at our meetings will be held in strict confidence. While each member has the right of decision regarding personal anonymity within the fellowship, the use of first-names-only reminds us that we are equals in Al-Anon. This keeps us humble and enables us to develop spiritually.

From page 5 of *Al-Anon Spoken Here* (Pamphlet 53)

Anonymity. The experience of our groups suggests that the principle of anonymity – summed up in Tradition Twelve as “the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions” – has three elements: There is anonymity as it applies outside Al-Anon, governing our contacts with non-members and organizations; anonymity within the fellowship; and anonymity as it contributes to our personal growth.

From page 83 of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*

Anonymity in Al-Anon is a sacred trust, basic to our fellowship and its survival. The principal of anonymity is essential for the newcomers to assure the confidentiality of their identity and all that is shared at the meetings, and with other members.

From page 50 of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*

Anonymity Within Al-Anon. Members use their full names within the fellowship when they wish. The degree of anonymity a member chooses (first name, pseudonym, or full name) is not subject to criticism. Each member has the right to decide . . .

Anonymity goes well beyond mere names. All of us need to feel secure in the knowledge that nothing seen or heard at a meeting will be revealed. We feel free to express ourselves among our fellow Al-Anons because we can be sure that what we say will be held in confidence.

From page 83 of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*

Special Note: Anonymity is a spiritual principle and cannot be used as a legal basis to shield criminal behavior, past or current. It is wise to remember that Al-Anon and Alateen meetings are not above the law. Members need to exercise care in sharing information that could require reporting to local, state, provincial and national authorities.

From page 50 of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*

Anonymity Within Al-Anon: Dual Members. “I am a member of another anonymous program. Recently I was asked not to discuss it at our Al-Anon/Alateen meetings. Why?”

Our meeting discussions do not include any other program or fellowship. When we talk about our experiences of becoming sober, drug-free, or how we stopped overeating or gambling, we take away from the Al-Anon focus. In Al-Anon, we focus on our common experience – having been affected by someone else’s alcoholism – and our recovery by giving and receiving mutual aid based only on that common experience. Those of us who are members of other anonymous programs avoid openly revealing this at meetings, concentrating instead on the Al-Anon approach to the family illness of alcoholism.

From page 8 of *Al-Anon Spoken Here* (Pamphlet 53)

Anonymity Within Al-Anon: Professionals. “As a psychotherapist – and an Al-Anon member – I feel that my professional experience can enrich our group’s discussion. Why have I been discouraged from sharing my knowledge at meetings?”

Those of us in the helping professions may be especially sensitive to the pain of others. We may sense the pain of fellow Al-Anon members and wish to share the benefits of our professional expertise. In Al-Anon, however, we meet and share as equals: no one is an expert. Our success comes from maintaining a nonprofessional approach, and from adhering to the principal of anonymity. We all have something to give and something to take from our meetings regardless of our educational, social or professional backgrounds.

From page 8 of *Al-Anon Spoken Here* (Pamphlet 53)

Anonymity Outside Al-Anon. Tradition Eleven gives a specific guideline: “We need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV and films.” This gives potential members confidence that their identity will not be revealed when they join Al-Anon. Also, personal anonymity at the public level guards the fellowship from the Al-Anon/Alateen member who may be tempted to seek public recognition . . . [At these levels,] use only first names or pseudonyms. In photographs for publication and in TV appearances, faces should not be recognizable. This may be achieved by back-to-the camera or blurring of features in some way.

It is, however, important to make Al-Anon known through our public information work with professionals who come into contact with families still suffering the effects of alcoholism. Such contacts, of course, make it necessary for the Al-Anon and Alateen members involved to give their full names. Al-Anon members also give their full names to interested doctors, spiritual leaders, school or industrial personnel.

From page 83 of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*