

DOCUMENT 9: MEETING EFFECTIVENESS QUESTIONS

The following questions have been compiled to help meetings as they strive to find the most effective ways to reach newcomers and support their own members. Groups may vote to have the MESA Representative read one of these questions during the weekly meeting announcement. They may also choose a question or set of questions from the final section to discuss at the monthly business meeting.

Before reading the question, the MESA Rep may want to say, "This question is intended to remind us of the ways our meeting can help the newcomer and communicate the message of FA recovery."

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ATTENDING MEETINGS

1. Do we treat our FA meeting as a formal occasion? Are chairs set up in rows? Does the meeting start and end on time?
2. Is the FA meeting format read as is, without any added comments?
3. Do we plan our schedule so that we can consistently arrive ten minutes early to help set up the room and greet newcomers? Do we try to stay to help and enjoy fellowship a few minutes after the meeting?
4. Do we refrain from activities that might distract others? These include texting, picking up our phones to check email, whispering, talking back to the speaker, counting Seventh Tradition money, drinking water, applying hand lotion, or taking notes.
5. Do we sit in the same seat and talk with the same people every week? To combat the addict's tendency to isolate, switch it up a bit, and talk to a member who may be sitting alone.
6. Do we warmly greet all who arrive at the meeting? Do we attend our meeting with an attitude of "what can I get?" or "what can I give?"
7. Do we leave the meeting as soon as it ends, or do we take time to talk to someone who our Higher Power may have put in our path, and help to put the room back in order?

8. Do we each have a personal profile on the FA website so that we can receive valuable information from Intergroup and the World Service Board? Having well-informed members helps strengthen individuals, meetings, and FA as a whole.
9. Do we find ourselves dozing at our meetings? If we do get drowsy, we can stand up in the back of the room to revive ourselves.
10. Do we consistently give to our meeting's Seventh Tradition collection, contributing our fair share to cover meeting expenses?
11. Does our meeting limit announcements to World Service and Intergroup communications, or other announcements directly related to our meeting? Announcing clothing swaps or fellowship meals can be confusing for newcomers, and distracts us from our primary purpose.
12. Do we know about the MESA Committee, FA's Meeting Effectiveness, Support and Assistance Committee? MESA helps meetings to become more effective so that they can help members get and stay abstinent. MESA also assists meetings to maintain effective, safe, accessible environments. To find out more, email the MESA committee at mesa@foodaddicts.org.

SHARING

1. Are we fearful or self-conscious about what to say when we share? Or are we asking our Higher Power for gratitude, and willingness to pass on the love and hope we have found in FA?
2. Do we refrain from mentioning food by name or give detailed descriptions of food? Elaborate fantasies may lead to the bite – for the speaker and others. If we must mention food, use terms like “flour product” or “sugar product.”
3. If we hear sharing not related to recovery, do we raise our hand and share clearly about food addiction and the FA solution?
4. Do we walk to the front of the room to read, make announcements, or share?
5. Do we engage in “crosstalk”? This may include referring to other members by name, commenting directly on someone's share, or giving advice.
6. Do we speak in a loud, clear voice so that everyone can hear us?
7. Do we give advice, air a grievance, or “entertain” the group? It's best to simply share our own experience with food addiction and recovery--what we were like, what happened, and what we are like now.
8. In a large meeting, do we limit our share to no more than five minutes, giving others a chance to speak? If we are in a small meeting, instead of sharing longer, we can practice humility and allow the group to decide how to spend the extra time.
9. When qualifying, do we share from our heart, relying on our words instead of “props,” such as old clothing?
10. In our casual conversations at meetings, are we open and welcoming to all members?
11. Are we mindful in our sharing that FA is a spiritual program, not tied to any particular religion?

12. Tradition One tells us that our personal recovery depends on FA unity. At our meetings, do we focus on our recovery from food addiction, which unites us, and not on things that might separate us?
13. Tradition Three states that the only requirement for membership in FA is a desire to stop eating addictively. At meetings, are we careful to focus on what unifies us with other members - our desire to recover from the disease of food addiction?

DOING SERVICE

1. If we hold a service position and miss our committed meeting and/or business meeting, do we arrange to have someone replace us?
2. Are we engaged in service both in our meetings and outside of them? This might include participating in Twelfth Step work, attending health fairs, and serving in a Local Service Group or an Intergroup committee.
3. Are we inviting all members with 90 days of continuous abstinence to participate in service opportunities?
4. Are we encouraging new people to move into service positions that have been held by the same members over and over?
5. When traveling, do we plan ahead and schedule time to attend local FA meetings? Calling ahead to meeting contacts and offering to qualify or participate in a fellowship meal is a wonderful and rewarding way to strengthen our program while carrying the message.
6. Do we attend Intergroup meetings on a regular basis, either in person or remotely?
7. Have we talked with our sponsor about how to stretch ourselves in a weighed and measured way to “give back what we have so generously been given”?
8. Do we answer and return phone calls from FA members?
9. Are all qualified people with six months of abstinence in our meeting standing up to sponsor? If no one stands up, are we willing to stand up to get someone started?
10. If it has been over twelve months since our last qualification at a committed meeting, do we offer to do that service?
11. Do we reach out to meetings that need support to do service there?
12. If we do not have 90 days of abstinence, are we consistently raising our hand to read at meetings?
13. If we do have 90 days, are we raising our hand to share at meetings?
14. If we have a service position at our meeting, do we understand the responsibilities involved in our position? We can find descriptions and suggestions in “Meeting Guidelines: Document 7” on the FA website.
15. Have we considered attending the FA Business Convention, or the FA Fellowship Convention? These gatherings help us connect to the broader FA fellowship, and learn about additional opportunities for FA service.

WELCOMING NEWCOMERS

1. Are we welcoming newcomers warmly? Do we take them to the literature table? Do we point out our name on the phone list?
2. Before the meeting, during the break, and after the meeting, do we try to connect with all newcomers?
3. Before and after the meeting, and during the break, do we connect with those who are new to the meeting before talking with our peers? Do we share hope and express excitement about our recovery?
4. Do we remember to share for the newcomer by focusing on abstinence and recovery through FA? Do we describe the tools we use to keep our program strong?
5. In sharing, do we think about what we wanted to hear when we were a newcomer?
6. Do we reach out with extra calls to new or struggling members to provide support?
7. In addition to approaching newcomers, do we take time to speak with someone who has been coming periodically to our meeting, but has not committed to working the program? A simple question about their day, or a compliment may help them feel welcome and safe.
8. When giving newcomers an FA phone list, do we ask for their number as well, so that we can make follow-up calls to them?
9. When showing newcomers the literature table, do we encourage them to buy the FA Book and other literature? FA members often say that reading the literature in times of stress has prevented them from taking that first bite.

LEADING MEETINGS

1. When leading a meeting, do we read the portion of the format welcoming newcomers and announcing greeters, even if we think there are no newcomers in the room?
2. When leading a meeting, do we sit when reading the format, then stand in front of the room when it is time to qualify or share?
3. Do we try to call on people without 90 days to read before we call on older members?
4. When calling on members to read or share, are our choices reflecting the diversity of our fellowship?
5. After saying, "Would we all join me in a moment of silence and the Serenity Prayer," do we take a significant pause to connect more deeply with our Higher Power?
6. Do we start and end our meeting on time?
7. If everyone with 90 days of abstinence has shared, do we invite them to share again? Alternately, the group can read from FA Conference-approved literature instead of ending the meeting early.

SUPPORTING SMALL/EMERGING MEETINGS

While this section may be especially helpful for smaller meetings, larger meetings will also find many of these questions relevant.

1. Does our meeting maintain a formal atmosphere, even if there are only two or three people present? Are chairs set up in rows facing the front of the room?
2. Do we call on members to read tools one at a time? Do we avoid rushing through the format?
3. Do members refrain from distracting activities like chewing gum, plugging in phones, walking around, or moving chairs? Keeping our meetings formal and orderly helps us remember that we have a life-threatening illness which must be taken seriously.
4. Small meetings can easily develop an intimate, or “informal” atmosphere. Are we kindly encouraging newcomers and people without 90 days of abstinence to sit quietly, listen during the meeting and save questions for the break or after the meeting?
5. Do we maintain religious neutrality at our meeting, even if we believe that everyone in our group has a similar background?
6. Are we careful to respect the Twelve Traditions at our meeting? For example, do we refrain from sharing about outside issues like religion or politics (Tradition 10), even if we assume everyone in the meeting shares the same views?
7. If all members with 90 days of continuous abstinence in FA have already shared, and there is a lag in the meeting, does the meeting leader take responsibility for its flow? Reading a piece of FA literature can jump start the meeting.
8. If we have 90 days of abstinence, do we take on service positions? The more service we each do, the stronger our meeting, and our own recovery, become.
9. When a newcomer arrives at our meeting, do we ensure that they will see recovery in our welcoming attitude of gratitude and service?
10. Does our literature table contain newcomer packets to offer a newcomer?
11. Is our phone list organized and current?
12. Do we make phone calls to fellows not only in our own meeting, but to FA members who have years of FA recovery?
13. Does our meeting engage in public information efforts to attract newcomers? Do we post FA flyers, hand out FA trifolds and place ads in online or newspaper community bulletins?
14. Do members take advantage of service-related committee calls available? These include monthly and quarterly Intergroup meetings/calls, and various World Service committee calls, including Frontier Resource calls.
15. Are all WSI email announcements read at our meeting? If we need to know more about these announcements, ask other members, or email the World Service Office.
16. Do we take advantage of the recorded qualifications available on the FA website, or the FA podcasts that can be downloaded from the internet?

INVENTORYING OUR MEETING

1. Do we have newcomer packets prepared and clearly marked on the literature table?
2. Does our meeting start on time? Are members arriving 10 minutes early to set up and greet newcomers to ensure an on-time beginning?
3. Do we keep chairs theater-style to maintain a formal tone? Using one type of chair is preferable, maintaining consistency in the room, and avoiding the impression of preferential seating.
4. Do we keep business meetings formal, with a chair for the secretary in front of the room, facing participants?
5. Do members stand at the front of the room when giving reports?
6. Does our business meeting periodically conduct an inventory, asking, "How are we serving the newcomer?" Refer to Document 10 on the FA Website, "Meeting Effectiveness Assessment."
7. Does our business meeting periodically discuss types of meeting formats, and other actions that are helpful to newcomers?
8. Does our meeting focus on our primary purpose—to carry the message of recovery from food addiction to the newcomer?
9. Do we consistently share chapter, Intergroup and World Service announcements? This ensures that members stay connected to the larger FA fellowship.
10. Has our business meeting had a discussion about crosstalk, and how it may unintentionally happen?
11. Are members of our meeting standing up to sponsor?
12. Is our meeting's literature table easy for the new member to find? Is it well stocked, neatly and attractively arranged, and does it contain only FA Conference-approved literature? Is the literature person available before the meeting, at the break, and after the meeting?
13. Are newcomers the primary focus of the meeting?
14. How is our meeting spreading the hope of FA recovery to the local suffering food addict?
15. Are there current phone lists available on the literature table?
16. Does our meeting last for 90 minutes?
17. Are all members with 90 days of abstinence encouraged to stay for the monthly business meetings?
18. Are people with fewer than 90 days at our meeting given priority for reading tools and Big Book passages from the format?
19. Does our meeting and business meeting begin and end with the Serenity Prayer?
20. Do members attend Intergroup – remotely, or in-person?
21. Are there physical factors about the meeting space that make it difficult for members to "get their medicine"?
22. Does our meeting have a MESA Rep?
23. Is everyone with 90 days of abstinence encouraged raise their hand to share?
24. Do members help newcomers find a sponsor?

25. Are FA Information Sessions planned to encourage all current members to participate in the process?
26. Do we hold business meetings every month? Do business meeting take place even when people are away on vacation or unable to attend?
27. Do we have a plan for meeting dates that fall on holidays, building-closure dates, or in case of inclement weather?
28. Do we use the most recent FA conference-approved meeting format?
29. Do we participate in public information service? Be sure to take advantage of the Public Information Tool Kit located on the FA website.
30. What do we need to do to make sure our meeting's PI efforts are reaching all people in our community? What is getting in our way? What might we do better?
31. Does our meeting have a rideshare list? Are we willing to give a ride to someone who might need it?
32. Is our meeting room fully accessible? Is our sound system meeting every member's needs?
33. For speakers, do we seek members whose stories of food addiction reflect the diversity and wide range of experience in our fellowship?
34. Does our signage make it easy for a newcomer to find the meeting room?
35. After setting aside a prudent reserve (usually one to three months' rent), do we send the remainder of our Seventh Tradition to our Chapter, Intergroup or to WSI?
36. Are copies of the full Intergroup report readily available each month? These reports contain information members may need to participate in service opportunities.
37. When our meeting has more members, do we increase the number of greeters who approach newcomers?
38. Have we considered sharing our phone list with our Intergroup so that they can share it with the rest of the fellowship and increase connections?
39. Do we confine our announcements only to those related to FA meetings and AWOLs?
40. Does our meeting periodically use *Gratitude in Action* as a springboard for conversation at our business meeting?
41. Do we maintain religious neutrality at our meeting, even if we believe that everyone in our group has a similar background?
42. Has our meeting chosen a Conference (Voting) Member to attend the World Service Business Convention? FA is strengthened by as many members as possible representing the entire fellowship.

SUPPORTING BUSINESS MEETINGS

These questions are intended to be read only at the monthly business meeting.

1. Do we attend monthly business meetings for our committed meetings? Do we take on service positions as we are able?
2. Even if we do not yet have 90 days of abstinence, do we attend our business meetings? Our presence there supports meeting health and our own personal recovery.
3. If we sponsor, do we suggest that our sponsees stay for business meetings at their committed meetings, regardless of how long they have been abstinent?
4. If we have noticed a problem at our meeting, are we willing to stay for the monthly business meeting, and bring up the issue for discussion gently and respectfully?
5. If we are unhappy about a decision made at our business meeting, are we able to trust what long-term members tell us—that no matter what decision we make in the business meeting, a Higher Power is in charge, and ultimately everything is going to be okay?
6. In our business meeting, have we discussed crosstalk, as it is described in Document 2 of FA's Meeting Guidelines? If so, what actions, if any, do we need to take to keep our meetings safe and welcoming?
7. Do we provide formats in large print for anyone who might need them? Does our phone list include any telecommunication device (TTD) numbers required to reach members who are deaf or hard of hearing?
8. Does our meeting provide seats in the front of the room so members who need them can better see and hear the speaker? Do we wait to start sharing until we reach the front of the room and face the audience so we can be better seen and heard?
9. Does our conception of gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, and disability affect our willingness to connect with newcomers?
10. When we hear sharing from someone whose specific experiences and personal history differ from our own, do we try to identify with the things we have in common?

If you have any suggestions or comments about the Meeting Effectiveness Questions, contact mesa@foodaddicts.org.