



# Gratitude In Action

Vol. 6 – Winter 2006

“Gratitude should go forward, rather than backward, in other words, if you carry the message to still others, you will be making the best possible repayment for the help given to you.”  
—As Bill Sees It, p.29

## Welcome!

We are pleased to bring you the sixth issue of *Gratitude in Action*. As promised, this issue is about “How to Start a New Meeting.”

“When you are right and the time is right, Providence will provide. You must always be willing and continue to make contacts.” These sage words of advice were given by Dr. Bob to an impatient alcoholic, anxious to start the first meeting in their home town. That town was Chicago.

This issue of *Gratitude in Action* is focused on the experience, strength and hope of many FA members around the world, who have had the opportunity of starting a new meeting. We sent a few informal questions to some people, and in grouping their responses, it was interesting to note many similarities in what worked and what didn't. We hope that this information will help members to concentrate their efforts on what has proven successful. On page 245 of the Big Book, an alcoholic named Jim refers to his discussions with some oldtimers about starting a new meeting: “they saved us endless time and lost motion”.

There are valuable resources everyone should be aware of on our website [www.foodaddicts.org](http://www.foodaddicts.org). In the “For FA Members” section you can find and download the “FA Meeting Format” and the “FA Meeting Guidelines”. There is also information regarding the important requirements for starting a meeting and the “Meeting Registration/Change” form for those ready to register their meeting. The FA World Service Office will provide new meetings with a starter kit

including a selection of tapes, literature and pertinent information to insure that a new meeting is well equipped until it becomes self-supporting.

With patience, and the guidance of your sponsor and those who have gone before you, starting a new meeting can be a tremendously rewarding experience. It is an opportunity to do service that will help strengthen your own recovery. Remember: Easy Does It, and as one of our respondents said so clearly “be a spirit of attraction and leave the rest to God”.

Our next issue will be about **Public Information** – and how to get the word out about your meetings.

We are delighted to announce that you can now find *Gratitude in Action* on the FA website at [www.fadocs.org](http://www.fadocs.org).

*Yours in service,  
Jamie M.,*

*Twelfth Step Committee Chair,  
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## FAQ's: Starting a Meeting

**I live in an area where there are no FA meetings. When is the right time for me to start a meeting?**

This is an important question, one to be shared with your sponsor and with your higher power. Before starting a meeting in an outlying area, we weigh our need for fellowship and service with the responsibilities that a new meeting brings.

While attending AA meetings can bring you recovery from food addiction, we also benefit from hearing stories of others who are food addicts. Meetings are an opportunity to come together with others who share this disease, to deepen our recovery through service, and to strengthen the worldwide fellowship of FA. Starting a new meeting is almost always a good thing. Your sponsor will help you to know when the time is right.

## What are the requirements for starting an FA registered meeting?

In FA, meetings are autonomous, but there are points that define an FA group. These are:

1. As a group, the members meet to practice the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of FA.
  2. All who have a desire to stop abusing themselves with food are welcome.
  3. To start a new meeting, the FA-World Service Board strongly suggests there be at least 2 members with 6 or more months of continuous FA abstinence.
  4. The meeting format contains specific readings and practices, including the definition of a food addict. See [www.foodaddicts.org](http://www.foodaddicts.org) and click on “For FA Members” and “FA Meeting Registration” for a complete list, or call the FA World Service Office (WSO) at 781-321-9118.
  5. Last, you must register the meeting with your regional Intergroup or Chapter.
- By following these requirements, your meeting will offer the same recovery to you as has been received by countless others around the

world, and your group will be joining a network of individuals sharing their experience, strength and hope in recovery from food addiction.

### **Are there suggestions for when and where to start a meeting?**

There are several suggestions available on-line at [www.foodaddicts.org](http://www.foodaddicts.org). Click on "For Members" and "FA Meeting Guidelines." Some highlights:

**Setting Up:** Chairs should be set in rows, auditorium style, facing the speaker in the front of the room. (Rows are recommended rather than circular seating in order to encourage meeting members to come to the front of the room, have a clear focus, and experience the humility of standing and facing the group. In addition, when the first Twelve Step meetings for food addiction were being organized, members of AA recommended rows.)

**Sharing:** Set the pattern of standing in front of the room to read, share or qualify, even if your meeting is small and has only three people. Standing helps us overcome our denial, false pride, and self centeredness.

**Focus on the Newcomers:** As the Fifth Tradition emphasizes, the purpose of every FA meeting is for us to share our recovery with newcomers.

Time Frame:

*Length of Time.* WSI recommends that meetings last 90 minutes.

*Time of Day.* The hour at which your meeting is held can have a significant impact on the health of your meeting membership. WSI recommends holding meetings at hours which do not conflict with mealtimes (e.g., midday meetings), sponsee calls (e.g., early morning meetings), or sleep (e.g., late night meetings).

**Meeting Disciplines:** Some suggestions from older meetings are:

- people should arrive on time, or if you are late, wait at the back of the room so as not to interrupt the speaker,
- turn off cell phones and beepers,
- refrain from mentioning food by name as it may make some members uncomfortable, and
- children are not allowed unless they consider themselves food addicts.

**Business Meetings:** Keep to the discipline of holding a business meeting each month, even if there are only a few people attending or there is no apparent pressing new business. Encourage meeting members to attend.

**Literature:** FA literature now comes in many different forms including printed pamphlets, qualification audiotapes and CD's, the FA magazine "theconnection" and "theconnection Collections", a press release kit, a public information manual (available in hard copy or on disc), a meeting format and other related guidelines packets (also available both on hard copy and on disc). Please see the FA literature order form for a more complete and updated list of available conference approved FA literature.

FA also approves the use of several pieces of AA literature including Alcoholics Anonymous, The Little Red Book, The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous and Twenty-Four Hours A Day,

**Telephone List:** Once your meeting is established, your meeting may wish to create a phone and email list. Please note that email is a helpful and useful

tool but should not replace telephone calls.

### **Members Share Their Experience, Strength And Hope About Starting A Meeting**

**In your experience, what amount of abstinence should someone have and how many abstinent members should there be for starting a meeting?**

I think you should have at least 3 members who are willing to commit to taking on all the service positions, and at least 2 should have 6 or more months of abstinence.

– Heidi, Petaluma, CA

It made a difference having someone with several years of abstinence at the meetings as it gave credibility to the meetings.

– Janice, Austin, TX

It really helps if there are enough people to do the service work that will be required so the people who are doing all the service don't burn out!

– Bonnie, Florida

### **Where did you find the space for the meeting?**

At a local church that supports other twelve step meetings. I suggest going to the AA website and find where local AA meetings are held.

– Suzanne, Carmel, CA

We have found library meeting rooms to be central geographically, provide affordable rent (an important issue when there are few numbers to cover costs) and are often handy to public transport.

– Sophie, Melbourne, Australia

We just called places out of the Yellow Pages and made a decision on one that was located centrally and

was most accessible for the members who were committed to start the new meeting.

– *Bonnie, Florida*

All our meetings are held at churches except for one at the YMCA.

– *Janice S., Austin, Texas*

Our meetings were mostly in hospital conference rooms and churches in the beginning.

– *Lyn T., San Francisco, CA*

### **When did you schedule the meeting, and why?**

I scheduled the Carmel meeting for Saturday mornings at 9 AM, since San Francisco is two hours away and speakers could either make an overnight out of it or drive down in the morning.

– *Suzanne, Carmel, CA*

We scheduled our first meeting in the evening after dinner time so it would be the best time for the most people. We started another meeting later in the morning so it would not interfere with sponsee calls, quiet time or breakfast.

– *Heidi, Petaluma, CA*

I would always schedule a meeting at a time where there's enough space before or after a meal.

– *Isabell, Germany*

Over time, I've seen some people try noon-hour meetings and I haven't seen that being successful or sensible for a food addict in recovery.

– *Lyn T., San Francisco, CA*

Essentially, we tried to avoid meal times. We also consulted the Worldwide FA Meetings list for guidance around meetings times from those who had gone before us. We now hold our one weekly Melbourne FA meeting on Sunday nights from 5 PM to 6:30 PM, then share an abstinent meal and

fellowship afterwards – If you're ever in the neighbourhood, please drop in! When we changed our FA meeting from Tuesday night to Sunday night, things began to pick up. Also, we found our Saturday morning PI meetings draw significantly more newcomers than did the ones on Sunday mornings.

– *Sophie, Melbourne, Australia*

We started a Friday morning meeting in New York City. That was really silly, because very few newcomers can come at that hour. Eventually that meeting closed. I would say from my experience that the best thing is to always put the newcomer first and to hold meetings that aren't around eating times. 7-8:30 PM is good, since we all get up so early and oftentimes there is travel time to be considered to and from the meetings. Saturday morning is an extremely successful meeting time.

– *Kris S., formerly New York City now Northern California*

We asked some old timers in FA what they would recommend and read the guidelines for starting a new meeting. We did try a very early morning meeting at 7:00 AM and that did not work.

– *Janice S., Austin, Texas*

### **What worked for you and what would you have done differently?**

We realized that we always need to focus on the needs of the newcomers and not solely on our needs when beginning a meeting. The saying, "This is **not** a program of convenience," helped us determine the best meeting times and locations.

– *Janice S., Austin, Texas*

A defining moment occurred one afternoon when, in a phone call with a more experienced member, I had an insight: "*I don't need my local fellowship to stay abstinent.*" I have, after all, a God in my life, I have these 12 Steps, and I have a fellowship around the world I can

turn to for support. I *want* a local fellowship around me and I am willing to keep showing up and doing all of the footwork I've been doing for the past six years. But I made a decision, that day, to let go of "trying" so hard, and turned it all over to God.

– *David, Calgary, Canada*

Faith and patience!

– *Lyn T., San Francisco, CA*

### **Any other worthwhile experience that you would like to pass on?**

I can't emphasize enough listening to the FA tapes for small, rural meetings. They offer such hope for recovery.

– *Janice S., Austin, Texas*

Service is so important. In the beginning, I had to do nearly everything -- and it really made a difference in my commitment to the program and to my recovery.

– *Lyn T., San Francisco, CA*

We found that a decent tape library and the long-distance sponsor list were essential. We practiced willingness to break our anonymity wherever appropriate. Keep your expectations and your sense of humor high! Trust in your Higher Power, stay connected on the phone to people who have experience, strength and hope (especially hope) to share regarding starting FA meetings in isolated areas, remember that it will happen in God's time - not overnight....if you build it they will come!

– *Sophie, Melbourne, Australia*

I would say start a meeting on a Saturday morning at 9 AM and watch your fellowship, and your own personal recovery, bloom! Oh, and patience and prayer help.

– *Kris S., formerly New York City now Northern California*

