

ANONYMOUS SJ

South Jersey Intergroup

January 2012

Say What?

Is "crosstalk" permitted at your group's meeting?

At a recent meeting I attended there was an incident where one member seemed to be lecturing another, and feelings were hurt. Some would call this "crosstalk", but not everyone I talked to about it afterward agreed that it was out of line. I decided to investigate further.

The first thing I discovered is that there is no AA policy on cross talking. The General Service Office representative that I spoke with put it this way:

"There is no formal or official definition of it, and there isn't even any prohibition against it in general in our fellowship. Some groups have decided that they don't want it. We have heard of other groups that actually think it is okay for people to have a conversation and talk to each other. That's an issue for each group conscience to determine for itself."

Here are some thoughts from an "old timer" that were published in the AA Grapevine's online edition in October of 2011 (reprinted here with permission):

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Happy New Year!

Patty H
Newsletter Committee Chair

Welcome to 2012 and congratulations on making it through the holidays! I am excited and honored to be taking on this commitment, but I don't want to do it alone. If you are interested in joining the newsletter committee, please shoot an email to newsletter@asj.org. We also welcome contributions, such as reaction to our articles or your personal story, and don't be afraid to make suggestions for future editions. This newsletter is for YOU.

First Month, First Step

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.

"I Concede" is a newcomer's experience, strength, and hope on the first step.

Powerless? That was easy. Looking back at my drinking history, I can't think of a time when I had just one. From my first drunk to my last, excess was always there. I had the best of intentions to start, but once that first drink went down, I wanted another. Then another...then another. I tried to cut down but it never worked. I couldn't control my drinking. In the end, I even tried to stop drinking completely. An idea that was foreign to me until things got bad enough. But all my efforts failed and I ended up drunk each time. There was no doubt, from day one, that I was powerless over alcohol.

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More on Crosstalk

When I came into AA 29 years ago, crosstalk was wisely not allowed at meetings. However, it meant something different then than it does today. Back then, crosstalk meant two people talking back and forth, instead of each person getting a turn to speak uninterrupted. No one could even interject a comment during someone else's share. "No crosstalk" also meant not criticizing what another person said, not telling someone what to do about their problems, and not analyzing anyone else's psyche or situation. All good things to avoid.

But we could directly address anyone and everyone at the meeting, as long as it was during our own turn. You could say, "Thank you for what you said in your share," and then explain why it had been helpful, or why you related to it. In that same spirit of A.A. fellowship, you could offer condolences if someone shared that a loved one had died. Nowadays, any of this is usually ruled out as crosstalk.

You could also ask for help with a sobriety-related problem. Or a newcomer could ask a question. As the meeting proceeded, anyone who desired would address the problem or question. Mind you, they could not tell you what to do or analyze you or your situation, because that would have been considered crosstalk. Instead, they would say what had worked for them: They shared their experience, strength, and hope. Any of this might be outlawed as crosstalk nowadays.

When a personal question or problem raised at the meeting became the meeting's topic, we were at the heart of A.A.'s purpose. Such meetings helped everyone.

In the past, people could also directly welcome a newcomer. If newcomers, or old-timers, want to go someplace no one will talk to us, we can go to a bar. We sat around talking to ourselves in our drinking days. Sobriety happens through the healthy interaction of bravely saying what is going on with you and humbly listening to how

others dealt with the same issues. Banishing this misses one of the actual reasons for meetings.

The original AAers would not have stayed sober if, when they got together as a group, they were not allowed to address each other's shaky sobriety. "No crosstalk" was created to stop us from getting in each other's faces. But alcoholics often take a good idea to the extreme. So it has gone with this issue, causing problems as bad as the ones the original idea was meant to solve. Taking things to the extreme is a way alcoholics try to control others, which builds walls: Newcomers don't get welcomed; people don't get help; members complain about lack of fellowship and caring. Let's clear up the current misinterpretation of crosstalk, to once again allow the real AA of people saying, "I need help!" and "I love you," when we gather.

—Lily Joy, Pennsylvania

So what do you think? Does your group permit crosstalk and how do you handle such situations? Send us an email or a letter and we'll publish your comments in a future edition of the newsletter.

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"Honesty with ourselves and others gets us sober, but it is tolerance that keeps us that way." - Bill Wilson

I Concede

Unmanageable? That was difficult for me to see at first. I had all the material things one should have at my age. In fact, those material items were a wonderful way to justify my drinking. Alcoholics can't hold a job. They get DUIs. They lose their homes. I started to see that it was only by sheer luck that those material things didn't disappear.

As I listened to fellow recovering alcoholics share, I realized that the only difference between me and the person who had a DUI was that they got caught. I began to see the emotional, spiritual, and mental bottom I had hit. Soon it became crystal clear that my life was unmanageable.

Then my sponsor asked me what I thought it meant to admit something. I missed an important part of the first step. "*We admitted...*". I was sober, actively working my program, in-service, and building a network of recovering alcoholics. But, had I truly admitted I was alcoholic? What does it mean to admit something? I went to the dictionary to understand this better. Within the definition of admit it says to "concede as valid". And to concede is to acknowledge as true, often reluctantly, to yield or suffer, to surrender.

I remember the first time someone said to me "I concede". I was arguing with a co-worker about an insignificant detail on a project. After some time, he simply said "I concede". He didn't say "you are right" or "I am wrong", just "I concede". That statement ended the nonsense instantly. I began to understand what this meant to me. I was still working, behind the scenes of my brain, to figure out a way to drink again. I knew my misery and alcohol were related. I believed that I was powerless and that my life was unmanageable; but I hadn't truly conceded to the simple truth that I cannot drink successfully. I was still looking for the way out. Finally, after enough pain, I realized that if I wanted the miserable nonsense to end, I needed to simply say "I concede".

- Rachel S - The Willingboro Group

The First Tradition

Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.

Unity is imperative if AA is to survive for the next suffering alcoholic who comes through the door. But too often the word "unity" is misunderstood. Often we interpret it as "coming together in a common place," or "superficial friendliness and jovial glad handling," or even "public displays of affection (such as hugging)." In truth, while such public expressions may accompany unity, it goes much deeper. Yes, we share a common malady—our alcoholism. But anyone who has ever frequented bar life can tell you that commonality in our illness alone produces little unity.

On page 84 of the Big Book the following words appear: "Love and tolerance of others is our code." In truth, this is the basis of real unity. Genuine love can come only from the source of love, which we call our Higher Power; tolerance, in turn, is the expression of this love toward our fellows. Tolerance is easy to practice toward those of our fellows with whom we share more than one commonality. For example, it's natural to tolerate people with whom we share a socio-economic status, interests and hobbies, education or (perceived) intellectual level. But what about those of divergent religious, political, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds? Can we be tolerant of them as well?

—Dave C., Springfield, Mo.

This is an excerpt from an article in the January 2012 edition of Grapevine, reprinted with permission of The A.A. Grapevine, Inc.

CONTACT US AT SJ INTERGROUP!



We look forward to receiving your written contributions for the newsletter—but we reserve the right to edit your submission's content (no profanity, please) and length—although we'll try to change as little as possible. This includes letters reacting to items in the newsletter or other comments. Submissions will not be returned, so be sure you make yourself a copy!

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Coming soon in SJ ANONYMOUS:

- A profile of the SJIG Road Show
- The importance of the 12 Concepts
- A preview of the Area 45 Convention
- Service and how it keeps you sober
- To share or not to share?
- More personal stories
- **YOUR IDEA HERE**

You Should Be Dancing, Yeah....

South Jersey Intergroup's Social Committee is excited to announce that salsa lessons are being offered at Atrium Dance Studio, starting in February. This is a six-week course for beginners emphasizing lead, follow and timing. The cost is \$12 per class, and you pay at the door.

Dates: Tuesday nights from 6 pm to 7:15 pm, starting February 7th.

Atrium Dance Studio
4721 Route 130
Pennsauken, NJ 08110
www.atriumdance.com

RSVP BY FEBRUARY 1ST:
Sherrill Barrett
Intergroup Social Committee
856-889-5595
Sherrill@sherrillbarrettnutrition.com

Calendar of Events

Sunday, January 22 - Brooklawn Sunday Spiritual will celebrate its 26th Anniversary at 10:00 AM at Community Center, 2nd Ave. & Center St., Brooklawn. Continental breakfast.

Sunday, January 29 - Gloucester City Sunday Night Group Anniversary. 1st Baptist Church, Sussex Street between Somerset and Monmouth Streets. 7:00PM, Direction Tip: Turn off of Broadway onto Somerset @ "Wing Hings Restaurant" turn right onto Sussex. Streets are one-way. Food @ 6:00 PM, followed by Speakers: Sr. Maurice and Sr. Rose.

Sunday, February 5 - Super Bowl Party at New Beginnings Club. 5:30 PM. Food at 6:00 PM. Pizza & Wings. \$10.00/pp. 101c Rose Ave., Runnemede, NJ. (GPS users enter 1001 Rose Ave).
More info: Tim - 856.882.8628. newbeginningsclub.org

Wednesday, February 15 - Bridgeton group celebrates their 42nd Anniversary. 2 speakers followed by food - St. Andrews Episcopal Church basement - 186 Commerce St., Bridgeton. Food @ 6:30 PM - Speaker @ 7:30.

COMING IN MARCH: 45th Annual Southern New Jersey Area 45 General Service Convention—March 23, 24th and 25th (see flyer included in newsletter for details)

