

DRAFT

Hints & Suggestions on Internet Safety

Alcoholics Anonymous neither endorses nor opposes the use of social networking sites. We do however realise the dangers that can occur with the breaching of anonymity on the internet within these sites and have produced a “hints and suggestions” pamphlet for the safety of AA members.

Social networking web sites are public in nature. Though users create accounts and use usernames and passwords, once on the site, it is a public medium where AA members and non-AAs mingle. As long as individuals do not identify themselves as AA members, there is no conflict of interest. However, revealing yourself as an AA member using your full name and or a likeness, such as a full-face photograph, would be contrary to the spirit of the Eleventh Tradition which reads:

“Our relations with the general public should be characterised by personal anonymity. We think AA ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as AA members ought not to be broadcast, filmed or publicly printed. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.”

1. It is advisable not to join any group with Alcoholics Anonymous or AA in its name, even if there is a disclaimer.
2. It is advisable not to disclose that you are a member of AA. If you choose to join a group for people in recovery, talk in general terms about recovery, steps, etc.
3. It is advisable not to post a message on someone’s “wall” about meetings, sobriety or AA.
4. It is advisable not to publish pictures from AA functions unless you have the permission from the people in them, and then ensure that these pictures are viewable by your friends in the Fellowship only.
5. If you choose to breach your anonymity on your profile page, please ensure the page is accessible only to your friends and not to the general public.
6. When creating an AA - related event on the site, please ensure that it is private so that invitees don’t have their anonymity broken if they decide to attend. Make the guest list of an AA - related event hidden.
7. Please be careful not to divulge personal details i.e., landline or mobile phone number, home address or email address to people you have only just met online no matter how genuine they may seem.
8. Be aware that personal privacy settings can unwittingly be removed when accepting add-ons from persons who may not be aware of your involvement in AA.
9. It should be remembered many social network sites interface with email address books and other network facilities. Social networking sites can, and often do, change their underlying structure, for various reasons that are usually commercial in nature. These changes can overwrite existing privacy settings or reset them, to a “default” level which may be more open than the account holder would like and if AA is included in any part of your address or name can inadvertently reveal your membership and that of others in your address book.
10. If you are not sure on the workings of the internet and especially social networking sites, it is advisable to ask someone to explain it to you.