



## What Is Cross Talk?

Reprinted from *Lifeline*, Ask-It Basket, August 1999

Q: What is cross talk? Are all responses and comments to another person at a meeting cross talk? Is thanking someone for something he or she shared cross talk? Or is it cross talk only if the comments are negative?

A: OA literature does not specifically define cross talk. The Suggested Meeting Format states: "As you share your experience and strength in OA, please also share your hope. Please confine your sharing to your experience with the disease of compulsive eating, the solution offered by OA and your own recovery from the disease, rather than just the events of the day or week. If you are having difficulties, share how you use the program to deal with them. If you need to talk more about your difficulties and seek solutions, we suggest you speak to your sponsor and other members after the meeting."

Discouraging cross talk provides the freedom in OA to say what is difficult to express elsewhere. Shares not focusing on your own experience may constitute cross talk, including comments in support of or opinions in response to another person's share. Such responses are not sharing your experience; they are offering your view of others in the room.

However, members do frequently share situations or describe feelings common to the group. Members want to hear about others' recovery, to see how others have dealt with similar situations and to know that they are not alone. Your intentions and tone determine whether responding to another's situation is the best way to share your experience, strength and hope. Clearly this is a gray area, and since you never know how others will interpret your remarks, sometimes it is best not to comment.

It is especially difficult not to respond immediately to a member in pain. A loving hug, a pat on the shoulder or a talk with the person after the meeting is the best expression of support.

Interrupting is also considered cross talk. Interruptions may disrupt the meeting and deny the speaker adequate opportunity to share. To prevent this, many groups ask members to raise their hands for recognition before sharing.

If cross talk troubles your group, request a steering committee meeting to discuss the problem. Consider each member's personal definition of cross talk. Ultimately, the group's consensus on what constitutes cross talk in its meeting should apply.

*-- Members of the Board of Trustees provide answers to these questions*