

Inside Al-Anon Family Groups

If I Am Aware, I Am Responsible

Years ago, I decided to branch out and find an additional meeting to attend in the town where I lived. There were limited choices in this relatively small community, including a local meeting I attended occasionally. What I experienced was a meeting that had one member who served as both the sole keyholder and the contact with the facility where the meeting was held. Each week, “Jim” unlocked the building, set up the room, and chaired the meeting. Others showed up and faithfully waited for him to start the meeting and announce the topic. This meeting was even referred to as “Jim’s meeting” by local members.

I knew I had choices. It would have been easy to simply stop attending this meeting, but I thought of the reminder on page 85 of *Hope for Today* (B-27): “In Al-Anon I’ve heard that if I am aware, I am responsible.” I was never comfortable speaking up before I found Al-Anon, but the program has helped me find my voice. I had to get out of my comfort zone and take a risk if I wanted things to change.

After regularly attending this meeting for several weeks, I decided to “Let It Begin with Me” and asked whether the group would consider having a business meeting to discuss some things about how the meeting was run. The group agreed, and I shared about how, at other meetings that I attended, the group would pass around a calendar so that members could sign up to chair. Jim’s response: “That would be wonderful.” He hadn’t set out to control the meeting; it had simply fallen into a rut.

Moving forward, a calendar was circulated each week, and members began to rotate the job of chairing the meeting, signing up in advance, and selecting a topic. Over the next few months, the meeting took on new life, proving that “participation is the key to harmony.” Over time, the group tripled in size. I am grateful that in Al-Anon, through the Traditions and the principle of participation in Concept Four, I am encouraged to voice my concerns at business meetings. By practicing these principles, I discovered that when I find the courage to speak up, I can contribute meaningfully and sometimes even make a significant impact. Members interested in finding out how groups conduct business meetings can find information in the section “Group Business and Health” on pages 46-49 of the 2026-2029 *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27).

By Margie S., Group Services Specialist

Reprinted with permission of Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., Virginia Beach, VA.