

**“Any Lengths” Online Group
Of Alcoholics Anonymous
Serving as Meeting Chairperson**



Thank you for agreeing to chair a weekly online AA meeting in our group! It may seem a little daunting at first glance, but rest assured, once you realize how much help and support you have in this role, you will find it not only easy, but also fun and fulfilling, while also a great way to be of service to the fellowship. We ask that you have a minimum of 90 days of sobriety and have some familiarity with the way our meetings are generally run; how a "normal" meeting flows. However, if you were asked to fill the chair position, we have full confidence in your ability to run a great meeting! So just relax and be yourself.

Here are some key things to remember:

- **Everything you really need is in the script.** You will find a link to the most recent [Meeting Script](#) on our web page at any-lengths.org under the **Service Materials**. Be aware that meeting format scripts are revised from time to time based on special needs, a group conscience or decisions made in business meetings. So, if you printed out an old one it may no longer be up-to-date. Please ensure you have the latest revision printed, or simply use the online version when chairing your meeting.
- **Give audible feedback to other meeting participants.** By repeating first names aloud, saying “Hi” and “Thanks” (*when it feels natural to do so*), and following the oral conventions for which AA meetings are famous, you are helping to give the meeting the feel of a traditional face-to-face AA meeting for all participants, and also assuring the speaker that he or she is being heard. You may also have situations where more than one person starts to share at the same time. When that happens, it helps if you quickly unmute and interject to suggest who should go first, who second, etc.
- **Please minimize both your and the group's feedback between shares.** There has been a tendency in our newer online group for people to unmute and interject comments between shares, “Great job! Keep coming back! You’ve got this! We love you,” etc (at times *per person*). When a half-dozen to a dozen or more people do this, often waiting for a gap between others so they can be heard, it can easily take up half a minute or more of meeting time, becoming both a major disruption itself and also taking up unnecessary time from other people having a chance to share. Those of us who have been around AA for years also know it simply isn’t good, traditional AA meeting etiquette. Providing a great, reliable, consistent, structured & sustainable AA meeting for both newcomers and long-timers will go much further in supporting our fellowship than interjecting comments between shares, no matter how supportive they may appear to be. *Please let’s follow 85+ years of AA tradition and **minimize in-between share commentary** – both from you and from the group.*

You lead the group on your day of the week and, especially in online meetings, it's important to remember AA is not group therapy. A little encouragement from you is welcoming and engaging; too much quickly becomes *too much* and it will also quickly become habitual in the group if not addressed. The group will follow your lead. You can limit this in two ways: (1) by limiting your own comments between shares – leading by demonstration (also feel free at any point to ask the group to reel it in if it's becoming a thing; and (2) by simply moving on the next person to share. Also it's completely ok to ask individuals who routinely chime in (privately, perhaps using Chat) to please limit their commentary between shares. Just like in traditional face-to-face meetings, the parking lot *after the meeting* is the appropriate time and place for giving feedback.

- **Pay attention to body language.** You may be able to tell that someone wants (or needs) to share just by watching; if that is your sense of the situation, don't be afraid to call on people. We encourage you to call on a variety of different members with different backgrounds, experiences and sobriety lengths.
- **You aren't required to use video when you chair, but...** video is an important communication tool, and improves the meeting experience for everyone else, especially if you can use it while listening. Some people have poor internet connections (especially during "stay-at-home" with so many people online today), or have other considerations that make it awkward to keep video turned on constantly and consistently. If your internet connection is too poor to let you keep your video turned on through the whole meeting, try turning it off while speaking, and keeping it on while you are muted and only listening. Feel free also to suggest this to others who seem to be having internet connection issues.

Do not suggest everyone turn off video as a general solution to audio problems in the meeting. By default, Zoom auto-prioritizes audio over video for each participant, and one participant's use of video never affects another participant's audio or bandwidth requirements.

- **Please ALWAYS remember to mute (& unmute) yourself** whenever others are sharing to prevent background noise from your own mic, breathing sounds or impromptu oral responses. In speaker view, which a lot of people use, if you're unmuted, your picture will continuously pop in and out while someone else is sharing, which can become very disruptive and also confusing for new people.
- **Time management is important.** Your main job in this area is just to make sure the meeting starts on time and ends on time. But during the meeting, it also helps if you can kindly and tactfully remind people to keep their shares within the communicated lengths. A general guideline is **3 minute** shares for groups under 40 attendees and **2 minute** shares for larger groups, but you get to make that call. Communicate with the meeting's Time Keeper for the meeting to set an appropriate length depending on the size of the meeting and the overall

time available for sharing. Closing part of the script takes roughly 3 minutes, so *always leave time* for this or your meeting will run late.

- **If there is a newcomer and it is their first AA meeting ever...** our usual practice is to make the topic the **Step 1/Tradition 3**. Ensure the newcomer knows what the First Step is – state it clearly or maybe ask someone to read it aloud. Sometimes it is appropriate to read the first couple pages of [More about Alcoholism](#) (also linked to from the [any-lengths.org](#) main page) to get a First Step meeting started. The newcomer may feel nervous at their first meeting, so keep in mind we want to avoid putting the spotlight on him or her. We want them to feel comfortable. Welcome them and allow them to have their own experience during the meeting. Keep in mind also (and you may need to tactfully remind the group) that addressing someone personally too much during shares, giving direct advice and cross-talk should be minimized.
- **Communicate with others on the service team** for your day during the meeting. It helps to be familiar with what the people in those service positions are responsible for. If you haven't served in those roles, you may want to download and read the [Daily Service Positions](#) PDF (available on the [any-lengths.org](#) main page). For instance, will you want a special Step 1 or maybe an additional reading at the end of the meeting? If so, private-chat this to your Screen Sharer in advance so s/he can have it ready. And don't be afraid to private-chat messages to others (even people not on your service team), asking for help during the meeting. *Don't try to do it all yourself* -- everyone in the room wants to help. Let them be of service if you have a need.
- **Arrive early so you know that your service team members have made it** to the meeting while you still have time to sort things out. Work with other group members before the meeting to make sure any empty service positions are filled for the day. If someone drops or doesn't show up, work with others in the room to get these positions filled.
- **If a speaker is having technical difficulties**, you can:
 1. Suggest that they turn off video while speaking so as to make sure all their available bandwidth is devoted to audio; suggest that they turn video back on after sharing.
 2. Move on to another speaker and promise to come back later
 3. Suggest that they leave the room and come back (provided the meeting isn't presently locked)

Finally, you are not expected to be a clone of any other chairpersons. Follow the script the best you can and everything will be fine. We're not perfect. Like everything else in AA, do your best to follow the format, keeping true to the intent to have a good AA meeting and all will be wonderful.

Thank you so very much for being of service to the Any Lengths Group of Alcoholics Anonymous!