

Inside Al-Anon Family Groups

An Al-Anon Group Is an Al-Anon Group—Even Online

I wasn't sure what bothered me about electronic Al-Anon groups when I first started attending them. They were new and different to me, and with my camera off and a made-up name, I could be completely invisible. I could drop in and out when I felt like it, without considering any disruption I might cause or sharing in the responsibility of serving the group. This made me vaguely uncomfortable, but the convenience swept me off my feet: I could do some household tasks or "just listen in," letting the other members carry the meeting.

Then I started comparing my participation in electronic meetings with my participation in face-to-face meetings. The difference was stark! When I realized how little effort I put into "attending" an electronic meeting, I decided to change the way I showed up. I started joining the meeting on time and making myself available to help ensure the meeting opened when it was supposed to and included helpful topics. I sat up straight, kept my camera on, and paid attention. I started doing my best to recognize that an Al-Anon group is an Al-Anon group; whether we meet in a hospital conference room, a church basement, or on an electronic platform, it still remains an Al-Anon group.

Now, when I attend an Al-Anon meeting online, I think about how I'm supporting the group and how that affects Al-Anon as a whole. Am I contributing by serving, sharing in leadership, and taking turns so as not to control? Do I contribute financially to the electronic "basket" even though the expenses for the electronic platform or welcome materials are not obvious to me? Do I encourage other members to participate in the group

and share Al-Anon-related announcements? Do I participate in group business meetings to keep the group informed and vibrant?

When I first started attending Al-Anon, I had only three face-to-face weekly meetings to choose from in a 40-mile radius, no matter the weather or any unexpected obligations that came up. After all these insights, I'm more grateful than ever for the many ways I can find recovery in an Al-Anon group—whether in person or online, almost anytime.

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