

Anonymity

The experience of our groups suggests that the principle of anonymity—summed up in Tradition Twelve as “the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions” —has three elements:

1. anonymity as it applies outside Al-Anon/Alateen, governing our contacts with the general public, the media, and professionals;
2. anonymity within the fellowship; and
3. anonymity as it contributes to our personal growth.

Anonymity Outside Al-Anon/Alateen

Anonymity and the General Public

When dealing with the general public it is important to use discretion in revealing one’s Al-Anon/Alateen membership. In settings where there is no media involved (health fairs, speaking to community groups or schools, etc.), members are free to use their full names, if they are comfortable doing so.

Anonymity and the Media

Tradition Eleven gives a specific guideline: “we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, and TV.” It is Al-Anon/Alateen policy to interpret Tradition Eleven to include the Internet as well as all forms of evolving public media.

Personal anonymity in the media guards the fellowship from the Al-Anon/Alateen member who may be tempted to seek public recognition. When speaking or writing as an Al-Anon/Alateen member in any form of press, radio, films, TV, Internet, or other evolving public media, members use only their first names and last initial or pseudonyms. Members can also speak without identifying themselves or sign articles “Anonymous.” Photographs, video, film, or Web postings in published or broadcast media should not reveal full face images of those identified as members.

On any Web site accessible to the public, whether an Al-Anon site or not, members' full names and faces are not posted if they are identified as Al-Anon/Alateen members.

Tradition Eleven is sustained if, when appearing on a television program as an Al-Anon or Alateen member, you maintain anonymity and take precautions to avoid recognition of the participants, e.g., back to camera or silhouette.

In either of the above cases a pseudonym or first name only should be used. This policy applies equally to visual tapes for closed-circuit TV (schools, etc.).

When appearing on a TV program as the relative of an alcoholic, a member can face the camera and give his full name, providing he does not reveal his membership in Al-Anon or Alateen. Any Al-Anon/Alateen member may write an article about the fellowship for local or national publications and may be financially remunerated. The personal anonymity of someone writing as a member is maintained by signing anonymously or using a pseudonym.

Anonymity and Professionals

It is important to make Al-Anon/Alateen known through our public outreach work with the many types of professionals who come into contact with families suffering from the effects of someone else's drinking. When working with professionals, Al-Anon and Alateen members are more credible and effective when they give their full names and contact information. While personal anonymity is not required in outreach to professionals, it is helpful to inform the professionals of the importance of anonymity and confidentiality in Al-Anon/Alateen.

Note: Alateen members must comply with local laws and their Area Alateen requirements regarding personal anonymity in all public outreach work.

Electronic Communication outside of Al-Anon

E-mail provides a quick and easy way to communicate the Al-Anon/Alateen message to the media and professionals. Members'

business e-mail addresses should not be used for Al-Anon/Alateen outreach, as they could imply affiliation, and may not be confidential to the member.

Web-based communication, such as on-line audio/visual materials (e.g., Web casts or podcasts), social networking sites, and blogs, provides members with easy access to distribute information about Al-Anon/Alateen recovery to a large audience. In keeping with Tradition Eleven:

(“Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, and TV. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all AA members.”),

members who use this type of communication outlet must maintain their personal anonymity and that of any Al-Anon/Alateen or A.A. member, as the Internet is a form of media.

Anonymity Within Al-Anon/Alateen

Members use their full names within the fellowship when they wish. The degree of anonymity a member chooses (first name, pseudonym, or full name) is not subject to criticism. Each member has the right to decide. Regardless of our personal choice, we guard the anonymity of everyone else in the fellowship, Al-Anon/Alateen and A.A. This means not revealing to anyone—even to relatives, friends, and other members—whom we see and what we hear at a meeting.

Anonymity goes well beyond mere names. All of us need to feel secure in the knowledge that nothing seen or heard at a meeting will be revealed. We feel free to express ourselves among our fellow Al-Anons/Alateens because we can be sure that what we say will be held in confidence.

At open Al-Anon meetings, group anniversaries, conventions, or workshops where nonmembers may be present, Al-Anon and Alateen members are free to decide how much anonymity they prefer. It is well to begin these meetings with a brief explanation of the Eleventh and Twelfth Traditions.

One suggestion is as follows:

“There may be some who are not familiar with our Tradition of personal anonymity in any form of press, radio, films, TV, Internet and other electronic media. If so, we respectfully ask that no Al-Anon, Alateen, or A.A. speaker or member be identified by full name or picture in published, broadcast, or Web-posted reports of our meeting.”

Anonymity in Our Personal Growth

In Al-Anon/Alateen we share as equals, regardless of social, educational or financial position. Common sense in the use of anonymity provides freedom and the security each member is assured in Al-Anon/Alateen. Our spiritual growth has its roots in the principle of anonymity. Each member has the right of decision regarding personal anonymity within the fellowship, which we respect whether the member is attending meetings, not attending meetings, or deceased. (See “Public Relations Anonymity.”)