



WORLD SERVICE BOARD OF TRUSTEES BULLETIN #15

Open and closed NA meetings

This article was generated by the World Service Board of Trustees in August 1987 in response to the needs of the fellowship. It represents the views of the board at the time of writing.

The purpose of the World Service Board of Trustees in addressing open and closed NA meetings is to help NA members understand precisely what NA meetings can offer to both addicts and nonaddicts, and how different types of NA meetings have different purposes. Awareness of this need for guidance has been sparked by letters and communication from the fellowship at large. This communication has revealed the need of the fellowship to know what Narcotics Anonymous is and how we carry our message.

The population at large is gaining an increased awareness of our fellowship and an increased interest in our meetings. Input which the board of trustees has received highlights examples of confusion which can exist when interested nonaddicts or people who are uncertain of their status, attend NA meetings. This confusion can be magnified when these individuals participate in our meetings.

Our message of recovery in meetings can be clouded or diluted if anyone other than an NA member participates. In our meetings, confusion can be created when people such as parents, spouses, therapists, members of other fellowships, or other people who are not NA members share and speak at NA meetings.

We always encourage respect, tact, and diplomacy when confronted with circumstances where nonaddicts attend regular NA meetings. Most of these occasions do not present continuing problems for our groups. However, with continued growth and increased awareness about NA, all of us must look ahead. It is our belief that, by gaining clarity about open and closed NA meetings, our members can be guided well in how we all carry the message of recovery from drug addiction to addicts, as well as to all others who are interested.

For these reasons and in the interest of Narcotics Anonymous, the World Service Board of Trustees recommends the following guidelines and definitions:

1. A Narcotics Anonymous meeting, whether it is open or closed, is an addict sanctuary. It is the one place where a drug addict can go and hear about and participate in recovery from the disease of drug addiction. As much as we might sometimes like, we cannot be all things to all people.

2. An open meeting is an NA meeting which may be attended by anyone interested in recovery from addiction. However, verbal participation is limited to NA members only. An open meeting in Narcotics Anonymous serves several functions. It allows people from outside of the fellowship (for instance, judges, probation officers, professionals, family members) to observe what Narcotics Anonymous is and how it functions. It provides a place for anyone to gain information regarding the disease of drug addiction and how to find recovery. This can be very helpful to those individuals who are striving to reach a decision regarding their personal status as an addict. An open meeting in Narcotics Anonymous is one method our groups use to achieve their primary purpose of carrying the message to the addict who still suffers.

3. A closed meeting in Narcotics Anonymous is only for those individuals who are there because of their own drug addiction problem. These meetings do not generally exclude people who are undecided about identifying as an addict; however, participation is still limited to drug addicts only. A closed Narcotics Anonymous meeting provides the freedom which is necessary for a more personal and intimate sharing by Narcotics Anonymous members.

4. Our service structure provides the only appropriate avenues for nonaddict participation in Narcotics Anonymous. In addition to recognizing the need and value of nonaddict trustees (*Temporary Working Guide to the Service Structure*) and nonaddict special workers (Tradition Eight), the fellowship has approved material (*A Guide to Public Information*) which provides for public information community meetings. These meetings are the vehicle for service committee efforts which are aimed at communicating information about our fellowship to the general public. These are not regular NA meetings and are the preferred approach to informing the general public about Narcotics Anonymous. This approach avoids confusion, presents no threat to anonymity, does not affect the NA message in regular meetings, and allows us to satisfy our recovery and service needs while at the same time meet the needs of nonaddicts who are interested in NA.

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