

Growing OA Recovery Worldwide: Building Healthy Service Bodies Workshop

Leaders

- Sue B., Region One
- Sandy F., Region Five

Discussion Questions

- 1) How does my service body encourage giving service and rotation of service?
- 2) How does my service body encourage and support abstinence?
- 3) How does my service body encourage and grow sponsors?
- 4) How does my service body encourage working the Steps and honoring the Traditions?

Purpose

To have interactive table discussions using the four questions below on how to make service bodies healthy so we can grow OA recovery worldwide.

Introduction/Opening

Sandy and Sue opened with a brief role play of how not to build strong service bodies to get the theme of the workshop off with a giggle. Sandy led the group with in Serenity Prayer. The point of this workshop was to engage participants in sharing and recording specific ways their meeting, intergroup/service board, or region builds strong service bodies. Sandy and Sue gave brief personal insights they found working within their own region.

Sandy talked about what works well in a larger metropolitan region. She shared about how her home meeting in the Chicagoland area welcomes and works to retain newcomers. For example, they begin their meetings in large groups by acknowledging newcomers with a *Welcome* coin and a special reading. The leader also asks if there is anyone returning to OA or visiting from another area, and they are acknowledged and welcomed. Finally, abstinence anniversaries are celebrated with the appropriate coin and a round of applause. Then after the opening meeting format, they count off and break out into small groups for sharing. This encourages everyone to be able to share—a novel idea! When newcomers are present, they go to a “Welcome to OA” session, where others share their experience, strength, and hope and talk about the Newcomer’s Packet as well as answer any questions the newcomer may have. The newcomer has been welcomed, informed, given literature, phone numbers, and knows of available sponsors when the meeting is concluded with Rozanne’s Promise. This approach helps newcomers know they matter and have found a supportive group where they can ask questions and find support. It sets the stage and is an incentive for them to keep coming back! For more information, contact Sandy F., Region Five.

Sue talked about how Region One has led intergroup renewal efforts throughout their region to help energize and build stronger intergroups and grow meetings. The process involves helping intergroups conduct a strengths and weakness analysis of what they are currently doing (inventory) and create an effective electronic survey for their entire intergroup fellowship (i.e., all meetings) to participate. This provides systematic feedback about what OA in their area really needs to help strengthen and build recovery. A four-hour on-site session is then arranged for two of the Region

One board members to come and help intergroup fellowships go through their survey results. The sessions are interactive and use both survey results and trends as well as participant insights. The result is a focused and clear road map for strengthening recovery within their fellowship. A mission statement is created (i.e., Be the Message, Carry the Message, Growing Recovery, Team up for Strong Recovery, Inspire Recovery) and project teams are created. Their role is determining clear goals and actions in key areas found in the survey information. Part of their job is to also list at least two other names of people in the meetings that can help in their area. Focused volunteer recruiting is also discussed because everyone in all meetings is really a part of intergroup and usually willing to help if you make a targeted request. For more information, contact Sue B., Region One.

Next, each table was asked to answer and record specific ideas on the discussion questions listed above. Many ideas are listed with the region or intergroup/service board that had the idea. This was done to promote sharing further specifics. Each table shared with the entire room several of the key ideas listed during discussion. Here is a complete listing of ideas generated during this workshop.

Question One

It is recommended that there are set terms for service positions to encourage rotation. Encourage meetings to send reps to intergroup for six months to a year; this encourages continuity. Train new reps for intergroup (IG). When someone is a new IG rep, they attend a training session that begins a half hour before the IG meeting. A volunteer explains what happens at the IG meeting and how to get something on the agenda. Green Dots also get their folder/packet of information. This helps new reps feel they are a part of the group. One intergroup produced a pamphlet about intergroup, what positions are filled and what those jobs entail. These pamphlets go out to their meetings so members can understand and be encouraged to become reps. Another intergroup hands out a pre-printed, fill-in-the-blank sheet at meetings so reps can get info in simple format to bring back to meetings and give their report. IG leaders empower other members to give service. A “Call to Service” checklist lists all service opportunities available from leading a workshop to putting stamps on envelopes. A service coordinator keeps a spreadsheet of names/contact info with listing of individuals who would be willing to do service. Non-intergroup members are encouraged to participate. Have OA meeting prior to intergroup meetings. Intergroup purchased copies of *Twelve and Twelve, Second Edition* and gave out one copy to each IG rep in attendance. Coordinate workshop before or after intergroup meeting to get more people interested. Special-focus meetings prior to intergroup meeting. Divide larger responsibilities (i.e., cochair) into smaller, more manageable parts. Mentor/transition of new officers. One on one ask (general appeal for service work doesn’t work). Have a service coordinator. Keep a “what talents can you share” skills list. Sponsors tell sponsees to volunteer for service.

Question Two

Region Three, Tulsa Green Country IG suggests abstinence requirement of six months to be on intergroup board but no abstinence requirement to serve on committees. Region One, Big Sky IG had intergroup renewal that determined three project teams. Outreach Project Team divided up meeting contact lists and each person called ten people per week. This has resulted in an explosion of attendance. Region Two has “Have Fun!” fellowship days after Saturday morning meeting (play games, talk). Weekly newcomer meetings use plastic spinner with topics. Newcomer friendly

phone list. Call twelve people on the twelve days of the month. Region Five, Milwaukee Area IG holds holiday marathons and newcomer workshops every quarter. Region Two holds *ABCs of Abstinence* and *Chronic Slippers* workshops. Region One, Vancouver Island IG's website highlights virtual sponsors. Since it is a small intergroup, this is helpful for finding sponsors. Share personal abstinence and encourage sponsees to share personal abstinence. Region Five, CSSI sends seed money (\$150) to any group that wants to do a workshop. Four topics per year: abstinence, sponsorship (American Thanksgiving), gratitude, and body image (spring). Houston Metro IG invited speaker to give *ABCs of Abstinence* workshop; over seventy people attended. They push workshops. Next workshop is on sponsorship. Region Seven, NJIOA holds a newcomers' marathon the first week after New Year's. This is presented by people with long-term abstinence who share stories of their experience, strength, and hope. Steps and Tools are explained as well as respecting the dignity of choice and focusing on back to basics. Midland, TX has an abstinence requirement to serve on the intergroup board as an incentive to keep abstinence. Host abstinence workshops to help encourage folks who are struggling. Host relapse and recovery workshops. Regions are starting monthly video conference meetings with speaker about abstinence and recovery. Meetings ask for volunteer to stay after meeting to help someone work out a plan of eating for the day. Phone meetings that share length of abstinence, length in program, weight loss. Recognize abstinence (coins). Region convention speakers have two-year abstinence requirement and have worked Steps Four and Five. Taking time for recovery topic discussion during IG meeting.

Question Three

Region One held sponsorship workshops with a "How to Sponsor" theme and matched sponsors and sponsees at the end. The Region One board traveled to different IGs to help with this. There are two assemblies per year. The one-day assemble where all groups attend at the beginning of summer and two weeks before Christmas (the worst time of year for compulsive overeaters), including sponsorship and service workshops. This helps isolated groups. Format: one recovery meeting, one workshop in the morning, and one workshop and one meeting in the evening. Region Nine, Spirit of Hope IG holds two retreats; one public information evening for radio, newspaper, professionals; and four workshops per year on sponsorship. Region Three, OA HOW holds two retreats per year. The intergroup created a sponsorship packet. Region Two, Silicon Valley IG holds a Sponsorship Workshop Day, normal meeting time and, gives sponsorship package within nine minutes. Sponsorship training is offered on-demand, including how to start newcomers, one-hour-long. It takes place one hour after the regular meeting. That's why they have so many sponsors. They use the pamphlet *A Guide for Sponsors*. Sponsorship training takes place at retreat and uses the "First Twelve Days" sheet, a locally produced piece of literature done by Sydney IG, to help encourage new sponsors and help retain newcomers. This helps an OA fellow take a newcomer through their first twelve days in OA by going through the *OA Newcomer Packet*. Region One has used this in several intergroups to help new sponsors get their feet under them and welcome newcomers. Central Jersey IG holds sponsorship workshops. There are sponsorship workshops in Region Seven with materials. They do quick fifteen-week Step study, at end do sponsorship training. Region Two, Foothills IG completed a fifteen-week Step study, and encouraged sponsorship at the end. IG chair/vice chair compiles a sponsor list/speaker list. These lists are provided (either printed or emailed) upon request. Region Two, Orange City IG lists their sponsors in their newsletter every two months. AY Thessaloniki IG lists Region Nine names next to the Step completed, asks "do you have a sponsor," "available to sponsor." Greece also has a

national list of available sponsors and members contact TSW Committee for list. Final thoughts: encourage service and volunteers; people with certain talents to recruit for service; break big tasks into smaller manageable pieces to get work done more easily; encourage abstinence and IG renewal; take the We Care list of all meetings, and divide among ten people, ask each person to make calls once a week; expect huge attendance result.

Question Four

Here are some ideas discussed: have special-focus meetings; hold workshops with a specific theme; encourage intergroup attendance; use the phone to have people attend intergroup, video conference people into intergroup meetings, rotate intergroup meeting locations; have a Step meeting before the IG meeting; record and send meetings; go to meeting-to-meeting explaining intergroup; send out information electronically when possible; reach out and invite people to participate; create back-to-basics Committee as part of a strategic plan; have workshops on Steps One-Three, Four-Nine, and Ten-Twelve; have speakers from inside or outside the area; after the speaker, break into smaller groups; use sponsorship as a topic of individual meetings; have a workshop a month before the intergroup meeting that focuses on one Step a month; create a quick Step study (i.e., four weeks).

Questions Asked from a Sampling of Attendees

- 1) How was the workshop flow?
 - I liked the lighthearted beginning and hearing leads from two perspectives.
 - The brainstorming part was helpful.
 - Both presenters shared from their experience.
 - It was nice to have a microphone and to be able to hear what was shared in the end.
 - I liked the small group-sharing.
 - The session was full of good energy!
 - Awesome!
- 2) If you could change anything, what would it be?
 - More chairs and tables set up.
 - A way to sit closer together when we talk.
 - The room seemed loud with everyone talking. Hard to hear across the table.
 - Nothing!