

How to Handle Crosstalk in our Meetings

To some, communication the Nar-Anon way is a new experience. It requires respecting others, hearing others and being heard. If a group is having a problem with crosstalk and the opening reading from our literature does not solve it, there are other solutions that can be used. Asking members to raise their hands is a good way to discourage crosstalk. Newcomers soon learn that if they want to share, they take their turn, raise their hand and wait to be called on by the meeting chair.

Encourage the group to start an around-the-room type meeting. The chairperson announces the topic, shares on that topic, then goes either left or right around the room, and each person shares in order. This way members tend to wait their turn to speak on the topic.

Have a topic meeting on crosstalk – what it is and how to avoid it. Usually if there is a person struggling with this issue, it can be brought to light and all members are able to share how they feel about the problem. Learning to listen to each other in meetings, reminds members to hear those in their families rather than talk over them. A new way to communicate using respect and understanding is learned.

Crosstalk tends to be a larger problem in open topic meetings. Choosing a core topic may resolve this problem.

Sometimes members will have sidebar conversations. A gentle reminder that there is a meeting going on can discourage side conversations which are best saved until after the meeting.

If only one person continues to crosstalk or interrupt others, a longtime member can take him or her aside after the meeting to explain how it disrupts the group. If all the other suggestions are used, this action is often not necessary.

Nar-Anon literature is designed to help groups and individuals overcome the effects of drug addiction.

- The *New Group Packet* and the *Newcomer's Packet* are used at the inception of groups to help and welcome every newcomer who walks through our doors.
- Our Steps and Traditions are guidelines to help members progress through the recovery process.
- Our Nar-Anon daily reader, *SESH*, is available and can be ordered on the literature website.

VISION STATEMENT

We will carry the message of hope throughout the world to those affected by the addiction of someone near to them.

We do this by:

- Letting them know they are no longer alone;
- Practicing the Twelve Steps of Nar-Anon;
- Encouraging growth through service;
- Making information available through Public Information, Hospitals and Institutions and websites; and
- Changing our own attitudes.



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APPROPRIATE SHARING & CROSSTALK

The difference between a social gathering and a support group is that the support group has a direction that promotes healthy communication for all who attend.



MISSION STATEMENT

The Nar-Anon Family Groups are a worldwide fellowship for those affected by someone else's addiction. As a twelve step program, we offer our help by sharing our experience, strength and hope.

Nar-Anon is a twelve step self-help group for the families and friends of addicts.

What is Crosstalk?

In Nar-Anon, crosstalk refers to a specific type of behavior that is strongly discouraged among members during a meeting. Crosstalk typically means questioning or interrupting the person who is currently sharing, giving direct advice to others who have already shared, speaking directly to another person rather than to the group, or telling another member how to think, act or feel.

At Nar-Anon meetings, only one person speaks at a time. When we try to listen to more than one person, someone is not being heard. Indulging in a private conversation, making comments or arguing during the meeting is disrespectful to the other members and destructive to the group.

The learning is in the listening; the healing is in the sharing. Crosstalk hinders the healing process and may make the person who is sharing feel uncomfortable.

Why is Crosstalk Harmful?

Crosstalk can be a major hindrance in a meeting. If faced with interruptions, specific questions or advice, a member, especially a newcomer, may feel hesitant to continue sharing. Questions and interruptions can take the topic onto another subject losing track of the original topic altogether, which can be extremely frustrating. Crosstalk also turns the meeting into a series of conversations rather than a single person sharing what is in the heart.

Worldwide, each Nar-Anon meeting needs to be a safe place for individuals to share their personal experience, strength and hope in dealing with the effects of drug addiction. A safe Nar-Anon meeting encourages appropriate sharing and discourages crosstalk.

What is Appropriate Sharing?

Appropriate sharing occurs when a member focuses on his or her experience, strength and hope without asking for advice and opinions from the group or making comments on what others have shared.

Inappropriate sharing or crosstalk deprives a person of the basic right to share what he or she thinks and feels. Every Nar-Anon member needs to be given the respect to share without interruption.

The natural flow of a member's sharing is best achieved without disturbance. Interruptions may take away from the focus to share directly from the heart. Once a person finishes speaking, he or she can now become helpful and humble by listening to the others speak.

Exposure to appropriate sharing in our meetings gives a newcomer the opportunity to begin recovery in a healthy manner.

Examples of Crosstalk

Interruption of Sharing: Interrupting the person sharing with any questions (such as how old is the addict or what drugs are they taking?) may make that member feel uncomfortable. Questions may be asked that one does not wish to answer.

An interruption when a member is sharing disrupts the healing process. He or she may no longer feel safe. This can send a message that what is being said is not important, that no one really wants to hear it.

Direct Feedback: Speaking directly to the person sharing excludes the rest of the group. Sharing in meetings is directed to and for the benefit of the entire group, not highlighting any one member. Any one-on-one conversations are done at the exclusion of the rest of the group. There could be any number of members who identify with the topic and might want to participate in the discussion. Addressing another member by name at any time during the sharing portion of the meeting is considered crosstalk.

During breaks or in the meeting, members do not give advice, offer solutions nor try to rescue one another. What they do give freely is

experience, strength and hope. They do listen patiently and show respect for each other and the common welfare of the group. One-on-one contact can be done outside the meeting via email, phone calls and sponsorship.

Chairperson Responses: A chairperson is giving service by directing a meeting and is not expected to know or have all the answers to all the questions. Many newcomers direct their questions and concerns at the chairperson. The chairperson may ask them to hold their questions until after the meeting.

The chairperson is a facilitator who acknowledges those who wish to share and accepts without comment what others say because it is true for them. Members are free to take from the meeting what they think will be most helpful to their recovery and leave the rest.

Member Dominance: A member is best able to share from the heart when given a platform free of judgment or comments. A Nar-Anon member who dominates a meeting with crosstalk tends to restrict the growth of others. A member who constantly responds with opinions disrupts the meeting and prevents both newcomers and longtime members from sharing. A member who dominates a meeting weakens the group. The foundation of loving sharing and interchange should not be shaken.

Members are to speak only about their own feelings and experiences and accept, without comment, what others say. Whatever a member shares is true for him or her. In recovery, members learn to take responsibility for their own lives and to avoid giving advice to others. Avoidance of crosstalk is considered a safety feature of meetings.