

A GUIDE TO SPECIAL EVENTS

Debtors Anonymous groups sometimes have a special event outside of the normal meeting time. The event might or might not have the purpose of raising funds. In either case, there are a variety of goals for special events, but it is recommended that all events:

- Be open to all D.A. members including newcomers
- Be closed to the general public
- Uphold the 12 Traditions
- Enhance fellowship
- Offer something of value to the participants
- Share service responsibilities
- Not require that donations be mandatory, though they may be suggested

Just as the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and D.A. Tools provide the path for our personal recovery, they also provide the framework for a successful event.

Event Suggestions

In keeping with the Fourth Tradition, it is suggested that an event not be represented as a “D.A. event” since that would imply it was approved by the fellowship as a whole. An acceptable alternative example would be a “12-Step Workshop given by the Wednesday night serenity group of Debtors Anonymous.”

Debtors Anonymous members are creative and there is no limit to the breadth of topics and formats for special events. A few suggested topics that can be relied upon for events are:

- Working the Twelve Steps
- Living the Traditions
- Sponsoring and Being Sponsored
- Keeping the Numbers
- Pressure Relief Meeting Workshop
- Visions workshop
- Fellowship with a silent auction

- BDA Business Planning Workshop
- Speaker Panel with ask-it basket and audience members sharing:
 - Oldtimer’s sharing – How I did it
 - 12-Step sharing of experience, strength and hope
 - How the 12 Promises have come true
 - Sharing recovery miracles
 - Life after debt

The Steps and Tools

Although all the D.A. Tools are useful for creating a successful event, a few are highlighted here to help members plan.

Service

Generally a core group of dedicated members will organize the event and bring it to fruition. They are performing 12-Step service and are the trusted servants for the event. This steering committee will often try to include volunteers with all levels of D.A. experience so the service load will be shared and members get the benefits of performing service.

Action Plan

The more detailed and specific the action plan for the event, the less likely it will be that unforeseen logistics or circumstances could create “chaos and drama.” The event plan also clarifies what actions each member doing service will perform and when they will do their part. However, even the most detailed of planning, allows opportunity for Higher Power to create what no one may have predicted in the planning.

Spending Plan and Awareness

Whether or not the event has the goal of raising funds, it will have expenses. Just as we do with our personal or business finances, we create a spending plan for the

A GUIDE TO SPECIAL EVENTS

event. The spending plan and the tool of awareness ensure that any member authorized to spend funds for the event will have a clear idea of how much to spend for their task. This clarity avoids situations where a well-meaning, but misinformed member, may spend more than the group can afford on materials for the event such as flyers or decorations. The spending plan allows for abundance for the event within the sobriety of clarity around the numbers.

The Telephone and the Internet

In addition to announcing the event at D.A. meetings, the telephone and the internet are effective ways of spreading the word and facilitating the event planning. In this context, anonymity concerns should bear in mind.

The Traditions and Events

All the Traditions are important guides for planning and carrying out events. A few are highlighted here for consideration.

Tradition 5

Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the debtor who still suffers.

By maintaining focus on the fifth Tradition, the planning group will ensure that the event will truly provide 12-step service.

Tradition 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.

The more mindful the event committee is of this tradition when deciding the format and venue for the event, the more successful the event will be. This tradition is also critical for spreading the word for the event

to other D.A. members while being careful not to imply an association or authorization for the event by Debtors Anonymous as a whole. This Tradition also is a good reminder to avoid topics from outside sources and to avoid using non-conference approved literature at events.

Tradition 7

Every D.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

Events are sometimes held with the intent of raising funds to send the group's G.S.R. to the annual Debtors Anonymous World Service Conference. When selling tickets to an event such as this, it is important that it only be promoted to members of D.A., ensuring that an outside contribution is not inadvertently accepted from a person that is not a member of the fellowship.

Tradition 8

Debtors Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

This tradition reminds the committee to avoid any compensation to D.A. members acting as members of PRG's or any other service that might be seen as twelfth step work. A suggested donation to the event would be more appropriate than charging members for services.

Tradition 9

D.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

This tradition is a good reminder to the trusted servants on the event planning committee and the people providing service during the event that they are responsible to the members attending the event.

A GUIDE TO SPECIAL EVENTS

How-To Suggestions

In addition to the previous general guidelines, the following specific ideas are offered to groups to use as they wish.

12 Step Workshop

Create a fellowship event where D.A. members experienced in working the 12 steps share their experience, strength and hope. Depending on the size of the group and the availability of qualified speakers, there could be one speaker per step or a speaker could cover a number of steps. Some larger groups or Intergroups may consider holding weekend-long workshops or retreats to work the steps.

12 Promises Workshop

Similar to the 12-Step Workshop, a group could put on an event where the speakers share about how the 12 Promises of Debtors Anonymous have manifested in their lives. The workshop could include an ask-it basket for newcomers to ask any questions they may have. It is also recommended that time be allowed for sharing by members of the audience.

Pressure Relief Meeting Marathon

A group may organize a fellowship day focused on participating in Pressure Relief Groups (PRGs). The event may start with a speakers' panel sharing their experience, strength and hope from giving and receiving PRGs. Then newcomers or others needing to receive a PRG are grouped with two other members qualified to give a PRG. After the first round of PRGs, there may be a break or a shared lunch. In the next session, the remaining members wanting to receive a PRG are grouped with those available to give. In some cases, those who received a PRG for the first time in the first session are able to give a PRG along with an experienced member in the second session. When planning an event of this type, it is recommended to get the word out

so there are enough experienced members available to give to the newcomers. Also it should be made clear to all in attendance that no fee should be charged for a Pressure Relief Meeting.

Additional Suggestions

Dance Party

Some D.A. groups and local areas have had successful dance parties. Other groups had fun dance parties, but had disappointing attendance and were unable to recover all the costs. It is suggested that a group considering a dance party seek out the experience of other D.A. groups that have put on successful dance parties.

11th Step Meditation

Create an event with the focus on the 11th Step. Format could be a speaker, or possibly a walking meditation or having meditative music.

Retreat Day or Weekend

Many of the topics could be done in the form of an all-day retreat or weekend. It is suggested that groups seek out the experience of other D.A. groups that have put on successful retreats.

Talent Show

D.A. is blessed with an abundance of talented members. A talent show is a fun way for D.A. members to perform and share their talents.

Vision Boards (a.k.a. Collages or Treasure Maps)

Have an event where members bring magazines and supplies to create their own Vision Board in the presence and support of other members. Everyone is encouraged to share their results with the group.

Garage Sales – Proceed With Caution!

If a group were to choose to hold a garage sale to the public and have signs saying it was a fundraiser for Debtors Anonymous,

A GUIDE TO SPECIAL EVENTS

most D.A. members would agree that this would be a clear violation of the Traditions. However, if a member, or members, of a group decided to hold a garage sale (anonymously) on their own, then donate the proceeds to the group's GSR Fund many people would agree that this would not violate the Traditions. An important distinction to remember is that this garage sale is an "outside issue" and should not be announced at group level, nor should flyers promoting it be distributed at D.A. meetings.

In addition to being careful regarding the Traditions, D.A. members ought to also be aware that many D.A. members have difficulty with compulsive spending and therefore a garage sale might not be the best format for a D.A. special event.

Applying These Principles

The fourth Tradition states that each group is autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or D.A. as a whole and the second Tradition reminds us that the ultimate authority is our Higher Power expressed through our group conscience. With these and all the Traditions in mind, how each group decides to implement the Traditions in the course of planning and carrying out an event may be different. The examples provided are intended for reflective contemplation, not as a definitive interpretation of the Traditions and events.

Suggested Resources

Spending Plan pamphlet
12 Traditions of Debtors Anonymous

This is D.A. Service Material, developed from the shared experience of D.A. members throughout the worldwide Fellowship. It also reflects the guidance of the Twelve Traditions, the General Service Board and the General Service Office. In keeping with our Tradition of Autonomy except in matters affecting other groups or D.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of Service Material is to assist in reaching an informed group conscience. Since Service Material reflects the current and ever-developing conscience of our Fellowship as a whole, it does not undergo the usual conference-approval process, but may be updated periodically under the auspices of the General Service Board to reflect current Fellowship experience.

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