

Hi, everyone,

As I mentioned on the meeting, here is a list of just a few of the ideas that have surfaced from the Women's Outreach Committee-sponsored "Let's Talk" discussions for anyone in the fellowship regarding "Women in the Fellowship: What's Working? What's Not?"

IDEAS FOR SOBER AND WELCOMING MEETINGS ESPECIALLY FOR WELCOMING AND RETAINING WOMEN

"We have the freedom to develop our meetings in different ways, in order to meet the varying needs of our diverse fellowship." Tradition 4, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.

- If "12-stepping" (meeting with or interviewing prospective members, face to face) is done before entry in a mixed meeting, it's great to send exactly one man and one woman, together, to meet confidentially with a prospective woman. (Some women relate to one gender better than the other.)
- For some, it has been helpful for a woman newcomer to develop a trusting relationship with someone in the fellowship before they ever get to a local meeting. This can be either an in-person relationship or a long-distance one – for example, over the phone. Some meetings or intergroups with few women have an information phone line answered by volunteer women from other geographical locations, and some groups distribute contact information of women volunteers.
- Some areas have held an orientation session for women prior to starting a woman's face to face meeting and determined that is was useful. It may work for mixed meetings for new members (or new women members) as well.
- If there are any regularly attending women in the group, they could arrive early in case of a woman newcomer.
- It is helpful to all newcomers to have an organized literature table. There can be a section for women, displaying SAA materials for and about women including the letter titled, "A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer - from other women members of SAA," or the official SAA Women's Welcome Packet, or a locally assembled newcomer's packet for women (and a different one for men). Women's Outreach Committee (WOC) announcements including retreats and workshops belong here, too. A list of women's stories in the SAA "green book" on the Lit table would make a statement of support. Information and schedules for women's meetings, women's telemeetings, and mixed meetings, belongs also. (If outside literature is permitted, it could also include such things as Meditations for Women, a Women's guide to the Twelve Steps, women's stories, or psychologists' books on Women in Sex Addiction.)

- The sign-in sheet may include column(s), "will take phone calls from women" (and also, "... calls from men"). Among the information available to women (at literature table or in women's packets) there could be a confidential phone list of women (and of men) who will take phone calls from women.
- Some meetings include a greeter as a service position. This can be a man or a woman, but it is preferable that they are someone with solid recovery (e.g., has permission from a sponsor for this position). It is helpful if the greeter is familiar with the resources available to women, some of which are mentioned in the WOC Welcome Letter (or at least they can give the new woman the letter).
- Some women prefer to connect with men, not just with other women. It's important to be aware that going to extreme lengths to try to connect the newcomer with the one woman on the phone list will not make the new woman feel like everyone else.
- Anything that calls out women differently from men will raise awareness of fellowship gender differences, and thus, seem less inviting. For example, there could be a sign that says, "for Women and Men", instead of "Women permitted".
- It helps women present as "equal members" if one or more is visible as a trusted servant -- e.g. meeting leader, literature person, treasurer, or Intergroup rep, or a service position that makes regular reports at meetings.
- Someone (man or woman, greeter or not), needs to extend their hand to a new woman, give their first name, and use the word "Welcome!" Someone (man or woman) should offer a seat to a woman who enters -- by gesture if the meeting has started.
- One woman, serving as secretary, found that taking newcomers' phone numbers, and proactively reaching out to newcomers, increases their likelihood of returning.
- In sharing, men in general tend to be more graphic and crude. Many have said that in meetings with a number of women attending, members tend to speak in more general terms (less specific) about slips or acting out behaviors.
- It is helpful if the meeting format (script) clearly states Group Conscience-approved boundaries around what is acceptable in the meeting and what is not (for example, we don't use profanity or graphic descriptions). Often, there is a suggestion that if a participant feels uncomfortable with the way someone is sharing, they may raise their hand, and the speaker will then be less specific in their sharing. Leaders could be aware of this tendency and take appropriate action, and not just let it pass as a one-time thing.
- New members and minorities or women won't feel safe to object if nobody else models that boundary in meetings.
- Asking permission before sitting next to a person of the opposite gender whom you don't know is a good idea.

- It can be off-putting if all seats are taken except for the two on either side of a woman. Sitting beside her (with her expressed permission) can help her feel normal.
- Respect also includes people not staring when a woman enters, or during the meeting; respect for all members includes asking permission before touching, hugging or holding hands.
- A meeting where LGBT persons feel free to share that information can relieve intimidation, as can a meeting where women feel they can share as personally and intimately as do men.

This list is meant to be suggestive only; many more and different ideas can work for some groups – we can take what works for us and leave the rest.

Women's Outreach Committee (WOC) hosts monthly open conversations about the ways we're welcoming women into our meetings and encouraging their full participation in the fellowship. These free "Let's Talk" conference calls are open to all SAA members of any gender, who are invited to share both what's going well for them in their groups as well as what challenges they're experiencing, so we can brainstorm possible solutions. We intend to share good ideas with others in the fellowship, as well as to help groups access existing resources or help to create new ones to support groups who are trying to support women in the fellowship. Topics raised and discussed during past "Let's Talk" calls include diversity, inclusion, safety (including "13th Stepping,") training ideas, and the use of technology in meetings as a tool for increasing meeting diversity and attendance. You are encouraged to spread the word to other groups you attend and invite your SAA friends.

The call-in number is 712-770-4160 and the passcode is 410674. The meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

Saturday, November 17, 2018, 16:00 (4 pm) Central

Tuesday, January 8, 2019, 20:00 (8 pm) Central

Saturday, January 19, 2019, 16:00 (4 pm) Central

Saturday, February 23, 2019, 16:00 (4 pm) Central

Tuesday, March 12, 2019, 20:00 (8 pm) Central

In recovery,

Deb in WV