

# ACA Suggested Service Norms

This Service Norms Document is intended for any ACA service body, including groups, that choose by group conscience process (Tradition 2) to adopt it. Every service body following these Service Norms has the autonomy (Tradition 4) to establish by group conscience process potential consequences for repeated deviation from these Service Norms. This document may be used in part or in whole by any group seeking guidance. In the following, when we use the word group, we mean any group or service body that uses these service norms.

Experience suggests these Service Norms will help promote trust and encourage respectful communication and behavior consistent with the ACA Traditions and Concepts. We recognize our shared humanity and that each of us brings our own challenges with interpersonal communication in group settings. Service includes any activity that allows us to carry the message to other Adult Children (Tradition 5 and Step 12) and service begins with showing up for a meeting.

The goal of the Service Norms is not to eliminate differences, but to support everyone in ACA in resolving conflicts in a healthy manner that references program tools. Every member shares individual and collective responsibility in upholding these agreed-upon Service Norms.

## **1. Keeping Myself Fit for Service**

- a. The Suggested Commitment to Service asks us to keep fit by “working my recovery as a member of the program.”
- b. Before talking to anyone about this issue, consider checking in with yourself, with a service sponsor/fellow traveler, attending an ACA meeting to take care of your inner child and your own personal recovery.

c. Bring your Inner Loving Parent into the situation.

## 2. Promoting Healthy Communication and Dealing with Conflict

### ---- Potential Service Challenges.

- a. Attempt to address contentious issues directly with the other person(s) before taking the conflict to the entire group.
- b. Avoid harsh or judgmental comments. Be especially cautious when expressing differences in writing, keeping in mind language differences. Use neutral language. Consider using “I feel” statements listed in the [Resources and Solutions](#) section below.
- c. Listen receptively and respectfully during disagreements. When upset, pause and reflect before responding. Avoid reacting. Try to stay centered and calm.
- d. Before advancing a member to member dispute to a group conscience, consider letting the other member know what is going to be presented in a manner that feels safe (i.e. in person, telephone, texting, or email).

## 3. Unity and Mutual Respect

Unity is the core principle of the First Tradition. This does not preclude us from expressing differences; it reminds us that we rely on one another to serve the fellowship, which is our primary responsibility. We agree to keep the following in mind:

- a. Weigh a conflict’s importance against the damage it may cause to ourselves, the other person(s) involved, and the group’s ability to do its work.
- b. We refrain from getting involved in conflicts that don’t directly involve us.
- c. We learn to discern between healthy and unhealthy conflict. Conflict is a part of recovery. Healthy conflict resolution is

about mutual respect and trust. It includes speaking up when necessary and listening to understand.

- d. We practice placing principles before personalities in resolving conflicts.
- e. In meetings, we practice listening to all opinions respectfully and avoid speaking a second time until all others who choose to have spoken.
- f. We avoid interrupting when another member is speaking, except as permitted by group conscience. Some groups may choose to adopt parliamentary guidelines such as Robert's Rules or Knowledge-Based Decision Making to assist in guiding group conscience discussion.
- g. To create a healthy environment for communication, we encourage participation and respect the right of all voices to be heard (minority opinion, Concept V).
- h. Show respect for the group conscience process. Ensure that no member remains uninformed about situations that can adversely affect their ability to participate.
- i. Avoid secrecy about any issues that affect the common welfare of the group as a whole. We should not be afraid to surface issues that are important. Participation and unity require an atmosphere of trust and transparency. To that end, we encourage all discussions about group business to take place within the group conscience process.

#### **4. Establishing and Affirming of Service Norms**

- a. Along with these Service Norms, the Traditions and the Concepts are available to help clarify and resolve differences.
- b. Service bodies may have their own policies and procedure manuals developed by the service body (such as Intergroup policy & procedures manuals) that offer additional guidance.

#### **5. Resolving Conflicts**

- a. When one-on-one resolution (for example, a 10th Step amends) is not possible or is insufficient, each service body has the responsibility to uphold these Service Norms. Through a group conscience process, the service body strives for a calm, principle-based discussion of all relevant views and information.
- b. Allow everyone recognition of their own stressors that may preclude their current involvement and allow them a gentle way out before limiting their service.

## 6. Repeated Violation of Norms

If it becomes necessary to address a member about repeated violations of norms, we suggest a thoughtful approach to this conversation. Remember that violation of norms is about a person's behavior, not about the person. Here are some points to ponder to take healthy action as opposed to reactive behavior:

- Be clear about how the repeated violation of norms is affecting not only individual members but the common welfare and unity of the group as a whole.
- The purpose of approaching the person about their behavior is to maintain group unity and a safe recovery environment for everyone. It is important to ensure the safety, integrity, and respect of everyone when approaching the person who is repeatedly violating the norms.
- Tradition 3 reminds us that the only requirement for membership is a desire to recover. When approaching a member about their behavior, we keep in mind we are all there to recover. We strive to model healthy behavior instead of ganging up on another member.
- Things to consider when planning such a conversation include:

- o Depending on the circumstances of the situation, one person may be willing to address the individual, for example, a sponsor or an officer of the group.
- o We keep in mind what may help or hinder the group's effort to ensure everyone feels safe.
- o Consider if more than one experienced member should participate in this conversation.
- o A willing member with some socio-cultural sensitivity and perhaps a level of recovery may be the member that could step in to approach the member whose behavior is an issue.
- As a last resort, this may require coordinating a group conscience discussion to discuss the next steps. Everyone is invited to this discussion, including the person whose behavior is repeatedly violating the norms.

Resources and Examples below

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## RESOURCES AND SOLUTIONS

❖ **Underlined items are links to the resources**

[ACA Schematic](#)

[Back-channeling article](#)

[Big Red Book \(Fellowship Text\)](#)

[Bill of Rights](#) *(in Fellowship Review mode)*

[Boundary Creation](#)

[Crosstalk Statement](#)

[Group Conscience skit](#)

[I Feel Statement/Four Part Statement](#)

[Johari Window \(video\)](#)

[Laundry Lists Traits](#)

[Preventing Unsafe Behavior in ACA Tent Card \(formerly known as Addressing Predatory Behavior Tent card\)](#)

[Shame Cycle](#)

[Suggested Commitment to Service](#)

[Twelve Concepts](#)

[Twelve Steps](#)

[Twelve Traditions](#)

[Victim Triangle \(article 1\)](#)

[Victim Triangle \(article 2\)](#)

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## EXAMPLES OF SERVICE NORM PROBLEMS

### DURING A MEETING

★ I feel statements can apply to all of these situations.

★ Possible solutions are written in green color

1. At a meeting, a member (whose sponsor was in the group) shared for many minutes (45 minutes) – way too long for what is the standard sharing time in a meeting.
  - a. A possible resolution is for the meeting chair or another group member to intervene and call a group conscience.
  - b. One possibility is the sponsor talking to the sponsee about how the group stays within the meeting guidelines regarding sharing time.

- c. Tradition One(Unity) and Two(Group Conscience).
  - d. Timed shares.
- 2. Lack of rotation of host which leads to "a person in charge" type of meeting.
  - a. Traditions One and Two.
  - b. Suggested Commitment to Service #8.
- 3. A member is verbally abusive and runs out of the meeting.
  - a. A group conscience could be called to allow people to process their feelings about the event and reestablish group safety.
  - b. Group Conscience skit.
  - c. Traditions One and Two.
- 4. A member is verbally abusive and stays in the meeting.
  - a. A group conscience could be called to address the disruption.
  - b. Group Conscience Skit.
  - c. Traditions One and Two.
- 5. A member shares explicit details of violence, sexual assault, or any other abuse, in a meeting.
  - a. A suggested healthier way to describe such activity might be a non-graphic description such as "there was incest in my family."
  - b. Someone could call an immediate group conscience to discuss whether the graphic nature of the share should continue.
  - c. Healthy Group Conscience Skit.
  - d. Tradition Two.
- 6. A person expresses time in any program in order to pressure others to support their position, not realizing that time in recovery doesn't equal emotional sobriety.
  - a. Boundary Creation.

- b. Suggested Commitment to Service #4 and #8.
  - c. The Steps.
  - d. The Other Laundry List #1.
  - e. Tradition One.
  - f. Victim Triangle Dynamic.
7. A chair/host doesn't follow a meeting format to allow everyone to speak while calling on the same members repeatedly.
- a. Boundary Creation.
  - b. Suggested Commitment to Service #4 and #8.
  - c. The Steps.
  - d. The Other Laundry List traits #1, #5 and #6.
  - e. Tradition One and Two.
  - f. Victim Triangle Dynamic.
8. A chair comments after share(s).
- a. Boundary Creation.
  - b. Crosstalk Statement.
  - c. Johari Window.
  - d. The Other Laundry List #1, #3, #6 and #11.
  - e. Tradition One and Two.
  - f. Victim Triangle Dynamic.
9. A chair only calls on their friends.
- a. Boundary Creation.
  - b. Crosstalk Statement.
  - c. Johari Window.
  - d. Suggested Commitment to Service.
  - e. The Other Laundry List #1, #3, #6 and #11.
  - f. Tradition One and Two.
  - g. Victim Triangle Dynamic.
10. A chair/host/member demonstrates condescending or disrespectful behavior or overly friendly behavior by use of words or tone of voice to show personal like or dislike of a share.
- a. Boundary Creation.
  - b. Crosstalk Statement.



- c. Johari Window.
  - d. Suggested Commitment to Service.
  - e. The Laundry List #1 and #2.
  - f. The Other Laundry List #1, #3 and #11.
  - g. The Steps.
  - h. The Traditions.
  - i. Victim Triangle Dynamic.
11. Re-reading of the Crosstalk statement was questioned/confronted
- a. BRB p.538 and p.576.
  - b. Group Conscience Skit.
  - c. The Other Laundry List #1 and #3.
  - d. Tradition Two.
12. Crosstalk in various ways: verbal, whispering, digital chatting (various platforms), non-verbal communication such as personal sounds (sighs, grunts), physical gestures such as head nodding, and facial expressions such as eye-rolling.
- a. BRB p.538.
  - b. Boundary Creation.
  - c. Crosstalk Statement.
  - d. Group Conscience Skit.
  - e. The Other Laundry List #3, #4, #5 and #6.
  - f. Traditions One, Two and Four.
13. Feeling/being pressured to add your personal information to a group phone list.
- a. ACA Schematic Recovery Task 3.
  - b. Addressing Predatory Behavior.
  - c. Bill of Rights.
  - d. Boundary Creation.
  - e. Group Conscience Skit.
  - f. Suggested Commitment to Service #3 and #9.
  - g. The Laundry List #1, #3, #5 and #7
  - h. The Other Laundry List #1, #3, #5 and #7
  - i. Tradition Two.

j. Victim triangle dynamic.

14. Pressuring the group to not have a group conscience after a member called for one.

- a. BRB p.538 and p.576.
- b. ACA Schematic Recovery Task 3.
- c. Addressing Predatory Behavior.
- d. Bill of Rights.
- e. Boundary Creation.
- f. Group Conscience Skit.
- g. Suggested Commitment to Service #3 and #9.
- h. The Laundry List #1, #3, #5 and #7
- i. The Other Laundry List #1, #3, #5 and #7
- j. Tradition Two.
- k. Victim triangle dynamic.

15. Meetings with a spoken or unspoken expectation of sharing "secondary diagnosis/qualification/identification" as part of introductions at start of meeting

- a. Bill of Rights
- b. Boundary Creation
- c. Violation of the Tradition Three, Five and Ten.

16. At a zoom meeting, the host does or does not remove a participant after they used chat to comment on another's share, ask them out, etc.

- a. Boundary Creation.
- b. Group Conscience Skit.
- c. Suggested Commitment to Service #7 and #9.
- d. Tradition Two.

17. At a group conscience, an "ambush" occurred wherein back-channeling had taken place prior to the group conscience.

- a. Back-channeling article.
- b. Boundary Creation.
- c. Group Conscience Skit
- d. Suggested Commitment to Service.

- e. The Other Laundry List #1 and #5.
- f. Tradition One and Two.
- g. Victim Triangle.

18. Repetitive lack of safe and healthy business meeting or group conscience

- a. Back-channeling article.
- b. Boundary Creation.
- c. Group Conscience Skit.
- d. Suggested Commitment to Service #7 and #9.
- e. Tradition One and Two.
- f. Victim Triangle.

19. A member feels pressure from another member to pay for something, provide material goods, provide money, or loan money.

- a. Bill of Rights.
- b. Boundary Creation.
- c. Tradition One, Two and Six.
- d. Victim Triangle.

20. A newcomer repeatedly shares intensely and leaves the meeting abruptly and early.

- a. BRB p. 584-585.
- b. Bill of Rights.
- c. Boundary Creation.
- d. Tradition One and Two.
- e. Victim Triangle.

ANYTIME

★ I feel statements can apply to all these situations.

★ Possible solutions are written in green color

1. A member feels unsafe before/during/after the meeting.

- a. BRB p. 584-585.

- b. Preventing Unsafe Behavior in ACA Tent Card (formerly known as Addressing Predatory Behavior Tent card).
  - c. Both sides of The Laundry List.
  - d. Boundary Creation.
  - e. The member is encouraged to speak up to a trusted servant.
  - f. Victim Triangle.
2. Outside of a meeting time a member feels pressure from another member or even a sponsor to pay for something, provide material goods, provide money, or loan money.
- a. Bill of Rights.
  - b. Boundary Creation.
  - c. Victim Triangle.
3. Pressure to join fellowship gathering that occurs after the meeting.
- a. Bill of Rights.
  - b. Boundary Creation.
  - c. Victim Triangle.
4. Pressure to donate to a meeting host's website that offers workshops
- a. Bill of Rights.
  - b. Boundary Creation.
  - c. Suggested Commitment to Service.
  - d. Tradition Six.
  - e. Victim Triangle.
5. Classic "13th stepping" in the nature of a personal/romantic interest, including being followed to one's car, receiving a deceptive invitation to group fellowship when the actual situation was instead a one-on-one.
- a. BRB p. 349 and p.571.
  - b. Addressing Predatory Behaviour.
  - c. Bill of Rights.
  - d. Both sides of The Laundry List.
  - e. Boundary Creation.

- f. Victim Triangle.
6. Pressure to add one's name and phone number to the meeting phone list and inappropriate use of meeting phone list including using it for dating purposes
    - a. BRB p. 349 and p.571.
    - b. Addressing Predatory Behaviour.
    - c. Bill of Rights.
    - d. Both sides of The Laundry List.
    - e. Boundary Creation.
    - f. Victim Triangle.
  7. Unwelcome physical contact of any type. For example: hugging, touching, shoulder massage, etc.
    - a. Addressing Predatory Behavior.
    - b. Bill of Rights.
    - c. Both sides of the Laundry List.
    - d. Boundary Creation.
    - e. Johari Window.
    - f. Victim Triangle.
  8. A member is stalking another member either physically or virtually.
    - a. BRB p. 349, p.571 and p. 584-585.
    - b. Addressing Predatory Behavior.
    - c. Bill of Rights.
    - d. Both sides of the Laundry List.
    - e. Boundary Creation.
    - f. Victim Triangle.
  9. Pressure to provide car rides to another member.
    - a. Addressing Predatory Behavior.
    - b. Bill of Rights.
    - c. Both sides of the Laundry List.
    - d. Boundary Creation.
    - e. Johari Window.
    - f. Victim Triangle.