

Anonymity



Debtors Anonymous • Conference-Approved Literature

"We practice anonymity, which allows us freedom of expression by assuring us that what we say at meetings or to other D.A. members at any time will not be repeated."

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

—Twelfth Tradition of Debtors Anonymous

Anonymity is an important principle in the Debtors Anonymous program of recovery; it takes on different meanings depending on the circumstances. On a personal level, anonymity means that D.A. members do not reveal the names of anyone we see at meetings nor what is shared at meetings. This safeguard protects all members from identification as compulsive debtors and provides the assurance that what we share is not repeated. This is very important for all of us, and is usually a newcomer's special concern.

At the media level, anonymity means we do not disclose our membership in D.A. in the press, TV, film, or any other media. On this level, anonymity promotes the equality of all members in the fellowship and helps to further develop the humility that is so important to our recovery. As a spiritual principle, anonymity is part of the practice of humility and gratitude. "Principles before personalities" is a statement of our willingness to trust that we are equal and that our higher power speaks through all of us, without judgment. No one person speaks as an authority on the program. No position in society exemplifies spiritual principles better than others.

Personal Anonymity

Most compulsive debtors are ashamed of the circumstances of their lives when they arrive at D.A. Newcomers may be fearful that others will find out about their problems. Most of us kept money problems and feelings to ourselves before joining D.A. However, our program suggests that sharing our secrets helps us to change destructive patterns in our lives. Confidentiality, one aspect of anonymity, is important because it makes sharing about our problems easier.

Without such protection, many debtors might avoid attending meetings or sharing at meetings. Because meetings are a key tool in our recovery, they need to be a safe haven for all of us. D.A. suggests that members use only their first names at meetings and respect the anonymity of other members. This does not mean, however, that we always hide our last names from other members. At times, we may choose to reveal our last name.

Revealing Your D.A. Membership

Individual members may reveal their D.A. affiliation with friends and family. When we disclose our membership to others some of us find it helpful to let them know that the information is something that we would prefer to share only with the people we choose. We also inform them that no revelation of our membership is to be made at the media level.

The D.A. program is a program of attraction, and many new members come to a meeting because they met a member and liked what the member said or did. Therefore, many of us believe that when we

meet someone who is looking for help, it is appropriate to reveal our D.A. membership. However, this is an entirely personal matter. When we have doubts we consult with friends or a sponsor about making such decisions.

Respecting the Personal Anonymity of Others

On a personal level, anonymity means that if we see people in meetings whom we know as friends, acquaintances or public figures, we do not reveal it to anyone. These people are in the meeting for the same reason we are. We respect their right to remain anonymous and expect the same in return.

Anonymity applies as much to the things shared as it does to the person sharing. Therefore, in addition to respecting an individual's need to keep his or her identity anonymous, we do not reveal the substance of what they share. Also, when we leave the meeting, we avoid gossip and criticism of one another.

Anonymity at the Media Level

Since its beginning in 1976, the story of D.A. has appeared in newspapers, magazines, television, and internet. These are very effective ways of carrying the message to others and membership has always increased after a story appears. D.A. suggests that when talking with the media, anonymity is preserved by only revealing first names and never having photos or pictures published or broadcast. It is the responsibility of the individual members, not the media, to maintain this tradition.

Many D.A. members have spoken to the media and have been quoted in articles. At those times D.A.

stresses precaution be taken to preserve the individual's anonymity. For example, in one meeting a local news team showed up at the meeting site right before the meeting began and asked if they could tape the meeting. Of course, this would not be in accordance with the tradition of anonymity at the media level and the camera crew was sent away. However, later arrangements were made with the same television station to tape a meeting of people who volunteered to participate with the promise that their faces would not be revealed and their last names would not be used. This is an acceptable way to provide the public with information about the program without undermining the tradition of anonymity.

It is the D.A. organization that we wish to make known, not its individual members. Anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV and film deters members from speaking out as the purported voice of D.A. or capitalizing on their D.A. membership. D.A. members adhere to the tradition of anonymity because, in our experience, and in the experience of other twelve step programs, anonymity helps the fellowship flourish.

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The Twelve Steps of Debtors Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over debt—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to compulsive debtors, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Traditions of Debtors Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon D.A. unity.
2. 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.
3. The only requirement for D.A. membership is a desire to stop incurring unsecured debt.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or D.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the debtor who still suffers.
6. A D.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the D.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every D.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Debtors Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. D.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Debtors Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the D.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
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