

SERVICE

Debtors Anonymous • Conference-Approved Literature

"We perform service at every level: personal, meeting, Intergroup and World Service. Service is vital to our recovery. Only through service can we give to others what has been so generously given to us."

What Is Service?

To serve means to render assistance, be of use, or help. *Service*, then, means assistance to an individual or a group. We help other D.A. members by attending meetings, listening, and sharing our own experiences. We help the group by performing tasks such as chairing or leading the meeting, being treasurer, or taking notes at a business meeting. In D.A. we learn to define service as giving to others what we have so generously been given.

The primary purpose of our fellowship is to carry the message to other compulsive debtors who still suffer, so any service, no matter how small, is important. Helping to set up and put away chairs or taking telephone calls from other D.A. members are simple ways in which we can give service right from the beginning. We are encouraged to give what we can, when we can.

Why Give Service?

For many of us, life has seemed a struggle to get and keep what we could for ourselves. We sometimes compulsively overspent or underspent in an effort to convince ourselves that we had enough. In D.A., we learned that one way to experience more abundance and prosperity in our lives was by giving of ourselves to others. This is the Twelfth Step in action. In other words, we help ourselves by offering service to fellow members and to D.A. as a whole. By doing so, we decrease our self-obsession and isolation.

When we volunteer our time to D.A., we are also helping to make sure that D.A.

will be there when the still-suffering debtor reaches out for help. We remember attending our first D.A. meeting and recall with gratitude the people who welcomed us.

Because D.A. is a non-professional organization, it depends upon the participation of its members to thrive and grow. Each group benefits from the service of its members, and the organization benefits when groups send contributions to the General Service Office to help "carry the message to the debtor who still suffers" on a national and international level.

What Are the Benefits of Giving Service?

We sometimes hear D.A. members say "When I got busy, I got better." The personal benefits we receive from giving service are without parallel: We feel useful. We experience a sense of accomplishment, which enhances our self-esteem. We gain a sense of oneness with others.

For many of us, the disease of compulsive debting is one of isolation. Giving service provides us with a direct connection to the fellowship, lessening our isolation and loneliness. Learning how to speak up in a business meeting helps us to be more assertive in other parts of our lives. Service gives us a voice in a community of fellows who understand us.

Taking a service position such as Secretary, Treasurer, or General Service Representative for our meeting helps us to keep our commitment to our own recovery. Many members have said that had it not been for their service position, which required them to attend meetings, they might have stopped coming altogether.

How Is Service Related to Our Money and Our Higher Power?

As we learn to give freely of ourselves through service in D.A., our connection with our Higher Power is renewed and strengthened.

SERVICE

When we first came to D.A., many of us were convinced that having enough money would be the answer to our problems. We began to experience a new perspective when we gave service. We learned that as we gave of our time and talents, our Higher Power did for us what we could not do for ourselves. We realized that our needs were being met; we had more than enough.

Service to the fellowship is service to our Higher Power, to our fellows, and ultimately to ourselves. When we become willing to contribute, to give back, the God of our understanding meets us more than halfway. We begin to experience the freedom from the fear of financial insecurity that is promised in the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous. As our lives begin to change, we continue to give from a newfound sense of gratitude. We notice a cycle: we contribute freely with joy and without expectation, we discover that all our needs are met, and in gratitude, we are inspired to give again.

What Ways Are There to Give Service?

The opportunities for service in D.A. are many and varied. We soon learn that we carry the message by example; that is, we demonstrate our recovery by not debting one day at a time, by working the Steps to the best of our ability, and by continuing to practice the principles of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in all areas of our lives. The example of our recovery—without bragging or preaching—is what gives newcomers hope when they come to D.A. Newcomers can see what the program has done for us and what it can do for them if they are willing to follow our suggestions, work the steps, and live in recovery through the program.

Four levels of service—personal, group, Intergroup, and World—offer every member an opportunity for growth and recovery.

Personal Service

On a personal level, we give service by meeting newcomers after meetings or calling them during the week. When we have ongoing experience working the Twelve Steps with a sponsor, we are ready to sponsor others. Asking a sponsor for help is also being of service to our sponsors. They experience the benefits of sharing experience, strength, and hope. When we have abstained from incurring new unsecured debt for ninety days and have had two Pressure Relief Meetings for ourselves, we can sit on Pressure Relief Groups for other D.A. members.

Group Service

Even as newcomers, we learn that our presence is of value to everyone at the meeting. We can help by listening, reading when it is our turn, and sharing our own experience. We give service to the group by arriving early to help set up the meeting and staying late to help clean up. As we gain some time in the fellowship, we can volunteer for a service position such as meeting chairperson, treasurer, or literature chair. Some groups have other positions, such as a secretary who takes notes at the monthly business meeting.

Most groups have suggested qualifications for holding a service position, such as having worked the Steps with a sponsor, having had two Pressure Relief Meetings, and having abstained from incurring new unsecured debt for at least 90 days.

Since each group is autonomous except in matters that affect D.A. as a whole, the group can set the qualifications and length of service for each position. Sometimes service positions are rotated every year or six months, sometimes every quarter. In some cases, if the meeting is new or small, a person may continue to hold a position until someone else volunteers to

SERVICE

do that service. We have found that the group is best served when service positions rotate on a regular basis.

Intergroup Service

As we learn to handle responsibilities on a group level, we may become interested in working with recovering debtors from other meetings in our area. We can volunteer to be the Intergroup Representative for our meeting. An Intergroup consists of representatives from D.A. meetings in a defined area, such as a city and nearby suburbs, who meet periodically to provide services for the entire area. Intergroup Representative is often a six-month commitment; qualifications vary from group to group.

The Intergroup is usually responsible for a number of activities that support meetings in the area, such as keeping a list of current meeting times and locations, maintaining a phone recording with meeting information, purchasing literature in bulk and selling it to groups, sponsoring workshops, and perhaps maintaining a website. Intergroup service positions may include chairperson, secretary, treasurer, workshop/events coordinator, and public information chair. Some Intergroups may need a voice mail coordinator to maintain the phone service and return calls from newcomers. Large Intergroups that operate area offices to provide these services may require additional service positions, such as office manager.

World Service

On an international level, we can offer to be of service as our meeting's General Service Representative (G.S.R.) or Intergroup Service Representative (I.S.R.). The service commitment for both positions is usually for two or three years and includes attendance at the annual World Service Conference. By attending the annual D.A. World Service Conference, a

G.S.R. or I.S.R. represents a meeting or Intergroup, respectively. G.S.R.s and I.S.R.s participate actively in determining the group conscience of the fellowship as a whole, and they give advice and direction to the General Service Board (G.S.B.). They do the work of the various Conference Committees while attending the Conference and throughout the year.

They report to their meetings or Intergroups and act as the links between these groups and the G.S.B. The G.S.R. may also represent the group at area or regional G.S.R meetings.

The suggested qualifications are to be actively working the Twelve Steps, to have had at least two Pressure Relief Meetings, and to have abstained from incurring new unsecured debt for at least one year.

In addition, those who gain experience as G.S.R.s or I.S.R.s may be nominated to serve as Trustees on D.A.'s General Service Board. The G.S.B. is an incorporated trusteeship of up to 15 Trustees who serve one to two three-year terms. Its purpose is to oversee and guide D.A. on matters that affect D.A. as a whole, including D.A.'s finances, operation of the General Service Office, literature publication and distribution, and other essential D.A. functions. It also protects D.A.'s legal rights and executes its legal responsibilities.

What Challenges Do We Face When We Give Service?

We may think that because we have been elected to a service position, we have special power or control over the group. We may be tempted to use a service position to manipulate outcomes or force issues. We may take it personally if it seems our efforts are not appreciated, such as if we organize a workshop and few people attend. We sometimes forget that our job is to take action, to "do the footwork," but the results are in the hands of our Higher Power. The

SERVICE

Second Tradition of Debtors Anonymous teaches us that “our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.” We are reminded to practice humility and avoid grandiosity, to *serve*.

Some of us climb onto a kind of service treadmill where we feel trapped, taking on more and more commitments, unable to say “no.” We may fear that we will lose power and control or that the work will not get done. Many of us have learned that the work gets done in God’s time, not ours. By letting go of our fears, we allow others the opportunity to enhance their own recovery by being of service.

Service may bring us a great deal of attention. Like debting and spending, it can be addictive for some of us. Eventually we have found balance through practice and prayer. We have discovered that our Higher Power is the source of our self-esteem, which is enhanced, but not dependent upon, our service work in D.A.

Some learn through painful experience the wisdom of our First Tradition, which states, “Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon D.A. unity.” If we bulldoze our agenda through a business meeting, it usually results in alienating members and creating resentment in ourselves. Gradually, we have come to understand that our personal recovery—our very survival—depends on group unity. We have discovered that when we rely on the authority of a Higher Power as expressed in our group conscience, the needs of the group, and ultimately our own, are met.

We trust in our Higher Power to guide us as we become willing to use the tool of service as an integral part of our recovery. With our connection to our Higher Power firmly in place, the rewards of giving service are truly beyond measure. As we give freely of ourselves with no expectation of return, we experience increased freedom and serenity. Every contribution we make with an open heart is another step in the

right direction. No contribution is too small if given freely with love.

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