**Speaking at non-AA meetings—one ASLO’s experience**

Purpose:

* To be ‘friendly with our friends’
* To inform the public concerning the role of AA in the community
* To carry the message of recovery to alcoholics through a third person

Introducing yourself:

* Introduce yourself as an AA member, who is a volunteer Armed Services Liaison Officer (ASLO), elected to the role for a set period and area, and accountable to those he or she serves.
* We do not speak for the organisation as a whole.

Bring along literature, e.g. newcomers’ literature, public information literature (either general or aimed at a particular discipline), or ‘outreach’ literature, e.g. the armed services pamphlet.

What to talk about:

* Maybe a minute or two on your story (including armed services experience, past or current).
* What AA is (use the official preamble).
* What actually goes on in AA (so recovery, not just abstinence; steps, fellowship, and service: avoid jargon!)
* How AA can be accessed (telephone helpline, website, chat now service on the website, email address on the website, finding a meeting on the website and going along).
* Particular opportunities for contact with an ASLO or an armed services twelfth stepper (via an ASLO or the telephone service, the former being preferable).
* Illustrate particular points with stories or experiences but structure the talk around the information content you want to present.

Specific application of Traditions:

* Tradition V: our purpose is to ensure that any professional helping a problem drinker can accurately explain AA and signpost the individual.
* Tradition VI: we don’t enter into affiliation with outside organisations, e.g. joint initiatives, but we do cooperate, under our own name.
* Tradition VII: we do not want any money.
* Tradition VIII: we are volunteers, not professionals.
* Tradition X: we remain silent on the condition of alcoholism or alcohol dependence as a medical topic, on other treatment approaches or programmes (other than to say we oppose none of them and individuals tend to find that AA dovetails well with other programmes), or on how the armed services, charities, or public bodies approach problem drinkers (or indeed any other matter). Keep away from questions of medicine, psychiatry, psychology, religion, social services, etc.
* Tradition XI: we avoid making sensational promises; we aim to present and explain, not convince or persuade; we do not position ourselves as better than or in competition with anyone.

Dress smartly: lounge suit or smart casual.

Tricky questions:

* What are the success rates? I tend to avoid answering this directly, because the statistics are unreliable. My experience is that it works for anyone who makes concerted efforts, although some people have initial ‘hiccoughs’ (i.e. relapses). Also quote number of meetings in GB (around 4500) and the fact there are a couple of million people in AA worldwide, with a significant proportion with multiple years of sobriety, and many people who did get sober in AA and who later left but without a return to drinking.
* Is it religious? No: present the range of successful experiences of AA, all the way through from religious people to out-and-out atheists.
* Who exactly it is for? I present the type of problem drinker AA typically helps as people who, when they start drinking, drink far too much and who, when they have sufficient reason to moderate or stop, find they cannot. This is regardless of whether or not they are diagnosable medically. Maybe quote pages 20 to 21 or page 44 of the *Big Book*.

Further reading:

(Go to the AA in GB website, click ‘Members’, click ‘Document library’, click ‘Literature downloads’: [http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/Members/Document-Library#](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/Members/Document-Library))

Twelve Traditions Checklist

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