

## **Questions and Concerns Sent in from Literature Coordinators that Were Not Discussed During the March 2010 Conference Call**

*Prior to the conference call, Coordinators submitted questions and concerns. Some of these could be responded to with a simple answer and were not really discussion topics. These were answered individually. In the spirit of open access, here are the questions and answers pertaining to Literature that you may find helpful.*

### **Q: Is the Sample Chapter Literature Project going to continue?**

A: Over the last couple years, we have covered all eight books that we currently have permission to post chapters from on a quarterly basis. (We have also completed the project for a ninth book, *Discovering Choices*, in anticipation of its upcoming release in French and Spanish—the Sample Chapters are posted in all three languages.)

We will continue to post the previous responses to this project on the Sample Chapter page, but there are no plans at this time to request additional topics and questions on the same books.

We recently posted a list of suggestions to the Literature Coordinators on e-Communities for other literature projects and ideas that they can carry out in their Areas. We hope this additional material can be of help.

### **Q: What can we do if AI-Anon meetings are using and citing the A.A. Big Book? Is there a stance on AI-Anon circuit speakers discussing their use of the A.A. Big book in their talk?**

A: The *2006-2009 AI-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*, which reflects the collective group conscience of AI-Anon as reflected through our World Service Conference, is quite clear about the use of the A.A. “big book” at AI-Anon meetings. It states on page 94:

“It is well to remember that all A.A. literature is written for and from the viewpoint of alcoholics and is not AI-Anon/Alateen Conference Approved Literature. Reliance on opinions expressed in A.A. and other outside publications can distort the AI-Anon approach, particularly for the newcomer.”

The WSO and the Areas, like all trusted servants, serve the fellowship—we do not govern. While serving does not include policing or enforcing this policy, it does include sharing information. If members are not aware of this policy or do not understand the reasons we have it, it is our responsibility to let them know. Delegates have further information available to them on e-Communities regarding the history of this policy and why it exists.

While page 94 of the *Manual* also states that “Brief excerpts from such [outside] material may be a part of their personal sharing at meetings,” we believe the intent of this wording is to allow some flexibility within our Conference Approved Literature policy. Some members apply the “CAL only” statement with such rigidity that in one group even giving a dictionary definition of a word found in the Concepts of Service was considered inappropriate, since the dictionary is not Conference approved.

According to this statement, it is acceptable for members to occasionally make brief references to outside materials within their personal sharings. Please note that the words "brief" and "personal" add limits to this statement. Problems result when members misinterpret or misuse the statement. If quoting extensively from an outside piece, a "personal sharing" is no longer really personal. The next sentence in the policy states, "In a spirit of unity, it is suggested that only Al-Anon and Alateen Conference Approved Literature be used and displayed at meetings." Bringing in a piece of outside literature and reading from it to start a discussion topic denotes that the piece is being "used and displayed at meetings." This distracts us from our program's intended focus.

Of course, as part of their personal recovery, Al-Anon members are always free to read any materials they choose outside of an Al-Anon meeting. However, at Al-Anon meetings we strive to understand the disease of alcoholism as it affects us. Since meeting time is so limited, it is important to stick with Al-Anon materials during meetings. Al-Anon members are also free to attend open A.A. meetings, where they can learn more about alcoholism from the perspective of the alcoholic.

At this year's World Service Conference, the Policy Committee brought recommended wording changes for clarity to the "Use of Materials" portion of the "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies" section of the *Manual*. The Conference approved them unanimously, and they will appear in the next edition of the *Manual*.

As for whether there is a stance on Al-Anon speakers sharing their use of the AA big book during their talk at an Al-Anon event, the same wording in the "Policy Digest" applies. Additionally, the Al-Anon Guideline for *Members Interested in Speaking* (G-1) states, "It is confusing both to potential Al-Anon or Alateen members and professionals to hear our message diluted by referring to other programs." (The Guidelines are available on the Members' Web site, [www.al-anon.org/members](http://www.al-anon.org/members).)

Some convention committees send all speakers a copy of the Guideline, often with additional wording of their own, such as the following example from one committee:

"In accordance with Tradition Six, our convention committee would like to remind all the speakers and moderators to keep the focus on our Al-Anon program. Many of us do belong to other fellowships, programs, and organizations. However, when representing the Al-Anon program we need to remember the importance of keeping the focus on our fellowship alone. This would also include references to literature; we use only Al-Anon Conference approved Literature. We want to thank you for helping us to keep the focus on the Al-Anon program."