

Ideas on Growth

Early 1999

Suggestions & Comments The Proposal

Teams

Randomly choose groups of three, from among our membership, who would commit to visiting with each other at least once a week.

Greeters

Have groups of Greeters, welcome and embrace newcomers to AA and our meeting, actively seeing to it that the new man is attended to, and included in the good things we have to offer.

Ed K.

I must admit I was a little skeptical of this proposal at first (imagine that, a skeptical AA!). For me, I find that whenever I'm made "uncomfortable" by something, anything, there's usually a fear, anger or resentment around it that I don't wish to confront. Such is the case here. I'm not exactly sure which, if not all three, are tied to my skepticism, but I know that it is there and that therefore I need to be willing and open to at least try this, rather than run and/or piss on it which is my historical path. If I'm unwilling or uncomfortable to at least try this, what makes me not want to reach out to someone else (and possibly even help them!) and consequently help myself as the program teaches we will? What can be wrong with this? If someone at Loyola hadn't called after me a few times I very likely would not be here today. Aren't there others who may need this same help (or worse, have needed it and didn't get it) and can't (or better shouldn't) participate on some level? I usually find that the more questions I have about something, the better it is for me, and the more lessons there are to be learned (or taught). It is so here. Long answer to a short question but finally, do I want to make 3 - 5 more phone calls a week? No. Should I for my fellow AA's and myself? Yes. I say let's give it a try.

Nathaniel N.

I think this would be good for the group. It is a problem that we've grown as much as we have. By putting people together as teams that do not socialize or know each other, will increase the collective awareness of the group overall.

Mark O.

Excellent idea.

David V.

Great idea - I'm all for it. It's not only good for the newcomer, but also myself; helping me in developing good male friendship within the realm of Sobriety. In a way, it's like having extra sponsors, and it also can help me in becoming a sponsor.

David H.

First, your premise: An attractive group is one where our Twelfth Step work is intentional. Good on you, for identifying the problem, and encouraging dialogue. I like the idea that team members aren't already buddies. Adds to group cohesion, but they sure ought to all be able and willing to contact one another for team cohesion

Do greeters need to be team-linked? It's an excellent position of service to offer newer men- just to stand at the door. When a greeter gets a newcomer he'd be able to hand off the new man to a team member and stay at his post. Greeters could be volunteers from the

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previous week. The other tasks, cleanup, etc., might be ok for team members. As I learned meeting in-laws, my favorite was a man who invited me to hang a gate on his farm. The work (cleaning up) was a focus, not me the frightened newcomer. Gives the new men a chance to hang around after the meeting.

As for getting phone numbers from the new men, I'd make that a one-on-one event. "May I take your phone number and call you during the week? Or offer you a ride to a Step Study meeting?" Sounds frightening, to have one's number passed along. I'd make it reciprocal: "Here's a newcomer packet, with a meeting schedule and some literature. Let me write my phone number on it. Call me anytime tracking newcomers is the object, a month-long commitment might be tough on teams. Perhaps it'd be 1st Monday, 2nd Monday, etc. teams. That way, a team could spend the next four weeks on their new men. Thanks for all your work.

Olie J.

That is an excellent idea and recommendation. I think that some people like to get lost in the crowd and delude themselves into thinking that they are doing what they are supposed to be doing by just showing up. This will not only help to hold members, new and old, accountable for themselves and others, but will enhance the integrity of Loyola.

There simply is no other group or AA meeting that I have come across, and I have attended at least one in 37 of the 50 United States (just counted), that comes close to the strength, character and blessing God has bestowed upon Loyola. Them's my thoughts.

Jack H.

The truth is: for as long as I have been coming to Loyola you have been "the glue", "the anchor", "the conductor", etc. It has been important to the success of the group and to my individual success. Another truth is: that we ARE a different, better, larger organization. Another truth is: that bigger organizations operate differently and attract different people than smaller organizations. Some people enjoy shopping at Fred Meyers and Target, while others enjoy small owner-operated neighborhood shops. There are both positives and negatives in large AA meetings and small AA meetings.

The Loyola challenge: how to combine the best of both. We don't have a choice, we already are a large meeting. You alone cannot be everything to everybody. I think that we implement your plan that has been germinating for several months. Some people may choose to shop elsewhere, that's great for them. Our goal is to be the best we can be, not the most we can be. Me, I love you and I love this meeting no matter how it changes. I'm stayin' on the horse that brung me. Thank you for caring so much.
(signed, but unable to read the name)

It's always important to keep in touch with our members, especially the newcomers. Team members should not necessarily be home group members, but someone who attends regularly. Good idea, great thought, let's put it into action.

Ron J.

I just want to say that I feel this is a Great!! idea, and I'm all for it.

Mark S.

Not being "a part of" was a big part of my life. I think this is a great idea. I'm all for it. Thank you for taking the time to think this out.

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Paul H.

I am willing to help however I can. I remember how important it was to feel welcomed and wanted when I first came into the program. As we grow, I like the idea of trying to see to it that new people are welcomed and feel "a part of". Self esteem building is so important. I am not so sure how the "team" concept will work. It might create a lot of administration work for someone. I do feel the idea of greeters welcoming people, gathering phone numbers and making follow-up calls is workable, and needed.

Pete C.

Whether you call it temporary sponsorship, greeters, teams, or a telephone tree, the concept is sound and deserves implementation. Tracking this many people requires constant communication, data access, data privacy or security, information review and updating; we're talking a dynamic database. Graphing the 3-5 member groups, connecting them in a common information stream, adding the fluidity of people's lives and I get the visual of a Matrix. I have no investment in the term, it just sounds cool.

Some characteristics of the Matrix might include:

1. Inclusion could be both voluntary or
2. in special circumstances one may be watched over, maybe until they're well enough to volunteer
3. 3-5 man team membership to be limited to 6 months. Review and reshuffle the roster 2 x yr., say at the clock changing times--fall back spring ahead. To be effective we must retain focus. The MISSION after all is to not only tracking the new man, but also to facilitate the phone fitness of the general membership. So shake em up and guard against complacency.
4. Individual responsibilities. Must have a phone or a willingness and ability to contact and be contacted by others. Minimum acceptable number of contacts suggested at 1-2 times each week; actual number may vary. This is not to replace sponsorship, just an opportunity to make small talk - or serious weight training for those of us with the 300 # telephones.
5. picking up the phone and making the call is more important than what you may think that you have to say.
6. keep the @TRIX database current with correct information

Managing the MATRIX:

1. establish a small management group to BE RESPONSIVE & RESPONSIBLE to the group
2. determine hardware/software to accomplish the mission
 - a. low tech . . . some colored markers and Xerox copies phone lists
 - b. any database conversant members?
 - c. Sharp Wizard with PC Docking - transferable, paperless, or you can easily generate tons of paper, input on the spot at the meeting.
 - d. other.
3. establish follow-up and review procedures
 - a. interlocking or hierarchical membership participation
 - b. groups with newcomers would contain a member who would also be on another group's member with oversight responsibilities. Create a pyramid or tree Matrix for two-way exchange of information.
4. review, replace, and report to the membership at large as long as MATRIX is operational.

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Michael W.

I whole heartily agree with the problem description and applaud the concern. I am uncomfortable about the creation of a system to keep track of groups of people involved in this type of effort. I think peer pressure is effective by means of setting an example. I would like to avoid adding any source of resentment who might not want to participate and feel "apart from" the rest of the group.

I would encourage the use of greeters and would volunteer to do so myself. I would prefer to see this done on a weekly volunteer basis, which could be accomplished by asking for volunteers (at the 7th tradition break) for the following week. This would eliminate the need for keeping lists. I think this would also be a great opportunity to establish a rotating service position for someone who could be the focal point for the "greeters".

To quote from tradition 9 (the long form): "Each A .A. group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best". I myself am guilty of being self-centered and have failed to reach out to others as well as I could. But, as my sobriety has lasted, so has my ability increased in reaching outside myself to help others. I think the responsibility lies in each individual. I am inclined to follow in the footsteps of other people not because of peer pressure but because of the rewards they have gained. I would rather see a small effort succeed rather than a large effort risk failure. Best Regards P.S. I still think our group is missing out on a valuable connection to A.A. as a whole by not having a General Service Representative!

DeWayne H.

I absolutely concur with Michael.

Mark S.

Anything we can do to help each other is a good thing!! What's wrong with being responsible!! No one is in control. You can decide whether to participate or not. The one who really benefits is you!!

Don E.

This is good because it is structured and structure works very well for the group. The purpose of the AA group is to work with the "new man". This puts definite direction to that purpose. Members of this group should welcome this opportunity, but if they can't do this, then they should let the Secretary know. (Unsigned)

I think it's a great idea. The only concern I have is, are we promoting The Program to the newcomer? Which would reflect Tradition Two. I believe AA would not survive if we continue to break traditions.

Tom F.

I think it's a great idea. I don't think this action will adversely effect other groups or AA as a whole. Therefore, if the group wants to do this, I am willing to be on a team. Saying welcome and keep coming back, we care, is attraction rather than promotion as far as I can tell.

Brian F.

I'll be out of town on February 22nd, so I wanted to put some of my thoughts on paper. To me, AA is all about one drunk talking to another. Our fellowship started with Bill talking to Bob in 1935; I was 12th Stepped by one individual who took the time to talk with me as an

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individual; and my own recovery has been amazingly enriched by one-on-one conversations with newly recovering alcoholics. I think the idea of creating "Loyola Teams" is an extension of "one drunk talking to another". I'm very much in favor and look forward to participating. When I got sober, I was taught to shake hands with at least one person at each meeting I attended. By shaking hands with another person, I get out of myself for a few moments, and maybe for the rest of the evening. By extending myself to another person, I carry on the tradition that was extended to me when I first got to AA.

"Whenever anyone, anywhere reaches out, I want the hand of AA to be there . . . And for that I am responsible."

(Theme from the 1955 International Convention) Welcoming another alcoholic/addict to our meeting is the most basic 12th Step work we can do. Breaking down the isolation, personally inviting fellow alcoholic/addicts into our fellowship of recovery.

Put in a humorous way, our message to new-comers would be this:

We've got good news and bad news:

The good news is that there's a solution to your problem.

The bad news is that we're it ...

Gary S.

This is to save lives. We have an opportunity to not let guys slip between the cracks. It's too bad this can't be or isn't mandatory. I reach out to old and new alike, and wish others did also. There is no downside to this. There's no way to fail. We all are only responsible for the effort anyway. The outcome is God's. Getting a cluster of 3 or 4 to be accountable to one another, and in turn accountable to the group, is a measure of success.

Jim S.

You either become a part of the group and grow, or worst case scenario, you stay the same.

Bruce K.

This is a great idea and I will help anyway I can, or my sponsor will kill me. Just kidding, "guip".

Dominic A. and Jim D.

We feel very strongly that any plan to include more men, in support of each other, is very good. This group has helped us so much, that anyway we can participate, or encourage others is our duty. There is no reason at all we should tolerate someone retreating into their own private hell. The entire basis for AA, in the first place, is for alcoholics to reach out to each other, develop accountability and encourage each other's recovery. Anyone who feels this team concept is not traditional enough or somehow unorthodox AA, is not, in our opinion, on firm ground at all. Even though we all have a choice of how we choose to participate, there can, (again, our opinion), be no valid excuse for not reaching out, not going to the next level of group involvement. We will volunteer and serve to the best of our abilities, and ask others to do the same. (Unsigned) I will support this.

Tracey R.

First, I will stand with whatever the Group Conscience is. I believe Greeters are a good idea. Maybe with a Newcomer Packet (mtg. schedule-names & numbers-and Ideas or Guidelines to start with, etc., etc.) I personally believe the Newcomer needs to be informed (stressed) about his responsibility for his own recovery. It can be damaging to carry the Alcoholic instead of carrying the message. If a team leader fails to call his team, and someone gets

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drunk, it would be easy for that individual to blame his slip on – poor me ...nobody cares ... or it's their fault. Other ideas ... ask for a show of hands at every meeting of those able and willing to sponsor.

Joe K.

The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.

Brent H.

Team Captains, members should have phone list for all members. Try with two teams to start with, to minimize coordination & time needed for process changes. Then start with whole group when we have worked out the bugs. Team leaders need to be willing to carry cell phones 24hrs and be available for calls. Group pay for cell phones?

Bob M.

1. As a new addition to this group, and AA (less than one year in attendance) my first reaction is that your idea is excellent! When a new person arrives for the first time, no matter whether he is in or out of control with his life, getting acquainted and involved with new people can be a challenge. Many times the group is divided into cliques and trying to find the common ground to participate can be difficult. If the new person doesn't feel welcome, I am sure that many would move on. Your solution opens the door to providing him the opportunity to get to know someone and feel more comfortable.
2. Your proposal offers those who wish to participate the chance to be more involved and I feel that it is important that you highlight that it is voluntary!
3. We may want to print out some simple business cards so each team could list their names and phone numbers to give to the new person.
4. I will look forward to the discussion at the group conscience meeting on the 22nd.
Best regards

Eric G.

- Should not be voluntary. If a person has asked to be included on our home-group list, put them on a team.
- If a person does not want to be involved, let him tell his team not to call him.
- Keep an open mind and be a part of the whole.
- Randomly chosen teams – no team leaders.
- Rotate every six months.
- No tradition is being broken because we are not promoting outside our group. We are only using Step 12.

Ralph H.

There are times I truly wish I was two people. I believe this problem is more a Wintertime problem, vs year round. If someone gets lost, my experience is that's where they want to be. I hope Loyola grows because of the attraction of the men in the group, not by a organized effort to babysit new and old people. My involvement is my responsibility with a lot of accountability to the new and old members of this group.

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Bob B.

When I put forth this proposal, I knew that the process would invoke a good deal of deep thought and creativity. Our group is very capable of both!

As the initiator, I also want to further our Group Conscience by offering both comment and clarification where I believe it can be helpful. The Program has taught us that God's WILL for us, concerning matters such as we now address, is reflected in the decision of the Group Conscience.

Therefore, I trust that the decisions we make will reflect the love our Ultimate Authority has already bestowed upon us as individuals and as a group. As you go through my submission, you should know that as I'm writing this, I've already seen all that you've just now read. I also have been thinking about this proposal for at least four month's time. Hopefully these additional thoughts will further your preparation to decide what's best for our Group.

From reading your comments, and visiting with many of you, I believe that there are two opinions of thought from among our members:

- Make no changes.
- Create a process, which better accepts newcomers to our group, as well as bonding present members to each other.

If we choose to make changes, allow me to be a bit more specific about how I suggest we do this. First of all, I think that some of you want to make this harder than it has to be. As far as picking teams, I envisioned taking our list of members, sorting it by length of sobriety, then picking a name from the top, middle, and the end, while making sure that they already aren't "golfing buddies", and go from there. No one is the team "leader", all are the team "members". Write the three names and phone numbers down on three pieces of paper, and give a copy to each of them. I personally really like Pete's idea of changing the teams twice a year at the change of the clocks. Each of us would commit to visiting at least once a week (outside the meeting) with our team members. Simple idea-simple execution!

We already have a list of members. Once we randomly computer-sort the names to make the teams, there is really no need to keep track of the teams. If a team wants or needs more members, all they have to do is ask.

A few of you feel strongly about not creating a process whereby a person feels left out or different, if they choose not to participate. Therefore, it has been suggested, to avoid resentments, that only those who step forward, or volunteer, are placed on a team.

I feel differently, and here's why. How many of you at one time or another, or even now, have lacked the selfconfidence or initiative to step forward like that, even when you know it's the best thing for you? I think a lot of us! Some others of us just get lazy!

Wouldn't it be better that we create a process where you have to step forward to exclude yourself? If the Group chooses this approach, we don't hurt anybody. The strong guy will say, "thanks, but no thanks", no matter what, and that's that! The less sure guy, who doesn't opt out, for whatever reason, can only gain from the experience, by becoming a part of a team. Maybe I see this issue as "a greater good".

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Allow me to further explain my vision on Greeters. I see them being much more than "handshakers". The reason I have suggested that teams, instead of weekly volunteers do this, is threefold:

- People who do good things together become closer.
- Doing it for weeks in a row, adds continuity and allows them to get better at it.
- Many talented and able people don't promote themselves, but when called to serve, excel.

The main purpose of the greeter is to welcome the new person into our meeting, to AA, and to see that helpful things begin to happen.

Some of you have changed my thinking on how we might best do this. Originally I suggested that one team would do this for four weeks in a row. Now I believe that two teams at a time should be doing this each week, and they do it for two weeks in a row. We could rotate, so every week a new team ends their two-week term, while another begins. Kind of a leapfrog thing.

If we have two teams working each meeting, perhaps we will want each of these teams to "keep" the new guys that week for their team, or see that they get passed along if there are too many. We can learn as we go along!

As you can tell, I feel very strongly about this proposal. If we choose to accept these "team" and "greeter" concepts, we will be the richer for it. Because I have been doing these things over a long period of time, I know it can enrich our lives. It has mine. The concepts don't need testing! Many of us are products of just such special attention. The only way I can see this failing, is if I don't participate. The same is true for you!

Please place the little reminder card on your bathroom mirror so you won't miss our Group Conscience meeting, Monday-February 22nd at 7:00pm in our regular room. You might also wish to join others in a week of prayer, asking for wisdom, understanding, and guidance in our individual and group decisions.

The Loyola Group has many traditions, perhaps the best being that we pass along to others that which has been given to us.