

Any Lengths

Online Group of Alcoholics Anonymous

Serving as Meeting Chair

Thank you for agreeing to chair one of our daily online AA meetings! 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. The group has voted that Chairs 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 a few key things to remember and review regularly:

- Please make every attempt to stick to reading the scripts as they are written without a lot of ad-hoc.
- Always remember to mute yourself - throughout the sharing & reading parts of the meeting - anytime another member is sharing, remaining on mute until they are done sharing (obvious exception: when you need to help wrap-up someone who's significantly over their time).
- You are expected to attend all business meetings during your service as chair to help communicate group conscience decisions.

Please follow the same general AA meeting etiquette followed in large in-person meetings (it's understood you may not have experienced one yet) in which meeting chairs/secretaries do not cross-talk or offer personal commentary to members following their shares. Avoid giving any advice or offering suggestions to whatever someone has shared about – keep it for after the meeting. The meeting chair is a facilitator, whose primary main role is to move the meeting along, keep it on track, start and end the meeting on time. If you are asked a question about the meeting or about the group, simply ask the person to stay and ask questions **after** the meeting.

General Guidelines:

- **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 group needs, cumulative experience, 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 are always using the latest version by checking the date in the footer against the "rev date" posted in the same area of the website, or just use the online version when chairing the meeting.
- **Give audible feedback to other meeting participants.** By repeating first names aloud, saying "Hi" and "Thanks" when it feels natural, and following the oral conventions for which AA meetings are famous, you are helping to give the online 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. Be quick to unmute when there are extended periods of silence, if there is an issue with

someone unable to get a mic to work, etc. Don't wait for someone else to chime in... they'll all be waiting for you to address any issues, as the facilitator.

- **Please minimize both your and the group's feedback after/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. One quickly becomes several doing it. When a half-dozen to a dozen or more people do this, it becomes disruptive, takes up meeting time, it's sure to morph into cross-talk and it can start to feel more like group therapy than AA. Those of us who have been around AA for a while also know it simply isn't aligned with traditional AA meeting etiquette. Providing a reliable, consistent, structured & sustainable AA meeting, both for newcomers and long-timers alike, will go **much further** in supporting members and our overall fellowship than any comments people think might be needed in the moments after someone shares, no matter how supportive they may appear to be. We open the meeting room early and stay late for personal support - 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.
- **Please ALWAYS remember to mute yourself when you are not actively talking** i.e. just like everyone else whenever others are sharing. Among other things, this prevents background noise from your own mic, breathing sounds or impromptu oral responses. In speaker view, which a lot of people use, if you are unmuted, your picture will continuously pop in and out while someone else is sharing, which can become very distracting and also confusing for new people. Of course, **always remember to also unmute** when it's your time to talk or else the group cannot hear your amazing voice directing the meeting.
- **Time management is important.** Your main job in this area is just to make sure the meeting starts on time and ends on time. You have a time-keeper for keeping shares relatively equal for each person to have for sharing, but starting and ending on time are both on you. **Important: The closing part of the script takes no less than 3 minutes, so always end the sharing part of the meeting leaving at least 3 minutes, or one full share, for closing readings & announcements.** If you don't, your meeting will constantly run late which can become problematic.

- **If there is a newcomer and it is their first AA meeting ever...** or several in the first days, our usual practice (for topic meetings) 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's 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. Also suggest they attend our **Step 1,2 &3 meeting** on Wednesdays.
- **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, verbally tell or 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 others (even people not on your service team) if you need something 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.
- **Always 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 - 20 minutes early is a good time. 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.
- **As a meeting chairperson, you are expected to attend the monthly business meeting** while you are serving so that group conscience decisions can be communicated, and so that you will know what they are.
- **If someone is having audio 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 as best as 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 very much for being of service to the Any Lengths Group of Alcoholics Anonymous!

Last Revised 08/28/2021