

The NA Meeting Chairperson

A Practical Guide to Maintaining an Atmosphere of Recovery

Purpose of This Guide

This guide is intended to help Narcotics Anonymous members understand the role of a meeting chairperson and prepare to serve effectively. It may be used during a chairperson workshop, reviewed before chairing a meeting, or kept as a reference for future service.

This is a locally developed workshop resource. It is not intended to replace a group's meeting format, group conscience, guidelines, or current NA service materials. Every chairperson should become familiar with the specific practices of the group they are serving.

What Is a Chairperson?

A chairperson of a Narcotics Anonymous recovery meeting is an addict who has been entrusted with the primary responsibility of guiding the meeting and helping maintain an atmosphere of recovery.

The chairperson opens the meeting, follows the group-approved format, introduces readings or speakers, recognizes members who wish to share, helps manage the available time, responds appropriately to disruptions, and closes the meeting according to the group's customary practice.

The chairperson is not the owner of the meeting, the supervisor of the members, or the ultimate authority in the room. The chairperson is a trusted servant.

A good chairperson does not attempt to control every person or every moment. Instead, the chairperson provides enough structure for the NA message to be heard and for members to participate safely, respectfully, and fairly.

Primarily Responsible Does Not Mean Solely Responsible

There is an important difference between being primarily responsible and being solely responsible.

The chairperson is primarily responsible for guiding the meeting, but every member present shares responsibility for the atmosphere of recovery.

Each of us is responsible for:

- Our own conduct.
- Respecting the meeting format.
- Allowing others an opportunity to share.
- Avoiding disruptive conversations.
- Welcoming newcomers.
- Supporting the chairperson.
- Helping newer members understand how NA meetings operate.
- Placing the group's primary purpose ahead of personal preferences.
- Responding appropriately when safety is threatened.

Making one person solely responsible for the entire meeting would place that person above the group and create the impression that the chairperson is an authority figure. NA service does not work that way.

The chairperson serves the group. The chairperson does not govern the group.

The Chairperson as a Trusted Servant

Chairing a meeting is an act of service.

The chairperson has been trusted with a responsibility, but that responsibility does not grant personal authority over other members. The chairperson's authority comes from the meeting format, the group's guidelines, the group conscience, and the spiritual principles of NA.

A chairperson should avoid:

- Making up new rules during the meeting.
- Changing the meeting format based on personal preference.
- Using the chair to settle personal disagreements.
- Correcting, embarrassing, or humiliating members.
- Giving special treatment to friends.
- Silencing members merely because they disagree with the chairperson.
- Using the position to gain attention or recognition.
- Acting as though the meeting belongs to them.

A chairperson should seek to be firm without becoming controlling, flexible without becoming careless, and loving without avoiding necessary action.

Guiding Traditions and Concepts

Several Traditions and Concepts can help us understand the spiritual foundation of chairing a meeting.

Tradition Two

“For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.”

Tradition Two reminds us that the chairperson serves the group conscience. The chairperson is not the ultimate authority and should not govern the members.

The group establishes the meeting format and expectations. The chairperson carries out that responsibility as faithfully as possible.

Tradition Twelve

“Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.”

Tradition Twelve reminds the chairperson to treat members fairly regardless of friendship, popularity, clean time, reputation, personality, or service position.

The same meeting guidelines should apply to everyone.

Placing principles before personalities may mean allowing someone we dislike to share, redirecting someone we admire, or asking a close friend to stop disruptive behavior.

Concept Four

“Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.”

Concept Four reminds us that leadership matters. A chairperson should develop qualities such as patience, courage, humility, fairness, reliability, open-mindedness, good judgment, and the ability to communicate clearly.

Effective leadership in NA is not domination. It is service guided by spiritual principles.

Concept Five

“For each responsibility assigned to the service structure, a single point of decision and accountability should be clearly defined.”

Concept Five helps explain why one person is assigned to chair the meeting. The group needs someone who can make necessary decisions during the meeting and remain accountable for carrying out the format.

The chairperson may need to decide:

- When to begin.
- When to move to the next part of the format.
- How to manage limited sharing time.
- When to interrupt disruptive conduct.
- Whether a brief recess is necessary.
- Whether additional help should be requested.
- Whether a serious safety concern requires the meeting to end.

The chairperson should make these decisions carefully and remain accountable to the group.

Why Do We Need Chairpeople?

NA meetings bring together people with different personalities, experiences, needs, emotions, communication styles, and amounts of clean time.

Without structure, a small number of people could dominate the meeting. Members with quieter personalities might never have an opportunity to participate. Side conversations could distract from the message. Personal arguments could take over the room. The meeting could become confusing or unsafe.

We give the chairperson primary responsibility for maintaining order so that the NA message of recovery can be heard without unnecessary obstruction.

A chairperson helps the group:

- Begin and end on time.
- Follow its established format.
- Create opportunities for members to participate.
- Keep the meeting focused on recovery.
- Prevent one person from dominating the available time.
- Protect the anonymity and dignity of members.
- Welcome newcomers.
- Respond to disruptions.

- Maintain reasonable safety.
- Carry the message of recovery.

If every member could speak whenever they wanted, as often as they wanted, and for as long as they wanted, members with the strongest personalities would receive most of the available time.

Structure is not intended to restrict recovery. Structure helps make recovery available to everyone.

The Importance of Following the Meeting Format

Most NA groups use a meeting format approved through the group's business meeting or group conscience.

The format may include:

- An opening prayer.
- A moment of silence.
- NA readings.
- Introductions.
- Recognition of newcomers.
- Clean-time recognition.
- Announcements.
- A speaker, topic, reading, or discussion.
- Member sharing.
- A closing statement or prayer.

Before chairing, the chairperson should know:

- Where the current format is kept.
- Whether the format has recently changed.
- Which readings are used.
- How readers are selected.
- How the meeting handles newcomers.
- Whether sharing has a time limit.
- Whether members are called on or share voluntarily.
- Whether the meeting is open or closed.
- Whether children or nonmembers are permitted.
- How announcements are handled.
- What time the meeting must end.
- Who can provide help if a problem occurs.

A chairperson should not rely only on memory. Even experienced chairpeople should keep the written format in front of them.

Following the format helps create consistency. Members know what to expect, and the chairperson is less likely to forget an important part of the meeting.

Who Can Be a Chairperson?

Any NA member with a desire to serve may be able to chair, provided they meet the requirements established by the group.

Different groups may have different requirements. A group may:

- Establish a clean-time requirement.
- Elect chairpeople at a business meeting.
- Maintain a rotating chairperson schedule.
- Ask members to co-chair before chairing alone.
- Require membership in the home group.
- Ask a chairperson to attend the business meeting.
- Require familiarity with the meeting format.
- Ask chairpeople to arrive early.
- Establish additional expectations based on the needs of the meeting.

The responsibilities of a chairperson should be taken seriously. Suffering addicts and recovering addicts are depending on the meeting to carry a clear message of recovery.

At the same time, members should not be discouraged from serving because they are nervous or inexperienced. Chairing is a skill that develops through preparation, practice, observation, and loving guidance from other members.

Suggested Qualities and Preparation

The following qualities are helpful for anyone who wishes to chair:

- A working knowledge of the Twelve Traditions of NA.
- Participation in an active program of recovery.
- A willingness to follow the group conscience.
- Dependability.
- Patience.
- Tolerance.
- Humility.
- Fairness.

- Courage.
- Good listening skills.
- The ability to communicate clearly.
- The willingness to be assertive when necessary.
- The ability to express boundaries in a loving manner.
- The willingness to ask for help.
- The willingness to fulfill the commitment to open, chair, and close the meeting.

A chairperson does not need to be perfect. A chairperson does need to be prepared, teachable, and willing to place the needs of the meeting ahead of personal comfort.

Before the Meeting

A successful meeting often begins before the chairperson says the first word.

Arrive Early

The chairperson should arrive early enough to prepare without rushing. Depending on the group, arriving 20 to 30 minutes early may be appropriate.

Arriving early allows time to:

- Locate the meeting format.
- Confirm the starting and ending times.
- Speak with the secretary or other trusted servants.
- Make sure the room is reasonably arranged.
- Locate readings.
- Identify volunteers to read.
- Check microphones or virtual-meeting equipment.
- Review announcements.
- Learn about any special circumstances.
- Welcome members as they arrive.
- Calm personal nervousness before the meeting begins.

Review the Format

Read the entire meeting format before the meeting begins, even if you have chaired many times.

Look for:

- Special instructions.

- Time limits.
- Required announcements.
- Changes approved by the group.
- Instructions concerning disruptive behavior.
- Instructions for recognizing newcomers.
- Directions for closing the meeting.

Ask for Help Before It Is Needed

Identify members who can assist if a difficult situation occurs.

Depending on the group, this may include:

- The group secretary.
- A home group member.
- The facility contact.
- A greeter.
- A meeting marshal or safety contact.
- An experienced member.
- A member familiar with virtual-meeting controls.

The chairperson should not wait until a disruption becomes serious to discover that no one knows who is available to help.

Prepare Yourself Spiritually

Before opening the meeting, take a moment to become centered.

You may quietly ask for:

- Patience.
- Courage.
- Humility.
- Good judgment.
- Freedom from personal resentment.
- The ability to listen.
- The willingness to serve rather than perform.
- The ability to place principles before personalities.

The goal is not to deliver a perfect performance. The goal is to serve the group and help create an atmosphere in which recovery can take place.

Opening the Meeting

Begin at the time established by the group whenever possible.

Speak loudly and clearly enough for the room to hear. Avoid rushing through the opening.

A chairperson may begin by saying:

“Welcome to the _____ Group of Narcotics Anonymous. My name is _____, and I am an addict. I will be serving as your chairperson for this meeting.”

From there, follow the written format exactly unless an immediate safety concern requires otherwise.

Helpful Opening Practices

- Make eye contact with the room when possible.
- Speak at a steady pace.
- Pause after important instructions.
- Avoid adding lengthy personal commentary.
- Explain unfamiliar procedures briefly.
- Make sure newcomers understand how the meeting works.
- Use the language contained in the group’s format.
- Do not assume everyone can hear or understand what is happening.

Selecting Members to Read

Some groups ask for volunteers to read. Other groups select readers before the meeting.

When asking for readers:

- Speak clearly.
- State the name of the reading.
- Allow enough time for someone to volunteer.
- Avoid pressuring a member who appears uncomfortable.
- Thank the reader after they finish.
- Make sure the correct reading is being used.
- Help a member locate the reading when necessary.

When possible, include a variety of members rather than relying on the same people every week.

Newer members may benefit from being invited to participate, but they should not be embarrassed or forced.

A chairperson might say:

“Would anyone be willing to read ‘Who Is an Addict?’”

Or:

“We would like to invite newer members to participate in the readings. Please raise your hand if you would like to read.”

Welcoming Newcomers

The newcomer is especially important in an NA meeting.

The chairperson should help newcomers feel welcomed without placing them under a spotlight or pressuring them to disclose personal information.

A chairperson may:

- Explain that members introduce themselves by first name.
- Clarify that no one is required to share.
- Briefly explain how the meeting works.
- Point out available literature.
- Encourage members to speak with the newcomer after the meeting.
- Follow the group’s customary practice for newcomer recognition.
- Avoid questioning the newcomer about substances, legal issues, treatment status, or personal history.

The chairperson should avoid making promises that NA cannot guarantee. We can offer experience, strength, hope, fellowship, and a message of recovery. We should not promise that every problem will immediately disappear.

Introducing the Meeting Topic or Speaker

If the meeting is a topic-discussion meeting, state the topic clearly and briefly.

Avoid giving a second full share before opening the meeting for participation. A chairperson may offer a short explanation, but the chairperson’s role is to guide the meeting, not occupy most of the meeting.

For example:

“Tonight’s topic is willingness. We invite members to share their experience with becoming willing, the obstacles they have faced, and how willingness supports their recovery.”

If the meeting includes a speaker, confirm beforehand:

- The speaker’s name.
- The expected length of the share.
- Whether a warning or signal will be given near the end.
- Whether the meeting opens for sharing afterward.
- How the speaker wishes to be introduced.

Keep the introduction respectful and brief.

Managing Sharing Time

One of the chairperson’s most important responsibilities is helping members share the available time fairly.

The chairperson should know:

- The total time available for sharing.
- Whether the group uses a timer.
- The suggested or required sharing limit.
- Whether members may share more than once.
- Whether newcomers receive priority.
- Whether the chairperson calls on members.
- Whether the meeting ends exactly on time.

Explaining the Sharing Guidelines

State the group’s expectations before sharing begins.

For example:

“To allow as many members as possible to participate, please limit your share to approximately five minutes.”

Or:

“We ask that members share only once until everyone who wishes to share has had an opportunity.”

Using a Timer

If the group uses a timer:

- Explain how it works.
- Give a respectful warning.
- Apply the same limit consistently.
- Avoid using the timer as a weapon.
- Do not embarrass members when their time expires.

Sample language:

“You have about one minute remaining.”

“Please begin wrapping up your share so we can hear from other members.”

“Thank you. We need to move to the next member.”

Some members will stop immediately. Others may continue. When necessary, the chairperson may need to repeat the direction more firmly.

Calling on Members Fairly

When the chairperson selects members to share, fairness is important.

Consider:

- Members who have not yet shared.
- Newcomers who wish to participate.
- Members who may be overlooked because they are quiet.
- The order in which hands were raised.
- The amount of time remaining.
- Whether a member has already shared.

Avoid consistently calling on friends first or allowing the loudest members to control the meeting.

Fair does not always mean perfectly equal. The chairperson may need to use judgment. However, the chairperson should be able to explain that judgment through the needs of the meeting rather than personal preference.

Keeping the Meeting Focused on Recovery

Members may share about painful, emotional, or complicated experiences. The chairperson should not interrupt merely because a share is uncomfortable.

However, the chairperson may need to redirect sharing that becomes:

- Threatening.
- Graphic in a way that seriously disrupts the meeting.
- Focused on promoting outside organizations.
- A personal attack on another member.
- An argument with someone in the room.
- An attempt to give medical, legal, or professional instructions.
- A prolonged discussion unrelated to recovery.
- An effort to recruit members into a business, religion, political cause, or outside program.
- A violation of the group's clearly stated guidelines.

A respectful redirection might be:

"Please bring your share back to your personal experience and recovery."

"We ask members to avoid directing their share at another person."

"Please share from your own experience rather than giving advice to another member."

"We need to keep the meeting focused on recovery."

Crosstalk

Groups define crosstalk in different ways. The chairperson should follow the group's understanding and meeting format.

Crosstalk may include:

- Interrupting another person's share.
- Responding directly to another member.
- Arguing with something another member said.
- Giving unsolicited advice.
- Holding a side conversation while someone is sharing.
- Making jokes or comments about another member's share.
- Speaking across the room.
- Correcting another person's recovery.

Not every reference to another share is necessarily harmful. Some members naturally identify with what they have heard. The chairperson should use the group's guidelines rather than personal preference.

A chairperson may say:

“Please avoid responding directly to another member’s share.”

“We ask that members share from their own experience.”

“Please allow the member to finish without interruption.”

“Let’s stop the side conversation so everyone can hear.”

Side Conversations and Minor Disturbances

Not every disturbance requires an interruption from the chairperson.

A useful rule of thumb is:

If the disturbance is brief, minor, and not noticeable to most of the group, it may be best to ignore it.

Reacting to every dropped object, whisper, late arrival, ringing phone, or movement can create more disruption than the original behavior.

The chairperson should ask:

- Is the meeting still able to continue?
- Can most members still hear?
- Is anyone in danger?
- Is the behavior likely to stop on its own?
- Would addressing it create a larger disturbance?
- Is another trusted servant already handling it quietly?

A chairperson should respond to the effect of the behavior, not simply to personal irritation.

Handling Persistent Disruptions

When a disruption continues or interferes with the meeting, the chairperson may need to address it.

Begin with the least forceful response likely to work.

Level One: Pause

Stop speaking and allow the room to become quiet.

Sometimes a brief pause is enough for members to recognize that they are disturbing the meeting.

Level Two: General Reminder

Address the room without identifying a specific person.

“Please help us maintain an atmosphere of recovery.”

“We need everyone’s cooperation so members can hear.”

“Please hold side conversations until after the meeting.”

Level Three: Direct but Respectful Request

If the behavior continues, address the individual clearly.

“Excuse me. We are trying to have a meeting. Please stop the conversation.”

“I need to ask you to allow the member to finish sharing.”

“Please lower your voice or step outside until you are ready to return.”

Level Four: Request Assistance

The chairperson may ask another home group member or trusted servant to speak privately with the person.

This allows the chairperson to continue guiding the meeting.

Level Five: Brief Recess

If order cannot be restored while the meeting continues, the chairperson may call a brief recess if the group’s practices permit it.

For example:

“We are going to pause the meeting for five minutes. Please remain calm while home group members address the situation.”

The meeting may restart with a moment of silence, an opening prayer, or another portion of the format chosen by the group.

Level Six: Adjourn the Meeting

In the most severe circumstances, it may be necessary to end the meeting early.

The chairperson might say:

“For the safety of everyone present, we are ending the meeting at this time. Please follow the directions of the facility staff or home group members.”

Ending a meeting early should be a last resort, but the safety of members is more important than completing every part of the format.

Disruptive and Violent Behavior

Disruptive behavior and violent behavior are not the same.

A member who talks loudly, interrupts, paces, cries, argues, or appears emotionally distressed may be disruptive without being violent.

Violent behavior may include:

- Threatening physical harm.
- Attempting to strike someone.
- Displaying or reaching for a weapon.
- Destroying property.
- Blocking exits.
- Stalking or cornering another member.
- Making credible threats.
- Fighting.
- Creating an immediate danger to people in the room.

The chairperson should become familiar with current NA service material concerning disruptive and violent behavior and with any safety plan established by the group or facility.

General Safety Principles

- Do not attempt to physically restrain someone unless immediate action is necessary to prevent serious harm and you are capable of doing so safely.
- Do not surround or provoke an agitated person.
- Keep exits accessible.

- Use calm, simple language.
- Avoid arguing about whether the person's behavior is justified.
- Ask experienced members or facility personnel for help.
- Follow the location's emergency procedures.
- Contact emergency services when there is an immediate threat to life or safety.
- Protect children and vulnerable members.
- Move the meeting or dismiss members if necessary.
- Document and discuss the incident afterward through the appropriate group process.

The chairperson is not expected to function as a police officer, therapist, medical provider, or professional crisis worker.

The chairperson's responsibility is to use reasonable judgment, request help, and protect the meeting to the greatest extent possible.

Responding to Anger and Arguments

Arguments can quickly shift the focus away from recovery.

If two members begin arguing, the chairperson should intervene early.

Possible language includes:

"We are not going to debate this during the meeting."

"Please direct your comments to the chair and not to one another."

"We need both of you to stop so the meeting can continue."

"You are welcome to discuss this respectfully after the meeting, but the argument cannot continue here."

If the argument continues, ask one or both members to step outside with experienced home group members.

Do not attempt to decide who is right during the meeting. The immediate goal is to restore the atmosphere of recovery.

When a Member Is Emotionally Overwhelmed

A member may cry, panic, express intense grief, or reveal a serious personal crisis.

Strong emotion alone is not necessarily a disruption. NA meetings should allow members to speak honestly.

The chairperson should avoid rushing to silence someone merely because the room feels uncomfortable.

Helpful responses may include:

- Allowing a brief pause.
- Offering tissues or water.
- Asking whether the member wants another member to sit with them.
- Inviting an experienced member to speak with them outside.
- Reminding the group to avoid giving unsolicited advice.
- Continuing the meeting when it is appropriate.

If the member expresses an immediate intention to harm themselves or someone else, treat the statement seriously. Request help, follow the facility's procedures, and contact emergency services when necessary.

When a Member Appears Under the Influence

A person does not need to be clean to attend many NA meetings. The desire to stop using is what matters.

However, behavior may still need to be addressed.

The chairperson should focus on conduct, not attempt to diagnose whether someone has used.

A person who appears impaired but is sitting quietly may not require intervention.

Intervention may be necessary if the person:

- Interrupts repeatedly.
- Cannot remain reasonably quiet.
- Threatens others.
- Attempts to distribute substances.
- Harasses members.
- Creates a medical emergency.
- Is unable to remain conscious.
- Becomes physically unsafe.

Respond to the behavior in the same fair manner that would apply to any other member.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

The chairperson helps protect the atmosphere of anonymity.

A chairperson should not:

- Ask members to reveal more personal information than the format requires.
- Announce someone's full name without permission.
- Discuss who attended the meeting with outsiders.
- Photograph or record members
- Repeat personal shares as gossip.
- Publicly identify a member's treatment, legal, medical, or family situation.
- Allow visitors to collect names or personal information

At the same time, anonymity should not be used to ignore an immediate threat of harm. Safety concerns may require contacting appropriate help.

Chairing Hybrid and Virtual Meetings

Virtual and hybrid meetings require additional preparation.

The chairperson should know:

- Who controls the meeting platform.
- How members raise their hands.
- How readers are selected.
- How members are muted and unmuted.
- What to do if an inappropriate image or message appears.
- How screen sharing is controlled.
- Whether the meeting is recorded.
- How anonymity is protected.
- Who can remove a disruptive participant.
- What happens if the chairperson loses their connection.

Helpful virtual-meeting reminders may include:

"Please remain muted when you are not sharing."

"Use the raise-hand feature if you would like to share."

"Please avoid displaying full names if doing so creates an anonymity concern."

"We ask members not to record or photograph the meeting."

A virtual host may need to mute or remove a disruptive participant. These controls should be used according to the group's conscience and not based on personal disagreement.

Remaining Neutral While Chairing

The chairperson may have strong personal feelings about something shared during the meeting.

The chairperson should not use the chair to:

- Rebut a member's share.
- Correct another member's understanding of recovery.
- Defend a friend.
- Attack someone with whom they disagree.
- Give a final opinion after every share.
- Show visible approval or disapproval.
- Turn the meeting into a personal lesson.

Remaining neutral does not mean ignoring threats, harassment, discrimination, or serious disruption. It means responding to behavior through the meeting's principles and guidelines rather than personal emotion.

Common Chairing Mistakes

Talking Too Much

The chairperson may unintentionally turn every transition into a speech.

Better practice: Keep instructions clear and brief. Allow the members to carry the meeting.

Apologizing Constantly

Nervous chairpeople sometimes apologize after every minor mistake.

Better practice: Correct the mistake, continue, and remain focused.

Reading Too Quickly

Rushing can make important information difficult to understand.

Better practice: Slow down, breathe, and pause between sections.

Being Afraid to Interrupt

Some chairpeople allow serious disruptions because they fear upsetting someone.

Better practice: Use respectful, direct language before the situation becomes worse.

Correcting Every Minor Behavior

Some chairpeople react to every whisper, movement, or late arrival.

Better practice: Address behavior only when it meaningfully affects the meeting.

Applying Rules Inconsistently

Allowing friends to exceed the sharing limit while interrupting others damages trust.

Better practice: Apply the format as consistently as possible.

Changing the Format

A chairperson may skip sections or add personal material without group approval.

Better practice: Follow the written format and bring proposed changes to the business meeting.

Trying to Handle Everything Alone

A chairperson may feel that asking for help shows weakness.

Better practice: Asking for help is responsible service.

Embarrassing a Member

Sarcasm, public correction, or humiliation can damage the atmosphere of recovery.

Better practice: Use neutral language and speak privately when possible.

Forgetting the Newcomer

The meeting may become focused on experienced members, service issues, or inside jokes.

Better practice: Remember that the newcomer may be hearing the NA message for the first time.

Helpful Phrases for Chairpeople

Beginning the Meeting

"Welcome to the _____ Group of Narcotics Anonymous."

"My name is _____, and I am an addict. I will be serving as your chairperson."

"Please help us begin on time by taking your seats and ending side conversations."

Requesting Readers

"Would someone be willing to read _____?"

"Thank you for reading."

"Would a newer member like to participate by reading?"

Explaining Sharing

"Please share from your own experience."

"To allow more members to participate, please limit your share to approximately _____ minutes."

"Please share only once until everyone has had an opportunity."

Redirecting a Share

"Please bring your share back to your personal recovery."

"We ask members to avoid directing comments toward another person."

"Please share your experience rather than giving advice."

"We need to keep the meeting focused on recovery."

Addressing Side Conversations

“Please hold side conversations until after the meeting.”

“We are having difficulty hearing the person who is sharing.”

“Please help us maintain an atmosphere of recovery.”

Ending a Long Share

“You have about one minute remaining.”

“Please begin wrapping up so we can hear from other members.”

“Thank you. We need to move to the next member.”

Addressing an Argument

“We are not going to debate during the meeting.”

“Please stop directing comments toward one another.”

“The meeting cannot continue while this argument is taking place.”

Requesting Someone Step Outside

“I need to ask you to step outside with a home group member so the meeting can continue.”

“You are welcome to return when you are ready to participate without disrupting the meeting.”

Calling a Recess

“We are going to take a five-minute recess while home group members address the situation.”

“Please remain calm and allow the trusted servants to assist.”

Ending the Meeting Early

“For the safety of everyone present, we are ending the meeting at this time.”

“Please leave calmly and follow the directions of the facility or home group members.”

Closing the Meeting

Monitor the time so the meeting can close according to the group's format.

Before closing:

- Complete required announcements.
- Thank readers, speakers, and participants when appropriate.
- Welcome newcomers again if the format calls for it.
- Encourage members to stay and speak with one another.
- Follow the group's closing procedure.
- Avoid adding a lengthy final share.

A chairperson may say:

"We have reached the end of our sharing time. Thank you to everyone who participated and helped maintain an atmosphere of recovery."

Then continue with the group-approved closing format.

After the Meeting

The chairperson's responsibility does not always end with the closing prayer.

After the meeting:

- Return the format and readings to their proper location.
- Help restore the room.
- Report serious incidents to the appropriate trusted servants.
- Check on newcomers when appropriate.
- Thank members who assisted.
- Discuss questions with the group secretary or experienced members.
- Reflect on what went well.
- Consider what could be handled differently next time.
- Bring policy concerns to the business meeting rather than changing the format alone.

Do not turn a post-meeting discussion into gossip about members.

When reviewing an incident, focus on:

- What occurred.
- How it affected the meeting.
- What actions were taken.
- Whether those actions were effective.
- Whether the group needs a clearer plan.
- What spiritual principles can guide future responses.

Chairperson Checklist

Before the Meeting

- ☐ I know the meeting's starting and ending times.
- ☐ I arrived early enough to prepare.
- ☐ I located the current meeting format.
- ☐ I reviewed the entire format.
- ☐ I located the readings.
- ☐ I know how readers will be selected.
- ☐ I reviewed the sharing guidelines.
- ☐ I know whether the group uses a timer.
- ☐ I know how newcomers are welcomed.
- ☐ I reviewed the announcements.
- ☐ I identified experienced members who can help.
- ☐ I know the facility's safety and emergency procedures.
- ☐ I took a moment to become spiritually centered.
- ☐ I am willing to follow the group conscience rather than my personal preferences.

During the Meeting

- ☐ I began the meeting on time.
- ☐ I introduced myself and the meeting clearly.
- ☐ I followed the written format.
- ☐ I spoke slowly and clearly.
- ☐ I welcomed newcomers without embarrassing them.
- ☐ I explained the sharing guidelines.
- ☐ I treated members fairly.
- ☐ I monitored the time.
- ☐ I avoided giving a personal speech after every share.
- ☐ I addressed significant disruptions calmly.
- ☐ I ignored minor disturbances that did not affect the meeting.
- ☐ I asked for help when necessary.
- ☐ I remained firm without becoming disrespectful.
- ☐ I kept the meeting focused on recovery.
- ☐ I remembered that I am a trusted servant, not an authority over the members.

After the Meeting

- ☐ I closed according to the group's format.
- ☐ I returned the readings and format.

- ☐ I helped restore the room.
- ☐ I welcomed or spoke with newcomers when appropriate.
- ☐ I reported serious concerns to the proper trusted servants.
- ☐ I avoided gossiping about members or their shares.
- ☐ I reflected honestly on my service.
- ☐ I asked for feedback when needed.
- ☐ I will bring format or policy concerns to the business meeting.

Personal Chairperson Preparation Questions

Before chairing, ask yourself:

1. Am I familiar with this group's format?
2. Do I understand the group's sharing guidelines?
3. Do I know when the meeting must end?
4. Am I prepared to follow the group conscience even when I disagree?
5. Can I remain fair toward members I like and members I find difficult?
6. Am I willing to interrupt behavior that seriously disrupts the meeting?
7. Am I also willing to ignore minor behavior that does not require attention?
8. Do I know who can assist me if a problem occurs?
9. Am I prepared to welcome the newcomer?
10. Can I serve without making the meeting about me?
11. Am I willing to admit when I make a mistake?
12. Am I willing to ask for help?

Spiritual Principles of Effective Chairing

Humility

We remember that the meeting does not belong to us. We serve the group rather than attempting to control it.

Courage

We speak when something must be addressed, even when doing so feels uncomfortable.

Patience

We allow members time to participate and avoid reacting impulsively.

Tolerance

We make room for different personalities, communication styles, and levels of experience.

Responsibility

We prepare, arrive on time, follow the format, and fulfill our commitment.

Accountability

We remain answerable to the group and are willing to review our decisions.

Fairness

We apply the meeting's guidelines consistently rather than favoring particular members.

Compassion

We remember that disruptive behavior may come from pain, fear, confusion, illness, or lack of experience.

Discernment

We learn the difference between behavior that is merely irritating and behavior that genuinely threatens the atmosphere of recovery.

Unity

We place the welfare of the meeting ahead of personal disagreements.

Anonymity

We place principles before personalities and protect the dignity of every member.

Service

We chair because we want the NA message to be available to the addict who still suffers.

Final Thoughts

Chairing an NA meeting is both a practical responsibility and a spiritual opportunity.

A chairperson helps create a structure in which addicts can hear the message of recovery, identify with one another, share honestly, and experience the unity of the fellowship.

The chairperson will not handle every situation perfectly. Mistakes are part of learning. Effective chairpeople remain willing to prepare, listen, accept guidance, ask for help, and improve.

We do not chair to become important. We chair because the meeting is important.

We do not chair to control addicts. We chair so addicts have a place where recovery can be heard.

We do not chair alone. The entire group shares responsibility for maintaining an atmosphere of recovery and carrying the NA message to the addict who still suffers.

LRG Chairperson Checklist

Before the meeting - recruit help as needed

- ☐ Arrive 30-45 minutes early
- ☐ Designate 1-2+ volunteers as door greeters
- ☐ Start coffee
- ☐ Ask for volunteers moving chairs
- ☐ Distribute the readings
- ☐ Look for envelopes in binder, and pens in 7th tradition basket
- ☐ If missing envelope or pens, look in the black cabinet under coffee maker
- ☐ Find KANA meeting schedules and pens, for newcomers
- ☐ Engage in fellowship, especially with newcomers

During the meeting

- ☐ Use the meeting format voted on by Group Conscience - please do not go off-script
- ☐ Start the meeting on time
- ☐ Thank addicts after reading/sharing
- ☐ Flag people down when approaching the 5-minute mark
- ☐ If there is silence, call on addicts to share
- ☐ Write down meeting and 7th tradition stats on money envelope and back of binder
- ☐ **FOR ALL NEWCOMERS:** Ask a home group member to pass around a KANA meeting schedule and a pen for addicts to write phone numbers down (men vs women)

After the meeting - recruit help as needed

- ☐ Drop money envelope in safe
- ☐ Engage in fellowship, especially with newcomers
- ☐ Make sure chairs are restored to proper room correctly
- ☐ Announce that you are pouring out coffee in case any addicts want to top off
- ☐ Turn off coffee, and clean coffee pot and coffee filter
- ☐ Clean up any mess at coffee pot, especially liquid or sugar
- ☐ Scan the room for any trash
- ☐ Check trash can in the room and if needed, take trash out and replace trash bag
- ☐ Lock front glass door to the big room
- ☐ Turn off big room lights and little room lights
- ☐ Lock the little room and the metal door to the big room
- ☐ Empty ashtrays outside - check for lit butts first
- ☐ Turn off the patio lights
- ☐ Make sure home group member stays until last addict leaves