

Corona virus question - National D.R. Discussion

<https://al-anon.org/al-anon-meetings/electronic-meetings/>

<https://al-anon.org/for-members/members-resources/member-blog/>

There are phone meetings available 7 days a week <https://www.phonemeetings.org/index.htm>

1. Corona virus question

Hello trusted servants, I have a question about how groups are handling the corona virus: are members still holding hands for the closing prayer, are they still sitting close to each other, are the meetings making any adjustments to accommodate the fear of the virus? thanks, John B DR, District 22, Northern California

2. RE: Corona virus question

I have concerns that holding hands are still taking place, I feel it needs to stop as directed by the government. It may be that meetings will need to be suspended for a period of time as so many take place in area's where large numbers of people gather. I am hoping that there will be suggestions come from WSO very soon. Wishing all well and good health.
LIS Tracey DR - District 29

3. RE: Corona virus question

I had a text from member today concern about the corona virus and thought as a DR, I should make some kind of announcement. So I reached out to my Area chair and had a conversation. I think it is important for us not to create any additional fear, anxiety or panic. I think we all must take the common sense approach. Stay home if we are sick or have concerns, don't hold hands if we feel uncomfortable, talk about it at the group level and activate the group safety plan, keep in touch with their group through email or by phone, if they need to cancel or suspend a meeting and have it posted on the state website.

There are no must in Al-Anon. Though holding hands at the end of our meeting is a great way to close a meeting, we must think about the welfare of all as it states in Tradition 1.

The few meetings that I have attended some are still holding hands, others are elbow to elbow, some are shoulder to shoulder and some are not holding hands at all. We are still seating close proximity but I am sure that might change soon.

Remember personal safety and self care must come first, We do have electronic meetings: I know they are not the same as a live meeting but they might work for this situation. Also, check out the blog, there are some great shares on there: I did check out a few other states website & WSO to see if they have posted anything on the corona virus and I only found 1 state so far, New York: <https://www.nycalanon.org/> Just my thoughts, stay safe and virus free.

Service - The Heart of Al-Anon , Philomena (Phil) D District 3 Representative DE Al-Anon, Area 8

4. RE: Corona virus question

Here's a follow up on my previous responds, we must look to our legacies and our Higher to guide us. It is great to hear everyone response. It how our fellowship works and helps us all to make informed decision for our groups and for ourselves.

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol-that our lives had become unmanageable.

Tradition 1: Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity.

Concepts 1: The ultimate responsibility and authority for Al-Anon world services belongs to the Al-Anon groups.

Just my thoughts. Stay safe and healthy. Service - The Heart of Al-Anon, Philomena (Phil) D

5. RE: Corona virus question

My district is located about 25 miles south of Seattle. We have meetings that are temporarily closing by choice through their group conscience and some that are closed due the facility limiting access to the building for now.

A coordinator at the area level sent this out in an email and I really liked it "While an outside issue, the corona-virus potentially can affect the health and safety of our meetings."

I shared with the GRs in our district that each group is autonomous in their decision to stay open or to temporarily close during this time and encouraged the use of the questions from KDBM if having a group discussion regarding this so they can make an informed decision. Most if not all groups are not holding hands at the end of the meeting. Currently we have 2 district events cancelled and 2 meetings of 14 have closed but I anticipate that number going up. Several other Al-Anon meetings and events in nearby districts have temporarily closed or have been cancelled.

My home group is starting the discussion and my thoughts on my group is if there are two people willing to keep the doors open, then there will be a meeting. I am not one of those willing as I have a son with leukemia who is basically quarantined by order of his oncologist. This does not need to be a 2/3s majority vote just two people willing to commit to keep the doors open should a newcomer or someone from one of the closed groups choose to visit us. This is my share in the group conscience. Thank you for starting this discussion. Steffani R

6. RE: Corona virus question

My home group is small and we meet in a board room and we can leave a couple chairs between each other. We no longer great with hugs and when closing we have just decided to bow our heads and say the Lords prayer. We just had our District meeting on Tuesday for the month and there to some were just elbow pumping or just touching our hearts, we also closed by just bowing our heads in prayer.

Fortunately the virus hasn't reached my area yet, but I'm sure that will change shortly. I think the best course of action is to err on the side of extreme caution. Many of the members in my district are older and we have some that feel that no matter what we should always keep the doors open. Under normal circumstance I agree with that premise, however these are not normal circumstances. I think suspending meetings is the safest way to go for everyone. Phone, online meetings and conversations with fellow members for the foreseeable future should be put in place. This may be a harsh solution, but if our members get sick and God forbid die, what good will that do our groups and Al-Anon. I think the WSO needs to take a hard stance on this and address it quickly.

I pray that everyone stays well. Blessings & elbow bumps, Colleen S District 8 DR Ontario, Canada

7. RE: Corona virus question

I agree with Philomena suggestions. I too have had both situation in the groups I have been attending. Common sense is what should be in place. Taking care of ourselves is our focus. So stay home if you are sick. There is Sponsorship and phone list to help us stay in tune with the program. If you don't feel safe at meeting. Common sense!!! Joy P

8. RE: Corona virus question

Here in my district we are not overly concerned. If you still want to not hold hands that is fine.

Some in our area are holding elbows instead of hands.

Chandra B, District 2 Idaho Area 13

9. RE: Corona virus question

I, personally am not concerned about the Coronavirus. We have choices in Al-Anon. We can choose to go to a meeting or not, there ARE online meetings if you wish to look into those. We can choose to hold hands or not. I don't plan to do anything different in District 1 in Idaho. I'm sure that we'll be talking about it at the meetings and take group consciences. Cheryl S DR Idaho District 1

10. RE: Corona virus question

I have a couple of very vocal GRs who are repeatedly asking for a statement to go out requesting people to not hold hands at the end of the meeting. One called WSO and was told it was up to each group to decide on how to handle the closing. My thought is that ultimately it is a personal decision. I'm considering sending the following. After reading the previous posts I may change the first sentence to include the fact it's an outside issue. I am waiting on direction from my HP on if/when to send the statement.

"Due to the concern about the Coronavirus, members may be thinking about whether to attend face to face meetings or to hold hands during the close of the meeting. Having a group conscious to decide how each group will respond is an option; however, ultimately, it is a personal decision to act on what is most comfortable for you.

If you choose to limit your face to face meetings, see the list of the alternatives at top.

Heather N District 5, Houston, TX

11. RE: Corona virus question

Dear trusted servants,

Hope all is well! I have learned in my years in the program that one way to battle fear is exercising faith. I am not living in denial, I'm just taking precautions. My HP takes care of me if I take actions.

Love you all! Belkis T. DR District 189

12. RE: Corona virus question

GRs and interested others,

I've had several GRs talk to me about how their groups are handling concerns about COVID-19. I am passing on one group's ideas arising from a group discussion about the topic. Since this topic falls generally under safety and group autonomy, I offer these in the spirit of experience, strength, and hope, not as recommendations or directions from the district, area, or WSO. Be well and thank you for your service, Lyria

We have choices. People make different choices about their health. Ask others in advance if they want hugs or touching or hand-holding. Don't take other people's choices personally. Consider taking a group conscience about whether to touch elbows or stand side-by-side instead of holding hands at the end of the meeting.

Consider leaving notebooks and the 7th tradition basket in the center of the room instead of passing them around, so people can make their own choices about whether to touch these items. Consider putting some hand sanitizer in your meeting room.

If you have a cough, stay home. Phone meetings will be happy to include you.

If you have a compromised immune system or underlying health problems, consider attending phone meetings as an alternative to face-to-face meetings.

The 3 C's applies to viruses. You're responsible for the effort, but you can't control the outcome. Aileen W

13. RE: Corona virus question

Our group took a group conscience at the beginning of the meeting to hold space, but not hold hands at the end of the meeting. Unfortunately, now the center where we hold our meeting has chosen to not allow any in person group meetings for the rest of the month. Westchester is one of the hot spots for this disease, so I suspect many more of our meetings will be closing. Indeed, I'm postponing our District Meeting. I considered doing a zoom conference instead,

but honestly, being so close to it here, I'm feeling a bit overwhelmed as are many of my GRs and we have nothing so pressing that it cannot wait a bit longer. Christine K

14. RE: Corona virus question

...to district 21 in North Seattle.

Trusted servants in North Seattle District 21 of Washington Area Al-Anon,

As your trusted servant, I am recommending that you close all in-person Al-Anon meetings immediately in order to be proactive in responding to the threat of the expanding coronavirus pandemic.

I am making this recommendation on my own, without consultation with the Group Representatives in the district, and without consultation with the officers of Washington Area, and without consultation with WSO. If I have overstepped my duty, I am sorry; I am merely trying to do my best to serve you.

According to Tradition 4, each group should be autonomous, so your group will need to make this decision. Should you choose to cancel, I recommend that you get in contact with your meeting venue to make clear and fair arrangements regarding rent payments. In addition, please send your cancellation notice to AIS.

My research over the past days has convinced me that the faster we act, the more impact we can have on slowing down the threat and possibly save lives. I do not believe we will regret acting too quickly, but we very well may regret waiting too long. I realize that my recommendation goes beyond current recommendations from the [Washington State Department of Health](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control](#). Several facts lead me to conclude that we should limit personal contact as much as possible. First, the [lessons of Italy](#) show us that once COVID-19 is established in a community, transmissions rates are so high that the health care system can get overwhelmed by an exponential spike in hospitalizations. Second, because of our slow start in testing, it is likely that the virus is already well-established in our District and the number of infections is potentially doubling every few days. In circumstances like this every day is critical and our meetings are playing a role in transmission. [This article is a level-headed, science-based investigation](#) of what the outbreak currently looks like in Seattle and how it compares to the lessons from other regions. It seems likely that the outbreak will be out of control in just a few weeks unless people act now. Third, countries like Singapore and Hong Kong have [managed to slow this transmission](#) of the virus using multifaceted approaches including social distancing. Hygiene and social distancing are the only controls we have, so we should practice them.

Recovery and Fellowship is important. I am working on guidelines for substituting online meetings to help you keep in contact with members of your group and will send as soon as possible. Members can also consider pre-existing electronic meetings.

GRs and Coordinators, please be aware that I will be moving our District 21 Business Meeting scheduled for Tuesday April 7th to an online meeting. Instructions to follow. Thanks in service,

Gary H, District 21 Representative. North Seattle

15. RE: Corona virus question

Below is the email I just sent to all of the Al-Anon and Alateen groups in District 6 even though we currently have no diagnosed cases. I would rather give them the chance to be proactive as opposed to being behind the eight ball. There may be fallout from the email. Que Sera, Sera!

"Greetings Fellow Al-Anon Members:

Even though COVID 19 aka the Corona Virus is an outside entity, it is one which can potentially affect the personal health and safety of our members. The issue--and the confusion surrounding it--arose in an Alateen meeting in District 6 this week illustrating the need for an open discussion about health and safety.

At this point in time, my suggestion is that each group have a group conscience to decide how you wish to handle this situation. The 4Cs are very appropriate in this instance. We didn't cause it, and neither can we control nor can we cure it; however we can contribute to its transmission by failing to exercise common sense. Some possible outcomes of such discussions (as evidenced in other groups) are as follows:

- 1.) leaving as much space as possible between people in the meeting
- 2.) linking/touching elbows during the closing prayer and/or Declaration
- 3.) having door greeters equipped with hand sanitizer and rubber gloves
- 4.) limiting personal contact to verbal rather than physical contact
- 5.) leaving the 7th Tradition basket and announcement materials in the middle of the table
- 6.) encourage those who coughing and/or feel unwell to remain at home.

This list is not exhaustive but rather designed to provide food for thought during group discussions for this topic.

The World Service Office was asked about the protocols for handling COVID 19. The subsequent response was that each group must handle it as they see fit; since it is an issue of group safety and autonomy. Tradition 4 in action!

To me, common sense and self care go hand in hand. For some practicing self care may mean limiting face to face meetings via social distancing, isolation, or self quarantining; however there are alternatives available. Some are as follows:

- 1.) increased contact via your phone list
- 2.) increased contact with your sponsor
- 3.) accessing online and phone bridge meetings by going to this website
- 4.) check out the Al-Anon blogs for a chance to share and to read the shares of others

If in the future, it becomes necessary to temporarily halt a meeting, please notify me so that I can notify the Area. If I have missed anyone, please forward this message to them. At this point, there are no district events with which to be concerned. I am going to conclude this email by quoting the World Service Office memo, "Of utmost importance is providing an environment which allows Al-Anon newcomers and members the opportunity to feel safe and maintain the safety of the group." My prayer for you is love, health, safety, and no virus. LIS Linda R SC District 6

17. RE: Corona virus question

My district is Manhattan south of 57th Street. Lots of meeting closures because the facilities are closed -- impossible to keep up with them all. I am going to try to have our District Meeting as an internet-only Zoom meeting at the scheduled time on March 31 -- fortunately my employer (who has told me to work from home until further notice) has the premium version of Zoom that doesn't have time or participant limits.

Charles H DR, District 18/19, New York South Area

18. RE: Corona virus question

In our district, we have had a church close to groups for the month. One affected group found an alternative meeting space at the public library. I see my role as providing information, giving updates about the status of meetings and meeting places. I posted information about Zoom for groups that are not able to meet in person as well as a link to electronic meetings. I know one meeting that was not affected decided to hold its meeting on Zoom this morning, rather than meet face-to-face. I've asked GRs to let me know about changes to their meetings so I can help get the word out.

We had a district meeting scheduled for today. One of our members expressed concerns about meeting in person, so I held a group conscience by email. I gave them three options: proceed as planned, postpone the meeting for a month or conduct the meeting via Zoom. We had substantial unanimity to postpone the meeting for a month. We had one critical vote, which we took by email. Our area officers are considering what, if any, action to take concerning the assembly planned for this month. KATHLEEN M

19. RE: Corona virus question

Our Area has been doing a lot of work to communicate with our DRs and Groups. They have built a webpage where they provide suggestions for groups and members as well as how to get information about meeting changes/closures and event cancellations. It also links to the guidance from WSO. Maybe you will find it valuable for your District/Area as well. Peace. Ralph Hueske, DR, District 31, Pennsylvania

20. RE: Corona virus question

Earlier this week based on recommendations from the county health department- my district decided to cancel our monthly speaker meeting and our monthly business meeting.

Several meetings have been suspended because the venue has asked them not to meet.

Every group that is told not to meet or chooses not to meet is asked to inform me, the DR. I pass the word to all GRs via our google group email. I also have suggested that the GRs uses the meeting phone list to start a phone tree passing the info to other members. We also let the AIS office know for the phone line and we ask the Intergroup Web Coordinator to post it on the website.

Like everyone else had said - all the groups are autonomous but we are encouraging thoughtful decision making and practicing exquisite self care.

We have let members know about on-line & phone meetings. We have also suggested that meetings which have been suspended can try free phone conferencing at the time of the regularly scheduled meeting with the usual members.

Everyone seems genuinely interested in staying safe, healthy and still connected. We are working together.

My best to everyone as we chart this new territory. Together we can make it! Ally G

21. RE: Corona virus question

A.A. had a huge area convention scheduled for two weekends from now, with close to a thousand people expected to attend and lots of Al-Anon participation. It was to take place in Westchester County, NY, which is one of the most affected counties in the US, although the convention site is a 15 mile drive from the center of the outbreak there. There is a link to a letter from the A.A. service area here: <https://www.aaseny.org/>

Charles H, DR, District 18/19, New York South Area