

Anorexics and Bulimics Anonymous

Guidelines for Receiving Phone Calls From Newcomers

Thank you for volunteering to receive calls from newcomers. This is a vital aspect of your group's 12th Step outreach and a powerful tool for maintaining *your* sobriety. Here are some important suggestions, developed by the Phone Line Committee of the General Service Association, for taking these calls. Remember that you are the newcomer's first contact with ABA and that your manner in receiving the call reflects on ABA as a whole. Recall how important *your* first contact with ABA was to your recovery!

- We suggest all volunteers for this important service work have a **MINIMUM OF SIX MONTHS OF SOBRIETY**. Also, remember you are not isolated in this work: You are connected with your ABA home group. Ask for support when you need it! We suggest you regularly bring up the subject of phone service at business meetings of your group.

- Above all else, **ENSURE YOU ARE TRULY AVAILABLE** when the newcomer calls. If you are tired or irritable or rushed, you will do more harm than good if you ignore your personal physical or emotional state and pretend you are "there" for the newcomer when you aren't. Far better to take their number and call them back when you are able, or give them the phone number of another ABA member who has volunteered for this service.

- **LISTEN RESPECTFULLY** to the caller. Often the caller simply needs to know that someone cares enough to listen. Just as in a meeting, avoid interrupting their sharing.

- **EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING** are most important. Let the caller know that you understand their pain by **SHARING BRIEFLY** from your own experience, as the opportunity presents itself. The newcomer didn't call to listen to your entire story, but a few pertinent comments will let the caller know that you were once in their shoes. Keep your sharing **SIMPLE AND DIRECT**. Don't spend hours on the phone with anyone!

- Tell the newcomer that **THERE IS HOPE**, that recovery is possible, that you know this from your own experience. Emphasize that they are not alone. Many of us in ABA were very ill at one time and are now leading happy and purposeful lives free from the disease.

- **AVOID GIVING ADVICE** or telling people what to do. Emphasize that any suggestions you offer arise from your own experience and that you are not a spokesperson for ABA..

- If the newcomer talks about frequent bingeing and purging or significant weight loss, ask if they have received any medical care. Emphasize that they have a **PHYSICAL ILLNESS** as well as a mental one, and that the disease can be fatal.

- Suggest that the caller attend an **ABA MEETING**. Many people are frightened by this idea. Tell them they do not have to speak or even give their name. Invite them to bring a family member or friend along with them for support. Provide information about your group's meeting day, time, and location. If there are other ABA groups meeting in your city and you know the details of their meetings, you may provide this also (unless it is a private residence).

- If it seems appropriate, let the caller know about our **TEXTBOOK OF RECOVERY** and how useful it has been to you and others. They can purchase a book at a meeting, or by consulting our website (www.abal2steps.org).

- Be **SENSITIVE** to where the caller may be at **SPIRITUALLY**. Don't force the concept of God or any particular religion upon them. Emphasize that the 12-Step Program is spiritual, not religious, and is open to people of all faiths or no faith.

- If you feel comfortable with the caller and available to do so, you may want to invite the newcomer to **MEET YOU FOR COFFEE** before or after an ABA meeting.

- If the caller is a family member or friend of someone of adult age with an eating disorder, you may wish to refer them to **AB-ANON** (web address abanonfamilygroups.com). The only requirement for Ab-Anon membership is that there be the problem of an eating disorder in a family member or friend.

NOTE: *If the caller is the parent of a child under the age of 18, tell them that the ABA approach is not suitable in this age group! Encourage them to seek help from a qualified medical professional.*