

WSO Delegate Report
New York South Area
April 2020

Dear GRs and Area Trusted Servants,

Al-Anon loves acronyms. And this month we have a new one: VWSC. Can you guess what it means? If not, read on...

VWSC: If you subscribe to WSO's monthly newsletter, *In The Loop* you already know the World Service Conference is going virtual this year! What this means for your delegate, is ramping up for conference through online orientations and trainings, downloading and studying documents, and getting ready to sit in front of my computer and participate, discuss, and vote on behalf of all of you—the five hundred groups in our NYS Area!

Our first *Virtual World Service Conference* will take place Mon, April 20 to Fri, April 24th, using a combination of web platforms and AFG Connects. Some items will be deferred until the April 2021 WSC.

While this necessary step makes a lot of delegates sad, it's important to note that 2019 WSC attendees already began discussing the idea of a hybrid conference (part virtual, part in-person). In fact, it was last year's Mega Issue. The fact that we have the chance to experience a completely virtual conference in 2020, is in keeping with this year's Conference theme: Dreaming Big with 20/20 Vision!

Love gifts: For groups and districts that have already prepared love gifts for the WSC attendees, thank you. WSO has asked that you please *not* send them to Virginia Beach this year, but instead, do bring them to our next in-person NYSA Assembly. We'll distribute them there.

**Delegate Report Part I
A New Normal**

First of all, I hope that you and your family and friends are all healthy.

Everything we've considered "normal" about our lives, our routines, and our Al-Anon program, have been profoundly affected by this global health crisis. For many of us, the uncertainty of this pandemic has elicited uncomfortable, helpless feelings and old coping mechanisms. But with it has also come new opportunities to connect with our Al-Anon family.

Here are some ways to stay connected during this time of social isolation:

- WSO website <al-anon.org> provides a link to the 300 registered phone/video meetings at <al-anon.org/al-anon-meetings/electronic-meetings/>.
- Alateens can participate in a WSO-sponsored chat room moderated by adult Alateen Sponsors. To register, go to <al-anon.org> and click on Newcomers > Teen Corner > Alateen Chat Meeting.

While sheltering at home, Al-Anon has become a lifeline for many of us—some members dipping into two or more meetings a day. I’m grateful to the many groups in our Area that have found ways to keep their virtual doors open to regular members, as well as to newcomers and visitors from around the country and the world!

And as with anything new, virtual meetings have brought with them unique challenges, especially, those relating to anonymity and being fully self-supporting.

How is your group handling anonymity and finances in this new virtual format?

After talking it over with our Area Chair Sarah, we decided to ask District Reps how groups in their districts are addressing the 7th and 12th Traditions as their meetings go virtual:

- *How are the groups in your district continuing to observe the 7th Tradition? We are interested in how groups have remained fully self-supporting both in terms of finances and service.*
- *How are groups in your district observing Al-Anon’s principle of anonymity as meetings have moved to a virtual space?*

A Sampling of Responses from Around our Area

Seventh Tradition: Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

- While some meetings are no longer paying rent, others still are. Either way, many are paying for a virtual platform that provides access for up to 100 people. The \$15/month cost may be donated by a group member; paid for by the group; or set-up by the district.
- Other groups begin by using a conference call number that’s free of charge.
- For their 7th Tradition, some members are using the envelope method: setting aside contributions in an envelope to bring to the meeting when it resumes meeting face-to-face.
- Members may write a check to the group treasure or to the group mailing address.
- Groups set up their own remote payment account on various platforms.
- Members donate directly to WSO <https://al-anon.org/contributions/member/>
- Or by mail to their other service arms: New York South, local AIS, their district.

This range of possibilities exemplifies Tradition Four: *Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting another group or Al-Anon or AA as a whole.*

How are Service Positions Handled in Virtual Meetings?

Some larger and/or daily meetings have added a new position of “host” to their service positions. I’ve attended meetings where the host keeps track of who is entering the space, shares information in the chat about how to make contributions, and sets meeting parameters to ensure member safety and privacy. Having a host can make it easier for the chairperson to focus on leading the meeting.

Smaller meetings might just have a chairperson—someone who is comfortable navigating the virtual space. As always, it’s up to group autonomy, unless it affects Al-Anon as a whole.

Maintaining Anonymity on Virtual Platforms

Tradition Twelve: Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles above personalities.

Why is anonymity considered the “spiritual foundation of all our Traditions”? Anonymity is what makes a new member feel safe enough to enter an Al-Anon meeting for the first time, and it’s what gives members the confidence to share honestly no matter how long they’ve been attending.

- In one district, groups remind members when signing into virtual meetings, to use only their last initial if they’re concerned about anonymity. And/or to turn off their video function so they can’t be seen.
- Another district has formed an Anonymity subcommittee to gather more information.

How can newcomers find meetings in this new virtual space?

They can check the WSO website or any of our Area’s information services (AISs) that have been doing a wonderful job adapting to the rapid shift from in-person to virtual meetings.¹ Not only are listings for electronic meetings continually being updated, so are the guidelines and safeguards that keep groups safe. This has taken the form of access codes and passwords that groups share with regular members. But this has also raised some questions for our fellowship. How can newcomers and visitors find meetings if they don’t have the access codes?

Each meeting needs to think about how best to balance the safety of its members while still being available to, and welcoming, the newcomer.

By posting participant access codes and passwords on public AIS websites, newcomers and visiting members are free to attend any meeting. But it can also open the meeting up to unwanted interference. Happily, I’ve not yet heard of any Al-Anon meetings having to contend with such harassment, but it is still a possibility. In addition to adding a “host” to your meeting, helpful suggestions on how to maintain safety in virtual meetings may be found on the NYC Intergroup home page: <https://www.nycalanon.org>

Delegate Report Part II

March 8, 2020 was our last in-person Area World Service Committee meeting. Normally, my report to the March AWSC meeting acts as the basis for my April report to the NYS Assembly. But this year, everything has changed.

The following events I announced at the AWSC were cancelled:

- NERD (Northeast Regional Delegates) meeting, March 13-15th
- New York South Area Assembly, April 4th
- The July 2-5th International AA Convention with Al-Anon participation in Detroit, MI

¹ Links to our NYS AISs may be found under Area Information on the NYS website: <https://www.al-anonny.org>

On the bright note, *The Road Trip! You and your Board Connect* is still scheduled to take place in Cleveland, OH on Oct. 31st. But stay tuned...



As we did at the March AWSC meeting, let's take a moment for a Seventh Tradition Exercise.



Tradition Seven Icebreaker

Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

What does it mean to be fully self-supporting? I'm reminded of the oxygen mask analogy from our literature, when the flight attendant says, "Put on your own oxygen mask before assisting others." This has always been a challenge for me, and yet it's quintessential Al-Anon.

1. *How can I be more self-supporting in my life and recovery?*
2. *How can my home group be more self-supporting (money, service positions)?*
3. *What does my district (or AIS) need to do to be more self-supporting?*
4. *How can our Area be more self-supporting?*

Additional questions, from Paths to Recovery, pp. 201-203 were also included in this exercise.

{If you'd like a copy of the Icebreaker, please contact me.}

A Few Closing Thoughts

We are living through unprecedented times. None of us has ever experienced a worldwide health crisis before. We are all experiencing sadness and stress, and for many (myself included), our moods vacillate day and night, and we "become irritable and unreasonable without knowing it."²

As a form of self-care, each morning I read program literature and "try to get a better perspective of my life."³ Here is a prayer I recently wrote:

I pray to think before I speak, to practice Steps One, Two, Three daily, and to reach out for the help and support I need. As I turn to my Higher Power and extend a hand to my fellow members, I pray to communicate with kindness, compassion, patience, and love. And to let the joy and gratitude I feel for this wonderful program shine through me.

Be well and stay safe. I look forward to meeting you again.
And if I can help in any way, please get in touch.

In love and service,
Emily D-C
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² Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual, version two, p. 11

³ *Just For Today* bookmark