

World Service Business Conference 2023

Ask-It Basket Questions

- 1) **Do intergroups hold Zoom accounts so that Zoom is not dependent on an individual's personal Zoom account?**

Yes. In addition, some intergroups and regions share their Zoom account access with their meetings.

- 2) **Can an ordinary delegate “listen in” when the Website Review Committee meets?**

In the eyes of the Website Review Committee, all World Service Business Conference delegates are extraordinary! We know firsthand you had to jump through many hoops to qualify, plus travel to Albuquerque! First and foremost, thank you for your service! On behalf of the Website Review Committee, we value your input. I'm happy to send you our minutes and accept all suggestions for the May 2023 – April 2024 Website Review Committee term. Please send them to me at bjjtrustee@oa.org and request when you'd like to “listen in” to one of our monthly meetings.

- 3) **Many of the Principles of Traditions are not useful for online meetings. Any suggestions for that?**

The Principles of Unity, Trust, Identity, Autonomy, Purpose, Solidarity, Responsibility, Fellowship, Structure, Neutrality, Anonymity, and Spirituality are the Twelve Principles of our Traditions. I believe all these Principles are useful and necessary for online meetings. The only one that was difficult for my area was fellowship. My meeting decided we would have “parking lot” time after the meeting to fellowship and make our recovery community closer.

All our meetings need to follow the Traditions, or we will fade away. As it states in our 12&12' “The Twelve Traditions are designed to keep our meetings and service bodies in track, functioning in such a way as to future the recovery of all compulsive overeaters who seek help in this fellowship.” [page 90 of OA's *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Second Edition*] When my group studied the Twelve Traditions, I realized how this helps in all my relationships outside and inside the Fellowship. “The more we understand the Traditions, we will be better able to keep OA strong and healthy and ourselves spiritually fit in the face of all challenges.” [page 90 of OA's *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Second Edition*]

- 4) **Based on the OA policy regarding local publications, after selling them, is that possible to use the profit to republish them?**

Below is the OA policy statement regarding the distribution and use of locally produced literature.

World Service Business Conference Policy 2010a Amended 2012. The following policy statement was adopted:

Statement on Approved Literature

In accordance with our Traditions, we suggest that OA groups maintain unity and honor our Traditions by using, selling, and displaying only approved books and pamphlets at their meetings. This includes OA Conference- and board-approved literature; AA Conference-approved books, booklets, and all future editions thereof, with original edition copyright 2010 or earlier; and locally produced OA literature. Although groups may choose to focus on only one piece of OA-approved literature, individuals and groups are encouraged to use any and all OA-approved literature. Locally produced literature must be developed according to the *OA Guidelines for Locally Produced Literature*, and should be used with the greatest discretion. Local literature should be considered temporary and discontinued when OA literature approved for general use is available to cover the topic.

If the literature in question has not yet been replaced by a piece of OA approved literature on the same topic, then the question of how to spend income from the sale of such literature should probably follow the guidance of OA Traditions.

- Tradition Two offers the guidance of following the group conscience in how the service body publishing the literature spends that income.
- Tradition Four offers the guidance of group autonomy in making such decisions where they do not affect other groups or OA as a whole.
- Tradition Five offers the guidance of maintaining our primary purpose by carrying the message of recovery.
- Tradition Seven offers guidance on being self-supporting in our efforts.

Given these considerations, it is clearly up to the publishing service body to make the decision about how to spend the proceeds of the sale of locally produced literature.

5) Transition of face-to-face meetings to online made during Covid has caused some serious division among members. Some members want to go back to face-to-face mode, and others want to stay online at the same day and time. If they stay online, should they change modality? Can they do it hybrid? What is your suggestion?

All meetings are autonomous by group decision. In my area, we had the same disagreement. Some of us wanted to go back to face-to-face and some wanted to stay online. We had many discussions and disagreements in our group conscience meetings. None of us wanted the responsibility of a hybrid meeting. Our decision was to split. We now have two separate meetings, one online (they created a new meeting) and one face-to-face (we took the old meeting number). Both are thriving and we've had two separate meetings for about a year now. We all aired our concerns, worked our program so we didn't have resentments, and now we have two meetings. We all agreed to disagree and it's worked out. Honesty, open mindedness, willing to disagree without anger, and remembering our primary purpose: to help the still suffering compulsive overeater.

6) If the priority is to have the same gender sponsor, what is the suggestion for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer members?

As a member of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual community, sponsorship can be a difficult issue to address. Because I came into OA when

there were few men and even fewer Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual members I had a female sponsor for several years. I did not sponsor men, especially gay men, for many years due to the same sex attraction which could occur. It was not until years later in the program that I felt comfortable sponsoring men. At the present time I do sponsor gay and transgender men. I think that gay men and lesbians sponsoring someone of the opposite sex is appropriate, the same with transgender individuals. Not quite sure how to respond to non-binary, asexual, bisexual or pansexual individuals. If the sponsor themselves is secure in their own sexuality I do believe that individual could sponsor anyone in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual community. Hopefully this will provide some insight into my personal perspective.

7) Are we allowed to use/create animation for young members in their specific-topic meetings?

Thank you for your interesting question. I think it's wonderful that you are looking at creating resources that will be helpful in the recovery of young OA members!

You will want to follow the [*Guidelines for Locally Approved Literature*](#) in creating your animations and working with your service body to obtain approval for your finished product.

If you follow the guidelines and the content of the animation is to help members recover through the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of OA, I do not see any reason why an animation could not be used in your meeting. Your meeting can hold a group conscience to decide how best to use the new locally approved literature.

One last thing to keep in mind: "Young people" in OA means members who are between 18-30 years old. Those under 18 years of age need to be accompanied by a parent or guardian at OA meetings. Thank you for carrying the message!

8) Definition of slip (break) and relapse in OA.

Relapse is not just on the physical level but on the emotional and spiritual levels as well. From personal experience, spiritual relapse occurs first because it was the most difficult aspect of the program to attain, followed by emotional, and eventually physical. Of course, emotional and spiritual relapse can occur without the physical ramifications and the sponsor might be able to assist the sponsee with the insights the sponsor may have after working with the individual for a while.

A slip to my way of thinking is choosing to eat something that the individual had previously determined was detrimental to their food sobriety or acting in an emotional or spiritual way which leads to the old way of acting and thinking about life as had previously been lived prior to coming to OA.

9) Can we use medical/scientific description of some conditions in specific-focus meetings such as bulimia?

It is best, when describing our disease in OA meetings to confine our explanations to our own experience, strength, and hope. This includes the direct experience of OA members attending the meeting and quotes from OA-approved literature that might be helpful.

The problem with including information from outside resources, even scientific and medical professionals in an OA meeting, is that they might be misunderstood to be the opinion of “OA as a whole.”

I would strongly caution against the use of quotes from outside sources, even “experts” in the scientific or medical professions.

10) How and where can I send suggestions to the website technicians?

We’d love to hear your suggestions! Please send them to me at bjjtrustee@oa.org. We are far from “techies,” but we are tech geeks with a food problem! Thanks to OA and its Twelve-Step recovery program, we get better together! Thank you for your service and willingness to help us!

11) Is it a violation of Tradition to have a “7th Tradition” button on the intergroup’s website?

After reviewing how each Tradition would be or would not be affected by this button, I see no violation of a Tradition Seven button. I have used Tradition Seven buttons to donate for my intergroup. For me personally, it provided a way that I could contribute to my intergroup online. Sometimes the button will take you to a different page on the website and then provide more than one way to contribute.

12) Are there any rules about Zoom accounts? Some meetings use a person’s personal Zoom account and when they leave or are out of the area the Zoom account sometimes freezes and members cannot have a meeting.

At this point there are no OA rules about Zoom accounts. We are aware that some members use their personal Zoom accounts, and should they leave the meeting, the meeting no longer has online access which is a disadvantage.

Here are some options with best practices:

- 1) Ask your intergroup if they have a Zoom account your meeting can use for your meeting. Offer a contribution to pay for your meeting’s portion.
- 2) Ask your region if they have a Zoom account your meeting can use for your meeting. Offer a contribution to pay for your meeting’s portion.
- 3) Set up your own group Zoom account.
 - Set up a generic group email with password.
 - Give access to a few key people (three or more depending on the size of your meeting).
 - Determine who these key people will be by group conscience.
 - Use the group contributions to pay for the account.
 - Reach out to your service body on how to do this if you don’t know how.

13) How can someone serve as a trustee? I've served at World Service Business Conference four years as a delegate but not at my region. Can I still apply to be a trustee?

I am sorry, but it turns out a trustee nominee must be nominated by a region, though a motion to change this could be made by a service body. For the near term, I would suggest contacting your region chair, even if you haven't been participating in your region, telling them of your interest and asking them to nominate you. I know this is an extra hurdle, but we look forward to seeing you on the board sometime soon. Thanks again for your interest in serving.

14) Why two separate and exact opposite motions even made it to the Business Conference, i.e., World Service Business Conference Bylaw Proposal 14 and World Service Business Conference Bylaw Proposal 13? Should it have gone to Reference Subcommittee?

Thank you for the question. New Business Motions and Bylaw Amendment proposals that receive more than a 50 approval approval vote on the Agenda Questionnaire are placed on the World Service Business Conference agenda even if they are exact opposite motions, which is what occurred with Bylaw Amendment Proposals 13 and 14. Since the motions did not receive three amendments, they were not automatically sent to the Reference Subcommittee for review.

The Reference Subcommittee was extremely busy during the 2023 Business Conference, meeting for eight different sessions over three days of the Conference and considered seven New Business Motions and four Bylaw Amendments. Proposals A, E, F, and I received three amendments from the floor and were referred to Reference, while New Business Motions C, T, and U and Bylaw Amendments 1, 11, 12, and 15 were considered after the Bylaws cochairs consulted with the board chair. Since there were so many motions this year, the Reference Subcommittee was not able to discuss many of the motions, and Bylaws Amendments No. 13 and 14 would have been difficult to discuss since they opposed each other.

15) Is there help available for a group with one member who is repeatedly hurtful to members during meetings? This person also apologizes but the behavior continues.

Thank you for your question, and I am sorry that your group is struggling with this issue. I will start by saying that I don't have the perfect answer, but I believe we can't go wrong looking to the Steps, Traditions, and group conscience in addressing problems in our meetings. There are also specific OA resources which may be helpful. There are some excellent suggestions in OA's [*Guidelines for Addressing Disruptive Behavior*](#).

One recommendation is clear wording in the format about crosstalk. Even if your format already has this wording, consider holding a group conscience to see if clarification is needed. At one meeting I attended, we found our no crosstalk request was continually ignored by a member. Our group conscience was to change our sharing guidelines to a short, numbered list, to be read by someone other than the leader for more emphasis.

Our OA 12&12 discusses how to handle breaks in group conscience: "When it comes our turn to lead an OA meeting, Tradition One makes it our responsibility to lovingly remind members of the group conscience if it is being ignored." (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*, page 92) Even if the crosstalk does

not stop, the leader's reminder that the meeting does not welcome comments or behavior directed toward others will reinforce the group conscience and help those affected understand that the behavior comes from an individual, not the meeting.

Another suggestion is to have one or two members meet with the disruptive person informally to discuss the problem and seek solutions. The good news for your meeting is that the member seems to recognize their behavior is causing problems, and most likely would rather not find themselves repeating unwelcome behavior. That is a good place to start. A kind and compassionate approach and a sincere desire to be helpful may be well-received.

There are quite a few other suggestions in the *Guidelines* that may be helpful for your situation. Of course, there is no guarantee that the member will be able to stop the troubling behavior. In this case, it may be necessary to continue to reinforce group conscience, but not allow one member's behavior to become the focus or change the tone of the whole meeting. If the meeting is overall a positive, welcoming, and recovery-focused place, it will serve the recovery of all who attend.

16) My work has a payroll donation system that gives to charities. Could I use this system to give to OA? Can I get and use an income tax receipt for this?

Thank you for the question. Yes, your employer could forward an after-tax payroll deduction as a contribution to Overeaters Anonymous, similar to other organizations such as the United Way. You should consult your tax advisor for more information on income tax deductions, but OA is a 501c(3) nonprofit entity. Since you are not submitting the contribution directly to OA, the World Service Office would not be able to issue an emailed receipt to you, but you could use your paystub as evidence of the contribution. Alternatively, you could setup an automatic recurring contribution on the oa.org website, and you would then receive an emailed receipt from the World Service Office.

17) A Region Nine country is translating the OA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. We have not been able to translate Tradition Nine, because we do not understand this phrase: "OA, as such, ought never be organized." Could you please offer an explanation of what this means?

Thank you very much for this question. Firstly, I would like to congratulate you on the translation of the 12&12 by Overeaters Anonymous. It is a very important book to carry the message of recovery.

Then I would like to share with you that at first when I read Tradition Nine, I also felt a sense of confusion. But then as I went deeper, I realized that it is precisely this Tradition that makes the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions fellowship different from other organizations. So, thank for your question, I took the opportunity to go and review it, and the key to it all lies in the spiritual principle that is "structure."

How does an organization that has an inverted pyramid as its structure stand up?

The answer is simple: It's a system considered from the point of view of the whole rather than of any single part. There's no intentional lack of organization, although in OA there aren't bosses, there are members willing to serve at many levels. We work together in

committees to create a structure that will support OA and keep OA strong in the future because we rely on spiritual principles rather than a power structure.

This Tradition keeps members free from the bureaucracy that tends to form in many organizations, and this allows us to focus on carrying the message. All members are equal in their efforts to serve OA. Members offer to take on positions at the local meeting level, and at any service body level, and they help each other.

When members work with others as part of a team, we grow stronger together, and OA is strengthened. Even if we usually have control of our decision, we learn to listen to each other with an open mind, and we continue to learn that we are not in charge. Our Higher Power speaks to each of us and guides us when making decisions.

In conclusion, to make OA work, it is essential that it is not organized. By doing so, we can relax, trust God (as we understood Him), and appreciate the wisdom found in Tradition Nine. The final result in our lives is an increase in our faith and of our humility. I hope I have been helpful and that now Tradition Nine is clear to you.

- 18) In my country, intergroups and national service board use a canal in telegram to announce meeting information daily. Our online intergroup (not registered yet) has refused to announce my home meeting for more than a year for some reasons such as:**
- a) The speakers share with camera and this is against anonymity.**
 - b) The group gives away free literature to newcomers (bought previously from intergroup).**
 - c) Holding workshop by the group.**
 - d) The group has a WhatsApp page for the members who wish to join.**
 - e) Communication with the World Service Office directly to ask questions.**
 - f) The group translates *A Step Ahead* and online *Lifeline* stories and shares with the attendees.**

Thank you so much for your question and we are so sorry your group is going through this. Please know that motions were passed at this year's World Service Business Conference intended to address just these issues. Firstly, we wouldn't want you to feel "forced" to affiliate with any service body. If you'd rather not be affiliated with the Virtual Region you may easily move your affiliation to a region more suited to your needs. You might start by contacting Claire, the chair of the Virtual Region (chair@oavirtualregion.org) or, if you're geographically in Region Nine, the chair of Region Nine (chair@oaregion9.org), for assistance in changing regions and the service body with which you would like to affiliate (intergroup or national service board).

None of the reasons you seem to have been given for denying service justify not treating your group with the same courtesy a service body (intergroup or national service board) would treat any other meeting. None of those points listed are Traditions violations, including having your video on during meetings. The service body with which you are affiliated by now should have heard of motions allowing for affiliation with a service body and a region of choice, so they are likely to be more willing to sell you literature and list your meeting. If this is not the case please reach out to your trustee liaison to help in discussion with the

national service board or intergroup. These would likely be Emilia at r9trustee@oa.org or Gary at vrtrustee@oa.org. All the best to you and your group, and if we can be of any further help, don't hesitate to reach out.

- 19) My home meeting has an average of 100 attendees every week and they receive the link for other members. This meeting is registered by the World Service Office and was forced to be affiliated to the Virtual Region. The national service board and intergroup don't sell translated books to our members. We live in a small country, and we all know each other. Any suggestions?**

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- 20) Can someone please point me to where I can find already existing public service announcements for newspapers and radio to inform the public about contacting local Overeaters Anonymous?**

Public service announcements are available on oa.org. There is a wonderful resource called "Let People Know about Your Meeting" in the [Document Library](#) under Category: Meeting Resources. It tells how to create a classified ad and has sample ads to look at too. There are tips for how best to make people aware of your meeting besides the classified ads. OA has radio public information ads and social media ads at oa.org/podcasts/. Download the "Local Contact Information Poster" in the [Document Library](#) under Category: Public Information. For more information, order the *Public Information and Professional Outreach Service Manual* from the World Service Office at 1-505-891-2664 or online at bookstore.oa.org.