

Dilution Workshop – Opening (Web Version)

Materials:

- Conflict Resolution Packet (10-20) - The scribe/speaker for each group gets one.
- Why CAL pamphlet - Handout - 1 per attendee
- Al-Anon Spoken Here - Handout - 1 per attendee
- One Scenario per Group - Handout - 1 per attendee
- One Answer Key per Group - To help with the conversation
- Display list of Spiritual Principles on the screen

Opening:

Question: What is the Service Manual?

<https://al-anon.org/for-members/members-resources/manuals-and-guidelines/service-manual/>

Please open your Service Manual, or any piece of Al-Anon literature you have with you, and look up the word:

- "qualifier"
- "co-dependent"
- "Crosstalk"

In November 2023, our Associate Director of Group Services, Sue P wrote a Forum Article on Dilution (also a blog):

From <<https://al-anon.org/blog/dilution-of-the-al-anon-program/>>

From the Delegate report in the Colorado Butterfly Newsletter, Spring 2023:

The November Forum had a great article written by Sue P, our Associate Director of Group Services, on dilution of the Al-Anon program concerning “lingo.” I found myself reflecting on a conversation I had with a member of another anonymous twelve step program. He was attending an Al-Anon meeting and heard the word “qualifier”, which labeled him and left him with more guilt and shame than he already had for the effects of alcoholism in his home. It left him not wanting to return to Al-Anon. As I further reflected on that conversation, based on that label, how many people did I qualify, not by my drinking, but based on my own behavior? Page 105 of “How Al-Anon Works” talks specifically about why we honor our Traditions. Al-Anon relies on adherence to our Traditions for our very survival.

Tradition Five is about welcoming, comforting, and encouraging. As we prepare to welcome newcomers in the new year, how do we ensure Al-Anon stays Al-Anon? Our pamphlet “Al-Anon Spoken Here” is a great start. As our Declaration says, it begins with me.

- Do I read the steps as written so as not to confuse a newcomer?

(Tradition 1: Unity - Personal progress for the greatest number; Tradition 2: Trust & Faith - God is at the center of the decision of the Group Conscience; Tradition 4: Harmony - How does my decision affect others, i.e. Al-Anon as a whole?; Concept 2: Cooperation - Am I cooperating with the decision of the worldwide Group Conscience?)

- Do I use labels? The policy section of our Service Manual (P24/27, p. 135) describes labels as dilution of the Al-Anon program. For instance, the word “qualifier” is a label and is not an Al-Anon word (2019 Conference Summary (P46-2019), p. 39 - 40). Have I considered how that, or other loosely-used terms, may affect others in my meeting?

- Do I use other non-Al-Anon words like “crosstalk”, which might be confusing? In Al-Anon, we talk about “loving interchange”. (2007 Conference Summary (P46-2007), p. 36)

Please open your 2022-2025 v2 Service Manual: p. 134 - Dilution of the Program

- Outside Therapies
- Labels
- Professional Involvement
- Drugs/Narcotics/Prescription Medications
- Families with Related Problems

Why is it important to our fellowship to keep Al-Anon "Al-Anon?"

- How Al-Anon Works - p. 105 says:
"We, who have found . . . "

Dilution has been contemplated many times at the WSC. Notes are on the WSO website and searchable. Try searching the word "qualifier" and see how many times it's been discussed at WSC.

- WSC 2012 Conference Summary: P30
https://al-anon.org/pdf/P46_2012_web.pdf
 - “At the 2011 WSC, we heard from Dr. Vivian Jackson . . .”
- WSC 2013 Conference Summary: p70
https://al-anon.org/pdf/P46_2013_web.pdf
 - “I have been asked by members . . .”
- WSC 2019 Conference Summary: p39-40 - Open Policy Committee Meeting
<https://al-anon.org/pdf/P46-2019-web.pdf>
 - “When we describe and label . . .”
 - “We can’t stop dilution . . .”

Let it begin with me . . .

WSC 2012 - Chosen Agenda Item #1 - p30 - How do we empower the average Al-Anon member to speak up at meetings when someone else’s sharing is not Al-Anon?

https://al-anon.org/pdf/P46_2012_web.pdf

DILUTION WORKSHOP – OPENING & CONVERSATION STARTERS

Workshop on Dilution Scenarios:

- Break into Groups of 8 to 10. Each group should include a mix of GRs and DRs or an Officer or a Past Delegate.
- Hand out to each group:
 - Scenario page – 1 per group member
 - Al-Anon Spoken Here pamphlet – 1 per group member
 - Why Conference Approved Literature (CAL) pamphlet – 1 per group member
 - Answer Key - 1 per group. These are NOT the only answers, just a place to start a conversation.
- Select a scribe
- Discuss the scenario
 - How can this be considered dilution?
 - What Tradition(s)/Concept(s)/Spiritual Principle(s) apply?
 - How can we address it in our meetings?
 - Group Conscience
 - Modeling
 - Let it Begin with Me
- Report Back

Scenarios:

- Scenario 1: Member talking about their "qualifier."

The policy section of our Service Manual (P24/27, p 135) describes labels as dilution of the Al-Anon program. For instance, the word "qualifier" is a label and is not an Al-Anon word (2019 Conference Summary (P46-2019), p39/40).
<https://al-anon.org/pdf/P46-2019-web.pdf>
- Scenario 2: Member talking about how counseling has helped them.
 - Service Manual (p24/27 p. 134) - Outside Therapies - Tradition 6

"Our Al-Anon experience . . ."
- Scenario 3: Member reading from non Conference Approved Literature.
 - Pamphlet - Why CAL
 - Blog on Using Discontinued Literature in Meetings:
<https://al-anon.org/blog/can-we-use-discontinued-literature-in-meetings/>
 - Email in AFG Connects from Tom Coffey on 2/2/23 addressing early use of non-CAL in meetings:
 - Please keep in mind that this pamphlet was developed before there was such a thing as Conference Approved Literature. Conference Approved Literature did not exist until 1961, when Al-Anon's first World Service Conference initiated the idea, which was further developed in following Conferences. By this time, the WSO was printing and distributing a handful of pamphlets, but many local groups and service

structures were writing and distributing their own literature, which varied widely in quality and content. Other groups were using more and more outside literature, much of which did not reflect Al-Anon philosophy. The Conference felt that Conference Approved Literature could assure that the Al-Anon message was clear and consistent, providing unity to the entire fellowship. In the following years, the Literature Committee reviewed the existing pieces that the WSO was printing, and recommended that the Conference grandfather in many of them as Conference Approved Literature. Some of these are still in print today. In October 1967, *To the Wives and Family Afterwards* was discontinued and deleted from the WSO order form upon recommendation of the Literature Committee and approval of the Board of Trustees (of which Lois was a member).

- As to your second question, the chapters "To the Wives" and "The Family Afterwards" from the Big Book were never considered to be Conference approved. It was Lois's adaptation of those chapters that was briefly CAL. As it states on page 114 of the *2023-2025 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual v2*, "A.A. literature is not used at Al-Anon meetings because it is written for and from the viewpoint of alcoholics and is not Al-Anon/Alateen Conference Approved Literature. Reliance on opinions expressed in A.A. and other outside materials can distort the Al-Anon approach."

- Scenario 4: Member changing the words in the Steps.
 - Tradition 1: Unity - Personal progress for the greatest number;
 - Tradition 2: Trust & Faith - God is at the center of the decision of the Group Conscience
 - Tradition 4: Harmony - How does my decision affect others, i.e. Al-Anon as a whole?
 - Concept 2: Cooperation - Am I cooperating with the decision of the worldwide Group Conscience?

- Scenario 5: Member using the word "crosstalk."
 - In Al-Anon, we talk about "loving interchange." (2007 Conference Summary (P46-2007), p36)

https://al-anon.org/pdf/P46_2007_web.pdf

- Scenario 6: Member discussing their other 12-step programs.
 - Service Manual (p24/27 p. 134) - Outside Therapies - Tradition 6

"Our Al-Anon experience helps us . . ."

- Scenario 7: My group wants to elect a member of Al-Anon who is also in AA to be its GR.
 - Several pages in our Service Manual make reference to this. Page 59, Page 64, Page 66 and on from there. The best write-up on this begins on page 86 of the Service Manual.

- “This relates specifically to . . . “
- “The worldwide group conscience of Al-Anon . . .”
- “What members of Al-Anon . . .”

<https://al-anon.org/blog/honoring-al-anons-singleness-of-purpose-in-policy-making-service-positions/>

- Scenario 8: My group wants to read the Al-Anon promises.

<https://al-anon.org/blog/does-al-anon-have-promises/>

- Scenario 9: My group wants to start its own social media site.

<https://al-anon.org/blog/avoiding-double-headed-management-on-social-media/>

- Scenario 10: A member is using the term "emotional sobriety" in the meetings.

- The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous mentions emotional sobriety in Step Twelve as an outcome of practicing all steps of the program and applying them to our daily lives: “Here we begin to practice all Twelve Steps of the program in our daily lives so that we and those about us may find emotional sobriety.”
- The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous is not Al-Anon Conference Approved literature.
- As it states on page 114 of the *2023-2025 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual v2*, "A.A. literature is not used . . ."
- Pamphlet - Why CAL
- ODAT - February 20 - p51 - ". . . **emotional detachment.**"
- ODAT - February 21 - p 52 - ". . . **mental sobriety . . .**"

- Scenario 11: After the closing prayer, my group chants. Is that Al-Anon?

- Meetings close in a manner acceptable to the group conscience. The 2001 World Service Conference discussed chants and prayers during the first open discussion session. See page 21 of the 2001 World Service Conference Summary (P-46).
https://al-anon.org/pdf/P46_2001_web.pdf
- Other thoughts (from Assembly Ask-It-Basket):
 - Concern over the length of meeting closings because of the additions of chants was a discussion topic at the 2001 World Service Conference. The Conference members concluded that it is not appropriate for the WSO or the Conference to make a policy or issue a statement regarding the use of chants in the closing of a meeting. Conference members were in agreement that it is within group autonomy to determine the use of chants and/or prayers at the end of a meeting by making a group conscience decision that abides by the Traditions. The group conscience decision could then be stated at the end of the meeting. Conference members were reminded that our co-founder, Lois W., “It doesn’t matter what (prayer) we close with, but we close with a spiritual moment.” Details of this discussion can be found in the 2001 World Conference Summary, page 21.
 - So there is no official policy regarding chants; how groups close their meetings is the decision of an informed group conscience.

- It is believed by some that the chat entered our rooms from treatment centers or other 12-Step recovery programs. If this is the case, Page 134 of the current service manual, under Dilution of the Al-Anon Program, see the section on Outside Therapies which states: “Our Al-anon experience helps us understand that we are powerless over another person’s drinking. This makes us aware at a meeting of the danger of being diverted from our own recovery by techniques that are focused on the recovery of the alcoholic.”
- Some members believe that this is a way of encouraging newcomers to return to the meeting. Some members believe that this can cause confusion with the newcomer and possibly scare them away. While others feel that use of a chant can give the impression that Al-Anon is a cult.
- A group inventory around this practice may be a helpful way for the members of the group to understand how this may be affecting the newcomer. A review and full discussion of Tradition 4 may be in order to see if this could be affecting another group or Al-Anon as a whole.
- Our 5th tradition tells us that we are to welcome and give comfort to families of alcoholics. By using the chant, thinking that we are welcoming and encouraging the newcomer to come back, are we truly honoring the spirit of this Tradition? Let it begin with me comes to mind. Have I warmly welcomed the newcomer in person? Have I taken them to the literature table to offer them a pamphlet or suggest a book that might be helpful to them? Have I asked them if they have any questions? Have I offered them my name and phone number? And the list goes on ... all things that a chant can’t do.
- Last but not least, as a member, I have a choice as to whether or not I want to participate in the chant. If I choose not to participate in the chant, I have that opportunity to educate a member who may ask why not.