

# *Anorexics and Bulimics Anonymous*

## **Guidelines for Attending ABA Phone Meetings**

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### **1. Welcome**

If you are new to ABA, welcome! We want you to know you are not alone anymore.

We are a group of people recovering from anorexia, bulimia, and other eating disorders by using a 12-Step approach adapted in 1993 from the program used since 1935 by Alcoholics Anonymous. Before coming to ABA, many of us felt hopeless and lost in the face of an illness so severe that no one had been able to help us. Others among us thought our eating problem was so trivial that it barely deserved to be called a problem. Yet, no matter what our thoughts and feelings, we were able to find recovery and a new freedom through the ABA program. Although it required commitment and some hard work, the results were beyond our wildest imagining: a life truly free from the obsessive prison of anorexia and bulimia.

This document is intended to help people begin to use the ABA phone meetings and to introduce our program of recovery. There are a variety of phone meetings, each one a little different from the others, so if you don't like the first one or more that you try, please try another before deciding that ABA is not for you. We also suggest that you obtain a copy of the ABA textbook (available for order on-line) to learn more about our program.

### **2. Why does ABA have phone meetings?**

Many people live in places where there are no face-to-face ABA meetings, and often phone meetings are their first introduction to ABA. For some members, this will be the only meetings they ever get to attend. Our phone meetings are therefore an important means of outreach to anorexics and bulimics who are still suffering and could benefit from our message of hope.

### **3. How to attend phone meetings**

Phone meetings all operate on the same principle. Instead of physically going to a location where you can meet face-to-face with other members, everyone dials a conference-call number and uses an access code to enter the meeting. *Be aware that not all phone meetings use the same phone number and access code.* The call itself then becomes a virtual meeting “room.”

### **4. How do phone meetings proceed?**

- All ABA meetings are strongly encouraged to use the “Preamble for Meetings” found on pp 142-148 of the ABA textbook (and also on the website: [www.aba12steps.org](http://www.aba12steps.org)).
- Some meetings have decided, by group conscience, to add to the format some information specific to phone meetings or to the particular group. This will be read during the meeting.
- To mute or unmute yourself, press \*6. *Note that in some meetings you will be automatically muted when you enter the call, and in others you will be unmuted.* Please stay muted when you are not speaking in order to avoid background noise, static, and echo.
- The chairperson generally starts the meeting by reading the Preamble. Other callers are often invited to read parts of it, e.g. the 12 Steps, the 12 Traditions, or the Tools of Recovery.
- Introductions follow, and newcomers receive a special welcome. The newcomer is generally considered “the most important person in the room.”
- A topic for discussion is then put forward, either one chosen by the chairperson or selected from suggestions made by other callers. When a newcomer is present, the topic of the first three Steps is strongly suggested.
- During the sharing portion of the meeting, members offer their experience, strength, and hope on the meeting topic. Newcomers

are invited to share anything related to their eating disorder. No one is compelled to share anything. *One person speaks at a time, and we refrain from interrupting when someone else is speaking.*

- Near the end of the hour, the chairperson resumes leadership and reads the closing as written in the ABA book. Special announcements are made. Some meetings ask a member to remain on the line after the meeting to converse more informally with newcomers and to answer any questions they may have.

## **5. What is the cost of the phone call?**

The cost to each person is the same as making a long-distance call. *Note that the call is not free.* Most of our conference-call numbers are based in the USA. If you have a long-distance plan, please check with your service provider to ensure that your plan covers the particular area code of the conference-call number. Some people without long-distance plans use phone cards to make the call more affordable.

## **6. Anonymity**

The 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Traditions of ABA deal with anonymity, which is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions. That means we don't talk to other people about who we saw or heard at a meeting or about what a particular person said. (However, when sharing, it is acceptable to say, "I once heard someone say...") We avoid all gossip and criticism of others. We also don't share publicly (through print media, photographs, TV, internet, etc) that we ourselves belong to ABA. Anonymity protects both ABA members and the Fellowship itself.

## **7. The value of other 12-Step Fellowships**

Many ABA members suffer from other addictions besides their eating disorder, and thus need to participate in other Fellowships (AA, NA, Al-Anon, etc). Such participation often strengthens their ABA recovery as well. Members who don't belong to other Fellowships often benefit from attending *open* meetings of AA or NA, especially if their ABA support is limited to phone meetings. There is no substitute for meeting face-to-face with others in recovery and hearing their

experience, strength, and hope emerging from working the 12-Step program. This is discussed in our textbook on p 154.

## **8. The 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition and financial contributions**

The 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition states that ABA is self-supporting, declining outside contributions, meaning that our members and groups are the sole support for the worldwide service structure of our Fellowship. In a face-to-face meeting a basket is passed to receive members' voluntary donations toward room rent, coffee, literature for newcomers, etc. A portion of the money collected is also sent to the General Service Association (GSA) of ABA, which ensures the ongoing vitality and unity of our Fellowship. People attending phone meetings are invited to send their donations directly to the GSA office, either by mailing a check or by using a credit or debit card online through *PayPal*. For more information visit the ABA website, [www.aba12steps.org](http://www.aba12steps.org). If you can't afford to contribute financially, you are still welcome to attend meetings and be part of our Fellowship.

## **9. Service work in ABA**

Doing service work for others is an important tool of our recovery, and everyone is encouraged to use it, no matter how new they are to ABA. In the beginning, service work may be as simple as offering to read something aloud during the meeting, attending business meetings of the group, making outreach calls to others to get support for ourselves, asking a sober member to sponsor us, etc. Later on, as we stay sober and recover from our eating disorder, we become ready to chair meetings, take calls from newcomers, and sponsor others. This is discussed in the ABA textbook on pp 164-165.

## **10. Helpful resources**

ABA literature is available for purchase through the GSA office. See the website ([www.aba12steps.org/resources](http://www.aba12steps.org/resources)) for further information.

Many helpful documents are available for reading online or for free download from [www.aba12steps.org/resources/documents](http://www.aba12steps.org/resources/documents).