

Starting a New Families Anonymous Group



WHO CAN START A GROUP? It takes only one concerned person to found a new Families Anonymous™ (FA™) group. In fact, many people who start FA groups have no prior Twelve Step program experience.

The only things needed to start a group are:

- a regular place to meet;
- a *Starter Kit* (#8003) containing basic materials for starting a new group (free upon request from FA's World Service Office [WSO]);
- a copy of FA's *Suggested Meeting Format with Basic Readings* (#5003), which is part of the *Starter Kit* and which you can also download for free from the FA website;
- some additional FA literature pieces to sell to attendees and use during your meetings; and
- a few potential members.

The *Suggested Meeting Format with Basic Readings*, along with other FA literature—especially *FA Fact Sheet* (#7012) and *Introduction to an FA Meeting* (#7016)—should answer most of your questions.

If you have never attended an FA meeting and have no FA groups nearby, you may find it helpful to visit an Al-Anon or Nar-Anon meeting, since those fellowships' programs and meeting structures are similar to FA's.

WHERE MIGHT I FIND A SUITABLE MEETING PLACE? Suggested meeting places include schools, places of worship, addiction treatment facilities ("rehab"), hospitals, public buildings, and retirement homes. The building where you meet should be well lit, easy to find, and in a central location. The building manager should understand the nature and purpose of the FA program as well as the fact that our 1½- to 2-hour meetings are traditionally held weekly, including holidays.

HOW MUCH SHOULD A MEETING ROOM COST? Your search for a meeting room will probably lead you to a community-spirited person or facility that might offer a room at little or no cost. If there is no set fee, you should explain that, in accordance with our Seventh Tradition (i.e., "every group ought to be self-supporting, declining outside contributions"), the group would like to make a small contribution toward the use of the room. Later, once your group becomes established, your members might consider increasing the amount of your contribution.

HOW DO WE FINANCE THE GROUP? The group is financed by "passing the basket" at each meeting. These voluntary donations are used to pay for rent, refreshments, and FA literature. If donations eventually exceed your group's needs, they can be contributed to your local intergroup or national service board (if any) or to the WSO.

WHAT FA LITERATURE WILL WE NEED? FA offers a wide variety of recovery literature. The full catalog is on our website at www.familiesanonymous.org. You can purchase FA literature online, or you can fill out a hardcopy order form and mail it to the WSO. A new group may purchase the *New Group Pack* (#8001), which contains one copy of each literature item as well as all the materials your new group will need for holding meetings.

WHAT ABOUT OTHER SUPPLIES? You may wish to provide light refreshments, a clock, a collection basket, and legible signs directing newcomers to your meeting room. All supplies used for the meeting (coffee, water, cream, sugar, disposable cups, spoons, napkins, etc.) can be paid for out of group funds.

HOW IS THE MEETING CONDUCTED? The *Suggested Meeting Format with Basic Readings* makes it easy to lead a meeting. Chairs are typically arranged in a circle or other configuration that enables easy communication among members. The meeting's leader (a different person each week) usually selects a specific topic for discussion. The topic may be one of the Twelve Steps or Twelve Traditions; the Serenity Prayer; an FA slogan; or a key word or phrase, such as "release with love" or "acceptance." A meeting topic can also be selected from the index of *Today A Better Way*™ (#1015); from one of FA's five "basic readings"; or from another piece of FA literature.

At some meetings, the discussion may proceed around the room, with each person having a chance to speak in turn. At other meetings, members wanting to speak, make comments, or ask questions may raise their hands and wait to be recognized by the meeting's leader. Regardless of which method is used, participation in discussions is strictly voluntary. The leader's role is to encourage participation by all who wish to speak, while ensuring that everyone follows the group's particular

understanding of *Crosstalk*. Members take turns leading the meetings from week to week, so as to avoid having any one member control the group.

WHAT MAKES A “GOOD MEETING”? Members make a meeting “good” by being willing to share their personal progress, shortcomings, or overreactions in daily-life situations. In this program, we help each other not by giving advice or criticism or by endlessly discussing our problems, but rather by honestly sharing our own experiences, strengths, and hopes.

HOW DO WE ENCOURAGE NEWCOMERS TO “KEEP COMING BACK”? It is FA members’ compassion and interest in each other that allow newcomers to sense that they will be understood and supported as they work on their recovery. One member (usually the group secretary) can be responsible for providing newcomers with a sampling of literature that introduces them to FA but does not overwhelm them with too much information at the outset. Literature selections often come from this list: *Basic Pamphlet* (#1001), *An Open Letter to My Family** (#2007), *Letter to the Newcomer** (#6001), *To the Concerned Family Member or Friend* (#6003), *Do You Need FA? (Twenty Questions)* (#6004), *A New Door Opens* (#6005), and one or more FA bookmarks, all perhaps placed in a *Welcome!* folder (#6002).

There are additional ways of helping newcomers feel welcome, such as by providing them with a list of members’ first names and phone numbers; suggesting (or handing out, for free) other FA literature that they might find meaningful; and announcing, as the basket is being passed, that at their first meeting they are the group’s guests. For more ideas, refer to *Growing Your FA Group: A Tip List for New and Established Groups** (#5011).

WHAT IS FA’S WORLD SERVICE OFFICE (WSO)? The WSO is the worldwide headquarters of Families Anonymous, Inc. It is supported entirely by donations from our member groups and by proceeds from the sale of FA literature. The WSO serves all FA groups—domestic and international—and carries the message of our program to people everywhere who are concerned about the use of mind-altering substances or related behavioral problems of a relative or friend.

HOW DO WE REGISTER OUR GROUP? As soon as you have obtained a meeting place and decided on a day and time for your meetings, you have enough information to register your new group with the WSO. There are two ways to register. You may fill out the Group Registration Form that came with your *Starter Kit* or *New Group Pack*, and mail or fax it to the WSO; or you may register online by going to our website, clicking on “Group Registration” on the homepage, and filling in and submitting the onscreen form.

By registering your group with the WSO, your meeting will be added to FA’s online and printed meeting directories, and you will receive important information about the fellowship, have opportunities for service and decision-making within the organization, and be sent notifications when our bimonthly newsletter, *The Twelve Step Rag*, is available for download. By re-registering your group annually, and by informing the WSO in the interim of any changes regarding your meeting day, time, location, or contact person, you can ensure that your website information will always remain up to date.

Please note that anonymity (as stated in our Twelfth Tradition) is the spiritual foundation of our program. Your personal information will *not* be used outside the WSO or be given or sold to any outside organization.

DO YOU HAVE MORE QUESTIONS? If so, or if you are puzzled about something you’ve read, FA’s Group Outreach Committee will be happy to assist. The Group Outreach Committee may be reached by email at go@familiesanonymous.org or by contacting the WSO. Remember that there are no foolish questions!

Thank you for your interest in FA. We wish you well.

**WHAT YOU ARE DOING
IS IMPORTANT FOR YOURSELF
AS WELL AS FOR OTHERS!**

* Available for free download from the FA website as well as for purchase through the WSO.

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