

Happy
Holidays!

Do you

1. keep your cell phone on during the meeting?
2. put your phone on vibrate but when you get a call pick it up and say "I'm in a meeting"?
3. when someone calls, you open the phone, jump up during the meeting and start talking as you are walking to the back of the meeting or outside?
4. text or e-mail from your phone during the meeting?
5. keep your blue tooth or ear piece on during the meeting?
6. you listen to your messages during the meeting?
7. become defensive and respond negatively when someone pulls you up on phone use during the meeting?
8. keep your cell phone in your hand as if it was attached to your arm?

The question is WHY? Addicts are becoming bold, blatant and ostentatious with their cell phone behavior in meetings. The literature states that money, property (the phone), and prestige can divert us from our primary purpose. When did the cell phone become so important during the meeting? When I was new, I had a pager. I was told by an experienced member that I should turn the pager off and focus on the meeting. For 90 minutes, nothing else was more important. I tried to rationalize that I had a young son that I had to monitor and I had to keep it on, "Just in case". Then when I got a job and was stealing time, I felt that my supervisor might call. What justifications I had.

The truth is that the disease of addiction will utilize anything to divert us from listening in meetings. I was told that there is a difference between *going* to a meeting and *making* a meeting. Going to a meeting requires simple attendance but *making a meeting* means that I am emotionally and mentally involved, that I am listening with my ears, my heart and my spirit. I am totally enthralled in the process with all of my faculties tuned into the moment.

The job of the disease is to make everything else, priority and minimize the art or gift of listening. Another point is this, we respect places of worship, jobs, classrooms, court rooms much more than we respect our meetings. The place that has kept us clean, we dishonor by using the phone while something is being read or shared.

You say that you are not obsessed with the phone, well here is how you can tell: make a decision to turn your phone completely off before coming to the meeting and don't touch it until the meeting is over (no going outside during the secretary's report to check it either). If you feel uncomfortable or experience some anxiety, then you know that there is something wrong. Monitor your feelings when you decide to turn your phone off during the meeting. The other thing to consider is the newcomer that is modeling behavior. Is it okay to talk on the phone during the meeting? I guarantee

that 99.9% of the time, no call is important enough to disrupt what is happening in the meeting. Getting up to answer the phone is rude, shows a level of arrogance and possibly makes one feel important to others, We know that the call is not even that important!

You may feel that it is okay to do what you do with your phone in meetings but take a good look at it: complacency begins when other things become more important than the meeting.

MEETING AND FELLOWSHIP ETIQUETTE

"Meeting and Fellowship Etiquette" is intended to help you understand what to expect when you walk through the door of a Narcotics Anonymous meeting and what to do while you're there. We hope this will be useful for both newcomer and old-timer alike. Showing respect for the group, listening to the members of that group, and following the meeting format will help any newcomer (or old-timer) to have a beneficial meeting experience.

What is Meeting Etiquette?

Meeting etiquette consists of customs, manners, decorum, and propriety; it is the way to conduct oneself while in a Narcotics Anonymous meeting. Meeting and fellowship etiquette has become an important topic among many members of the Narcotics Anonymous community, as well as those who refer people to its program. People "associated," but not "affiliated" with Narcotics Anonymous recovery, such as judges, law enforcement and medical professionals, and others are taking an increasing interest in what actually happens to a newcomer being sent to his or her first meeting. These professionals want to ensure that any newcomer is treated with respect and that those people they refer to meetings are not taken advantage of. They also want to ensure that the meetings actually provide those services as presented in the public relations material from various Narcotics Anonymous service bodies. The fellowship also wants the persons referred to their meetings to not be disruptive or distractive and to participate.

Meeting etiquette has traditionally been a concept passed down from one recovering person to another, e.g., from sponsor to sponsee or a more experienced member to the newer member. There is no standard or accepted model beyond what is written in the Twelve Traditions; however, it is common for each member to take personal responsibility for his or her own fellowship and to make certain that there is an atmosphere of recovery found in the meetings. Most "violations" of meeting etiquette are usually addressed by more long-standing members of a group, usually in a kind and tolerant way.

Examples of meeting etiquette are as follows:

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- Getting to a meeting early enables an attendee to get a beverage, use the restroom, socialize, etc., so they can:
 - Be sure of a seat before the meeting begins;
 - Avoid the disruption of performing these activities while members are reading or sharing.
 - Leaving and returning to one's seat or speaking to one's neighbors during the meeting is frowned upon, as this distracts those who may be sharing, or those attempting to pay attention.
 - If asked to read one of the passages or literature selections, it is considered respectful to read them as written, without adding comments or "sound effects." The literature of the Narcotics Anonymous program was written with great care to be of help to those who suffer. It was voted on by group conscience and the fellowship as a body agreed on the final presentation. Anyone with a disagreement on a particular reading should simply excuse him- or herself from reading it aloud and discuss it afterward, privately, with a sponsor or other member. "Editorial comments", "callbacks", or chanting along with or in response to the readings in a meeting might confuse or alarm newcomers or others who desperately need to hear the message of recovery as it was intended.
 - Using only the language and literature consistent with Narcotics Anonymous ensures that a clear message of recovery is being offered. Using mixed language from various fellowships sends mixed messages and can cause newer members to be confused about the meeting's primary purpose.
 - The guideline against "cross-talking" or "sniper sharing" helps maintain a calm and safe atmosphere of recovery in the meetings.

- “Stay in the meeting ‘from prayer to prayer.’” Since most meetings begin and end with a prayer, “staying in the meeting from prayer to prayer” means both physical attendance and mental focus on the meeting from beginning to end.
- The Seventh Tradition states that groups should be fully self-supporting and decline outside contributions. This allows Narcotics Anonymous groups to carry the message the way it was intended, without the influence of outside people or organizations. It is customary to put a contribution in the basket if one can afford to, but it is not required, nor it is appropriate for a visitor (or newcomer in some fellowships).
- Members do not publicly mention specific facilities, treatment centers, detoxification units, hospitals, halfway houses, drug courts, etc. Doing so is considered an implied endorsement of these facilities/entities by the member. This is especially important if a member serves on a group, area, or regional service body. As such, the member is viewed by others as a representative of the Narcotics Anonymous fellowship and they will think that the fellowship, rather than the member, is endorsing a specific entity.
- Members refer to the meeting by its name rather than the facility where it is held. Referring to a facility may imply a relationship with the facility.
- Members refrain from mentioning specific drugs or tell overly detailed “war stories” (“drunkalogues” or “drugalogues”); it can make others in the meeting uncomfortable if specific drugs or excessive details are mentioned.
- Many groups will ask members to keep their sharing between three to five minutes in order to give everyone who wishes to share a chance to do so. This is especially important if the meeting has a large number of members in attendance.
- Members show respect for the facility where the meeting is held. Narcotics Anonymous may not be affiliated with the facility, but they have a responsibility to make certain that the meeting area is left in as good or better condition than it was found. Smokers should dispose of cigarette butts in an appropriate manner, using cigarette receptacles or ashtrays. Be mindful of behavior outside the meeting as well; negative complaints from neighbors to the facility is a direct reflection on the Narcotics Anonymous group and have caused many groups to lose a meeting place. Many meetings are held in public places. Groups want to make sure that the behavior of a few members does not negatively affect the fellowship as a whole.

If someone is being disrespectful or placing the meeting location in jeopardy, then it is the responsibility of the chairperson, secretary, and all other members to bring the issue to that person’s attention. They can ask an individual not to return to a particular group or facility if chronic negative behavior puts the facility or its members at risk. The meeting chairperson and or other members have a responsibility to approach the disruptive person and explain, in a respectful manner, why or why not a certain practice is unacceptable.

Cell phones should be silenced or turned off at the beginning of the meeting. You should not text message or otherwise indulge in other distractive behaviors (Angry Birds, and such). This is disrespectful to others and you will not be able to participate in the meeting. If you receive an important phone call you should take it outside, but this should be avoided if possible. It is also considered rude to get up once the meeting begins. If you need to get coffee, go to the bathroom, or smoke, do it before the meeting begins. People moving around can be very distracting to those who are sharing.

Most meetings do not permit crosstalk, or directly addressing the comments of others. Instead, sharing should be confined to the topic at hand and how it relates to your own experience.

Talking to neighbors during the meeting is disrespectful to whoever is sharing. Public speaking can provoke a lot of anxiety in some people. Not only are side conversations distracting, but they convey the message that attendees are not listening to what the speaker has to say. If you have to leave the meeting early or get up for some other reason, wait until the speaker finishes to do so. If you have a paper to be signed for verification of your attendance, do not expect to have it signed unless you are present for the entire meeting.

Meeting attendance or court cards

If you have an attendance or court card requiring a signature, place it in the basket when it is passed for the Seventh Tradition. Usually the meeting chairperson or secretary will sign it and then make it available to you after the meeting has ended. This is done as a courtesy to you; the group is not required to sign your card. Please wait until the end of the meeting to get your card back. And never interrupt the meeting by trying to get a meeting attendance card signed for a meeting that you intend to leave early, have been disruptive, or haven't been present the entire meeting (being outside smoking or talking on the phone, excessive bathroom breaks, etc.)

No cross-talk.

"Cross talk" is speaking directly to a person who has shared in a meeting and offering advice to them during the meeting. This is another way that Narcotics Anonymous meetings differ from group therapy. Most consider cross-talk to be unacceptable. In general people do not share their honest thoughts and feelings in a meeting so that others present can comment, jeer, debate, heckle, or otherwise offer their personal opinions on what a person just shared. If people were permitted to remark on each other's sharing, the meeting could very easily become sidetracked, and the primary purpose---RECOVERY---forgotten. Members often enjoy each other's company and like to talk about many subjects and even tease each other and mention what was shared, but after, not during a meeting. It is inappropriate to make abusive, racist, sexist comments, or to share in such a manner as to offend others in the room. If you do so you may be asked not to share again, or to leave.

Getting "kicked out" of a meeting

As a general rule, you cannot get "kicked out" of a Narcotics Anonymous meeting. You can, however, be asked to leave a meeting place or location because you are not following group or facility rules or are perceived to be a threat to others. If you are asked to leave a meeting location by the chairperson, secretary, or elected representative of the group, you are obligated to leave that space. A law enforcement official could be called in and a charge of trespassing pressed. This is an extreme situation, but may be necessary, and if so, is well within the legal rights of the group and its trusted servants.