How to Host a Writing Workshop

Hosting or attending a writing workshop can feel intimidating. Many members may think, *I'm not a writer*, or *My words aren't as meaningful as someone else's*. Yet recovery has taught me that willingness matters more than perfection. A writing workshop can become a place where I meet myself honestly and invite my Higher Power into the process.

When I put pen to paper, writing can become a form of prayer and meditation. It gives me a way to practice Step Ten by taking an honest look at myself, Step Eleven by seeking conscious contact with my Higher Power, and Step Twelve by sharing my experience, strength, and hope with others. Just as Al-Anon meets me exactly where I am, writing does too.

Where and When

A writing workshop can happen anywhere Al-Anon recovery is taking place: at a convention, at a fellowship event for your home group, at the Al-Anon Information Service (AIS) office or Literature Distribution Center (LDC), as a part of an Alateen gathering, with a Sponsor or sponsees, or as part of a book study. You can also ask your Area *Forum* Coordinator or representative to help you host one. I try to remind myself that there is no wrong way to begin, so writing becomes another way for me to contribute to my recovery—one honest word, one sentence, one moment at a time.

How

When facilitating a writing workshop, I try to create an atmosphere of grace and acceptance. Members may write with pen and paper or use laptops, tablets, or phones when participating online. I try to make clear that the writing space is not a grammar class, critique circle, or where we air out our grievances. Instead, it's an opportunity to focus on ourselves and our recovery.

I "Let It Begin with Me" by reading a few unedited sentences of my own writing. This reminds me that connections are available when I am vulnerable. Just as in my meetings, no one expects perfection from me, only honest sharing.

I share a simple prompt and allow members time to write if they connect with it; I can offer others if they don't. If Alateens attend, I find that shorter expressions, such as quick

thoughts or reflections, work well. I like to think of the writing time as similar to the moment in a meeting before someone speaks, waiting for sharing to surface naturally with patience and care.

When members are ready, they may read exactly what they wrote. We listen without criticism, advice, or correction. We share what touches us and what we identify with, and I often discover that the experiences I thought were uniquely mine are often shared by others.

More Than Writing

What happens on the page can support my work in Steps Ten and Eleven. Writing can help me notice where I have grown, where I may need to clean things up, what fears need to be surrendered, or where gratitude is quietly waiting to be acknowledged. Sometimes I discover answers I wasn't looking for; other times, I simply become more aware of my need to trust my Higher Power.

Carrying the Message

Step Twelve reminds me that I keep recovery when I share it with others. After writing, I may share my reflections with my Sponsor, discuss an insight with my home group, or submit my sharing to *The Forum*. Each choice is recovery, and each choice carries the message and may help reach someone else who needs to know they are not alone.

Finding Inspiration

Conference Approved Literature (CAL) offers many opportunities for reflection. The questions in *Paths to Recovery* (B-24) and *A Little Time for Myself* (B-34), among others, are helpful. Prompts can also come from Al-Anon slogans, a topic from a recent meeting, a Legacy that resonates with you, or the warm words from your Sponsor. You can also browse previous issues of *The Forum* or posts from the Member Blog for inspiration. Use CAL and Al-Anon posts as examples of how to apply the program tools and principles and for connection and reassurance that there are many ways to experience recovery. With an open mind, I often find that the next thing I need to write about is the next thing I need to learn.

Sharing Your Writing

If you choose to submit your writing to *The Forum,* follow *The Forum Writing Guidelines* (F-1) and consider asking your *Forum* Coordinator or local representative for support. When your words are ready, visit al-anon.org/sharing to submit to *The Forum*.

The World Service Office edits for grammar, punctuation, and clarity. Your recovery experience remains your own. Our honest, personal, recovery-shaped voices can become exactly the message someone else needs to hear. In sharing, I keep recovery alive for myself and offer hope to someone who may need it today.

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