

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR GETTING THE MOST OUT OF ONLINE FA MEETINGS

Online FA meetings have the same essential components as face-to-face meetings, in that we recite our basic readings, discuss the Steps, and share our experiences, strength and hope about finding serenity despite dealing with the disease of addiction. But online meetings are very different from face-to-face meetings in that everyone is not together in the same room: each of us is in our own space, at home, and on camera.

Because of that, it takes a bit of care to ensure that we look and sound like our natural, in-person selves so that we get the most out of the meetings. Here are a few basic tips to keep in mind:

1. Watch your camera angle. Set up your computer or smartphone so that the camera is at or slightly above eye level and angled down toward your face. Sit close enough to your computer or smartphone that your full face, neck and shoulders fill up the middle third of the screen and there's not too much space above your head. This will present you in a natural-looking, level, full-face pose. The same rules apply if you're attending as a couple; place the camera at or slightly above eye level, and be sure the image of the two of you fills most of the screen. Check your background, too: if it's too cluttered or "busy," that makes it harder for your FA colleagues to pay attention to you.
2. Make sure you are well lit. It's best to have soft, diffuse light directly in front of you so your face isn't in shadow but isn't too bright or "washed out" either. Facing toward windows with natural daylight could work for daytime meetings. For evening meetings, good artificial light can be as simple as a desk or table lamp set behind or just to one side of your camera, at approximately eye level, so it shines toward your face. You can check out your lighting in advance of the call by turning your smartphone camera around and looking at yourself. Walk around the house and try different locations to find the place where you look best, then set up and take the online call from there.
3. Minimize distractions. Just as we silence our cellphones in face-to-face meetings to prevent interruptions, we should do the same when attending a meeting online. In addition, if there's a pet in your house, or there are children or others who are not attending the meeting with you, you should take steps beforehand to be sure they do not interrupt during the meeting. If possible, take the call in a separate room and ask to not be disturbed during that time. If you find you need to get up and move around, turn your camera off to avoid distracting others.
4. Present yourself as you would in person. Dress as you would if you were attending your usual face-to-face FA meeting. When you speak, look into the camera on your computer or phone, not at your image on the screen or at the faces of the other attendees displayed there. This will enhance their feeling that you're sharing directly with them.

5. Follow the rules. The person leading your online meeting will lay out the ground rules, such as muting your microphone unless you're sharing, checking the Chat room for information about literature and donations, and the like. Please pay attention and follow the rules carefully to ensure that everyone's online experience is as rewarding as it can be.

The following are suggested ground rules:

- All but two people should be muted during the meeting: the leader and the person sharing. Others may mute/unmute themselves, depending on if they're sharing or not. The administrator of the meeting may have the capability to mute everyone in case there is background noise.
- When it's time for a specific reading, it is very helpful for the leader to share his/her screen with the group so everybody can follow the reading online.
- It's best when group members take turns reading. The leader can call on specific people to read, or attendees can volunteer to read, whichever works better for the group.
- Ask for volunteers to stay online after the meeting to check in with any newcomers, to address questions or comments, and to coordinate delivery of a Welcome! (newcomer's) kit or any other materials of interest. Announce this at both the beginning and the end of the meeting.

Using the Chat area:

- Ask people to enter their first name and phone number under Chat if they are willing to be contacted between meetings. This is a convenient way for newcomers to take someone's number.
- Use Chat for people to express interest in leading an upcoming meeting.
- Use Chat for members to express interest in either being a sponsor or seeking a sponsor.
- Use Chat to point people to the URL for Families Anonymous donations and to provide Zelle payment information. Zelle can be a convenient method for participants to make donations during the meeting.
- Use Chat to point people to the URL for Families Anonymous literature.

GROUP POSITIONS IN THE VIRTUAL FORMAT

Below are additional duties of group positions in the virtual format. Depending on the size and needs of the group, the group has the option to combine positions.

Administrator – This is a new position. Alternatively the secretary can perform these tasks.

- Sends the URL to members each week for logging on to the virtual meeting. May also include the topic for the week so members can prepare in advance.
- Forwards the “Suggested Meeting Format” to newcomers.
- Adds the following information to chat:
 - FA website: familiesanonymous.org
 - Free downloads of FA material: familiesanonymous.org/literature/free-downloads
 - FA e-store for literature purchases: familiesanonymous.org/shop
 - Donations to the World Service Office via Zelle: Email donate@familiesanonymous.org (See Appendix for instructions on using Zelle.)
 - Other ways to donate: familiesanonymous.org/donate
 - [Optional] Email address for Zelle donations to this FA group #___: _____
- Opens the webpage for the meeting, and admits members as they come on.
- Asks for volunteers to lead the next meeting.
- Closes the webpage at the end of the meeting.

Treasurer

- Assists members if they have questions about how to donate.
- Reports the status of finances and donations to the group on a regular basis.

Literature Chair

- Mails new-member packets to newcomers.
- Recommends literature for specific issues, and assists members with questions.

Greeter

- Greets members as they come on the call.
- Makes newcomers feel welcome.
- Stays on the call after it closes to answer questions for newcomers.

APPENDIX:
HOW TO USE ZELLE TO DONATE TO THE FELLOWSHIP

Zelle is a computer application that enables you to electronically send and receive money to and from people you know. Once you enroll in Zelle, you only need the preferred email address or mobile phone number of the intended recipient to donate money.

Zelle is offered by over ninety (90) banks and credit unions in the United States, including Capital One, Wells Fargo, Chase, and Bank of America. To get started, enroll in your bank’s mobile banking app or access your bank account online.

Once you are logged in to your account, follow the directions to select the “Zelle” service. To send money using Zelle, simply select the recipient from your device’s contacts (or add a new recipient’s email address or U.S. mobile number), enter the amount you’d like to send, review, then hit “confirm.” For Families Anonymous, you would use donate@familiesanonymous.org.

The money you send goes directly from your bank account to the recipient’s bank account (even if they are in two different banks), and the funds are available in minutes. There is no fee; there are no checks to write; and the transaction is secure. Once you send money to a particular person or entity (such as FA), their information is saved in your Zelle account, so making future donations is easy: log in to your online banking account, go to the Zelle service, click on the FA name, and enter the amount you want to donate.

Now that many former face-to-face meetings are being held online, a number of local FA groups have also adopted Zelle as a way to virtually “pass the basket.” Please take a few minutes now to explore how you can use your online banking app and Zelle to conveniently support your local FA group and the World Service Office.

For additional information or support, go to <https://www.zellepay.com/>

