

Our Welcome Format

“Could we please go around the room and introduce ourselves by our first name?” As a newcomer, this phrase held special significance for me.

When I first came into an Al-Anon meeting, each person around the table shared their name, and then it was my turn. For the very first time in a very long while, I felt valued as a person. Sharing names made me feel safe, accepted, and like I was a “part of” the group. It made me feel welcome, as it introduced me to everyone present, helping me feel less like a stranger and giving me a name to match each face.

Later, when they asked if there were any newcomers in the room, I realized that had I not said my name as we went around the room, I might have felt uncomfortable acknowledging I was new and missed this precious opportunity.

During the sharing part of the meeting, people would again say their name before beginning to share their experiences. This practice reaffirmed the safety of the room and encouraged me to open up to the other members. By this time, I had names to accompany the faces I was getting to know.

Flash forward to today, and I now belong to several electronic groups. It may be just me, but each time I’ve said my name, it has validated me as an individual. It has validated my connection to my Al-Anon Family Group, and, equally importantly, it continually

reestablishes the safety net of confidentiality found in the room. By saying my name as I begin to share, I open myself up for others to find me after the meeting for fellowship or to use as a resource for phone calls after the meeting.

Some of us need this weekly reminder of connection, confidentiality, and validation as we are working our program while in the trenches of living every day with our families, our relationships, and our jobs. We are continuously striving to “belong” and be valued in all areas of our lives, leveraging the tools we gain while working our program.

By Peggie C., Pennsylvania

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