



ES&H for Intergroup Chairs

Region One asked the Region Chairs and Board of Trustees to respond to the question:

"If you were speaking to a new intergroup chair, what are some of the "Do's and Don'ts" you would suggest they keep in mind in order to be an effective chair?"

Here, in no particular order, are their wonderful responses!

I would suggest they get a copy off the website of the how to be an effective trusted servant document.
https://www.oa.org/pdfs/trusted_servant.pdf

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The most valuable tidbit I have to offer is to always have a printed agenda (copy for all present) and follow the agenda.

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As for a new intergroup chair my first thought is please never forget Rule 62- never take yourself too seriously!!

Each IG meeting we (South Eastern Arizona IG) spend a few minutes reading from the pamphlet "OA Handbook for Members, Groups, and Service Bodies." (SKU 120). It is one of the best pamphlet we have. It describes everything any OA member needs to know. By reading a few pages each intergroup meeting we finish the whole pamphlet about once a year. Each month we learn something new.

I find it helpful for each sponsor to expect/recommend/ask their sponsees to give service at the IG level. At least try. Or go to a meeting, just to check it out.

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I once chaired an intergroup that went from a dysfunctional group to one that really thrives. Here's some of our Do's and Don't's:

- Do make abstinence important; support one another in our personal recovery
- Do create abstinence requirements for service
- Don't be scared!

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My suggestions are have an agenda and follow it. People are far more willing to give service if it doesn't get bogged down in long winded discussions that lead nowhere.

Have reports due ahead of the meeting and sent out in advance. Then the meeting time doesn't have to be taken up with the giving of reports. Use the time to discuss projects or for committee breakout meetings.

Have a time when the IG reps can bring up questions or share about their group.

Begin and end on time.

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How to run a meeting well: Have an agenda, listen, be patient, be flexible, know that everyone there has the good of OA in their hearts, be honest, be open minded, and be willing to let go our your ideas and let others "do it their way." Guide rather than direct. Suggestions go a long way.

Handling the time commitment: God's put you in this position to use your talents but also to keep it simple and in balance. Ask yourself "How important is this?" Or...are babies dying over this? Watch the time commitment and learn to say "no" nicely.

Use of Robert's Rules: Use more or less depending upon group size. When it gets contentious use them a bit more. And remember that a group conscience deliberation and decision include HP.

How to fill empty service positions:

Ask people personally. Encourage them to use their ESH and let them know others are available to help them as they learn. (God doesn't call the qualified - he qualifies the called.) Be a "service pusher" and let others know how doing service is smashing it for your recovery.

Do's:

Keep it simple and balanced.

Ask for help when you need it.

Memorize and call upon the "group handbook" - it can be your best friend.

Do look for solutions in the grey area rather than our addict "black and white" tendency. Ex: Let's try this for two months and see how it works. (Rather than let's make a new Bylaw about that right now.)

Learn to let go and let others do tasks their way.

Be enthusiastic about service and positive about carrying the message and resolving issues with the traditions.

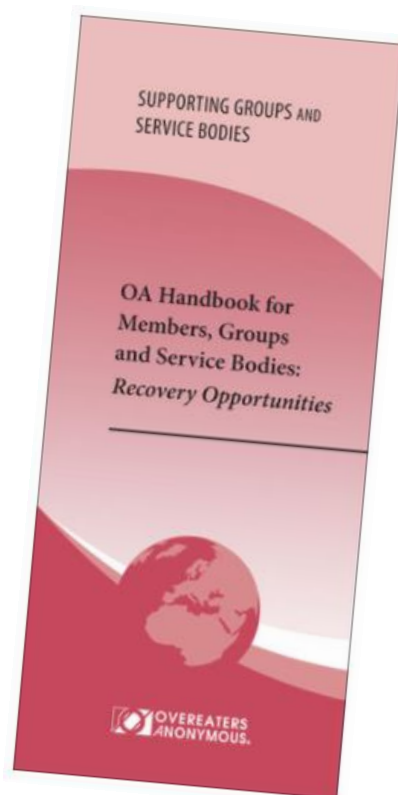
Look for the spiritual solution to issues.

Don't:

Make a decision until you hear all sides.

Let your service work replace your recovery work.

Despair when others do something differently (or in your mind not as well) than you do.



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First and foremost, remember our Primary Purpose in all things you do and lead the IG to do. Ask yourself and the group frequently if what you're doing or thinking about doing will help the still suffering compulsive eater. A lot of times service bodies get bogged down in administrative tasks and lose focus of the bigger picture of why we exist as an organization.

Next - keep the focus on personal recovery. Work on your own recovery. Encourage your officers and committee chairs to work on their recovery. The IG won't be effective or attractive if recovery is not present among the members who are in leadership positions. Then find out how the IG can help its groups focus on the recovery of its members (this goes back to the first point above).

A good way to discover how the IG can help foster recovery is by doing an IG survey and then inventory (see Don C's manual as well as the Group Inventory Handbook). It's important to find out what the unique needs of YOUR IG are, as they may differ from other groups.

Don't just do things because "that's the way they've always been done" or because that's what your predecessor did - keep putting all actions through the litmus test of "does this help us carry the message?" You may encounter resistance if you decide to change things. Refer to the traditions, especially Tradition 5 (are you sensing a theme yet?) to help guide your actions and responses.

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- Recruit your OA buddies at the meeting level to come support your IG efforts. This will be especially important if you are trying to implement changes.
 - Bring recovery to the IG meeting to help you lead (the change of focusing on recovery) by example: have a speaker share their recovery story before or after the IG meeting, pair the IG meeting with an OA meeting or workshop, etc.
 - Spend 5 minutes of the IG meeting to have your officers share on what they are doing to strengthen their personal recovery
 - Ask the previous IG Chair to serve as an ex-officio Chair for a period of time to help ease the transition
 - Use a standardized meeting agenda & send it out ahead of time so members know what to expect before each meeting & can prepare accordingly.
 - Start and end the meeting on time. This was HUGE in my IG, as a lot of people had stopped attending when previous chairs let the meeting run late. Not knowing when the meeting will end has a negative effect on everyone and reduces people's willingness to return.

Concentrate on what the IG can do to support the OA meetings in carrying the OA message of recovery.

Do have some basic ground rules for participation in the meeting. As you grow you may need more and may need to use Roberts Rules.

Try to run a 'recovery event / workshop' on the same day as the IG meeting. In my view this is crucial – it brings service & recovery together and sends a very basic message that service is part of our recovery. Members that want the workshop may attend the IG as a visitor and it's a good way of introducing members to service that they might not otherwise look to. Try to cover the traditions & concepts as part of some of these workshops.

Ask members in a group to give a lift to other OA members to the meeting – encourages participation and fellowship.

Useful to have an 'IG Newsletter' of one page length after each meeting, with the 'bare bones' of info that you want to be conveyed to the groups. Catchy colours / clipart etc. is useful – see attached for an example.

Where there is a workshop attached to the IG meeting – try to get members to adhere to basic sharing details that the IG agrees to as a whole – see attached as an example.

Have abstinent members in service positions. Abstinence requirement should be stated in the bylaws.

Basic bylaws perhaps drafted from the WSO website:

https://www.oa.org/pdfs/bylaws_overview.pdf

https://www.oa.org/pdfs/sample_ig_bylaws.docx

Keep your IG details up to date with WSO <https://www.oa.org/pdfs/igregform.pdf>

Have the treasurer read the guidelines https://www.oa.org/pdfs/ig_treasurer_guidelines.pdf

Review for good measure as a 'good' trusted servant

https://www.oa.org/pdfs/trusted_servant.pdf

Good idea to be inclusive as you can <https://www.oa.org/pdfs/UnityWithDiversityChecklist.pdf>

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Firstly I would explain that a Chairperson to facilitate the meeting reminding everyone that they only have a voice thru the Chair - ie the Chair will keep record of who was due to speak next according to when they indicated they wished to speak. *They DO NOT govern, nor do they have an "opinion"*.

Also I would encourage the candidate to read up on a simple system of Robert's Rules and uses these as well as the Traditions to keep the meeting focused and peaceful. *This avoids chaos.*

I would suggest they become familiar with the Service Board By-law and Policy Manuals. *These are often referred to and should be available for all attendees.*

Often the serenity prayer will get you past some tricky moments.

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- ♥ Take it one day at a time
 - ♥ Helpful to work with your Board and create a vision/theme for your year/term. Do you choose the Principles, Traditions or a one word theme of 'Unity'
 - ♥ This is a great opportunity to reach out to other Intergroups in your Region to see what they do

- ♥ If you feel even more brave, you can reach out to another Region Chair and get a couple of other Intergroup Chair names and numbers of contacts (Great way to build your OA community)
- ♥ Learn to Delegate as best as you can
- ♥ Have regular board meetings prior to the Intergroup meetings to give and share updates and ideas
- ♥ Remember why you stepped up to do this awesome service and know that HP equipped you with what you need to lead
- ♥ Use the documents section of [oa.org](https://www.oa.org) – oodles of awesome free documents and ideas - <https://www.oa.org/documents/>
- ♥ HAVE FUN



One of the most important things I learned as IG chair was to give everyone who wishes a chance to share. Some are reluctant and I try to find ways to help them feel safe speaking up. Not always easy I agree. Sometimes I had to cut off discussion because we ran out of time for us to reach consensus at one IG meeting. Very few decisions need to be made urgently. A long time member suggested that a close vote means there is no consensus and I agree. It does take more time, but it is well worth it in the long run.

Also check out the consensus guidelines here: <https://www.oa.org/pdfs/consensus.pdf>

- We're all in this together and none of us is in charge! Just because you're the IG Chair doesn't mean you know more than the person next to you. We can't do this perfectly, but you were willing to take on a leadership role....it may be new to you, but that's how we develop new skills.

- Live and breathe by the Traditions! It might make sense to have your Region Board present a Service/Traditions/Concepts workshop.



It's OK to get help

- keep the meeting focused and on time—this is critical!

- Don't be afraid to ask for help! Just like our recovery, we won't always know what to do....ASK! Ask the previous IG Chair, ask your Region officers/trustee, ask your sponsor....just ASK!

- The [oa.org](https://www.oa.org) website has lots of resources available to you....handling disruptive members, how to be effective trusted servants, etc. The OA Handbook is also a valuable resource.

Remember to acknowledge and appreciate everyone who comes to intergroup, AND those who are not able to attend, but take other service positions and help keep groups going strong! We are ALL part of intergroup!

Check in with people in service positions—ask them how it’s going and if they need any help. If someone is feeling overwhelmed, get them help, even with small parts of their job. Make sure people know they have backup and they will have an alternative to “stepping down.”

Make intergroup meetings interactive, rather than just the board talking. Ask for input, ideas and solutions. Ask for help with small tasks. Our intergroup has a listing of “Service in Small Packages” on the agenda, with the last item being “Does anyone else need help?” Offering small service opportunities allows people to feel a part of, even if they’re not up to holding an office.

Start and close meetings on time. This is respectful of the time members are giving to come to intergroup.

A good agenda:

- Is published in advance of the meeting
- Is clear about what will be discussed, and the time allotted to each item
- Allows for group input / interaction
- Includes the exact wording of any motions being brought to the meeting

Don’t feel like you have to fill the agenda with business! It’s wonderful to have program-focused presentations, as well.

Help the group move along to a decision, especially on minor items. Sometimes we can debate even the smallest issues for a long time, and that can get frustrating. However, sometimes issues are very important to people, and there are strong feelings involved. It’s important to know when something needs more time, thought and discussion. It’s usually ok to postpone an item of business to next month.

Remember that you’re not alone. Meet with your fellow board members to discuss how things are going and what new directions you want to explore.

“The principle of *service* which underlies OA’s twelfth step can now guide our actions both inside and outside the program. Here we experience the great truth that when we let go of our need to control people and simply allow our Higher Power to serve others through us, we receive an abundance of joy and strength.” *OA 12&12, page 106*