

Today's presentation is on Reaching an Informed Group Conscience using Knowledge-Based Decision-Making.

Purposes of the workshop

- ▶ Informed group conscience
- ▶ Group decisions
- ▶ Spiritual principles
- ▶ KBDM process

The Purposes of this Workshop/ Presentation are:

- To clarify the phrase “informed group conscience”
- To have a common understanding of who makes group decisions
- To connect the decision-making process with Al-Anon spiritual principles
- To learn about Knowledge-Based Decision-Making as a decision-making process to arrive at an informed group conscience

Informed group conscience



The group conscience is the result of the group's business meeting discussions. The group conscience is the will of the group.

“In order to make an informed group conscience decision, members need access to all the information about the issue they are being asked to discuss, they need clarity on what their discussions hope to accomplish, and they are asked to trust each other's motives and capabilities.” (*Service Manual - Handbook* page 53)

See more in the *Service Manual – Groups at Work* page 69, about reaching consensus in our decision-making.

Informed group conscience

“The guiding principles for the group conscience are always the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts of Service.”

2014-2017 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P24/27)
Groups at Work p. 53

An informed group conscience is the result of using the guiding spiritual principles found in our Legacies (the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts of Services). Otherwise, we would just have a bunch of opinions.

We need to take time out to refer to our Legacies before we make a group decision. This ensures that the decision is a spiritual one, and we are guided by our program's principles.

Group decisions



Group Decisions: Each body would use a guideline or describe for itself who might have voice and/or vote. Normally, if you are a member of the home group – you have a vote, if you are a GR attending your own District meeting you would have a vote. Our *Service Manual* states, for example, that each group has one vote at Area Assembly when electing their World Service Delegate.

For more information, please refer to the *Service Manual* — Groups at Work page 53.

Collective wisdom

“ ... we seek spiritual guidance for our groups in the same collective wisdom. We call this a ‘group conscience,’ the voice of the majority of members. We believe it represents the greatest good for the greatest number.”

How Al-Anon Works (B-22), p. 110

Spiritual guidance is found through the collective wisdom of the group. We have agreed to be bound by the group conscience even if it differs from our own individual opinion because we believe that our Higher Power gives guidance when every voice has been heard.

Tradition Two

“For our group purpose there is but one authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in **our group conscience**. Our leaders are but trusted servants - they do not govern.”

Spiritual principles

- ▶ Open-mindedness
- ▶ Equality
- ▶ Unity
- ▶ Responsibility

Reaching a group conscience is not a new idea in Al-Anon.

Al-Anon has always known how to handle its business affairs in a way that ensures our spiritual principles are followed.

For example:

- Every voice is heard - Open-mindedness
- Every voice is important - Equality
- The good of the group comes first - Unity
- The outcome is beneficial to most - Responsibility

KBDM

What is
Knowledge-Based Decision-Making?



How does it fit Al-Anon?

What is Knowledge-Based Decision-Making?

And how does it fit our program?

Knowledge-Based Decision-Making is closely aligned with the Al-Anon way of thinking and interacting.

The Board of Trustees and the World Service Conference have been using the KBDM process because we find it aligns with our spiritual principles. KBDM had its origin in non-profit organizations as a way to better accomplish its business.

Ask yourselves:

Does our current process allow us to reach the best decision possible?

Ask yourselves: Does our current process allow us to reach the best decision possible?

In using only parliamentary procedure, sometimes the motion itself becomes the issue. Everyone tries to wordsmith it, modify it, or add punctuation to it. All the energy is diverted into the motion rather than the topic. Have you ever experienced that?

Sometimes when someone brings a motion, no one knows why it is being brought or how it fits into the meeting. Because it is in the form of a motion, a pro and con debate begins before anyone has had a chance to have an informed discussion. Opinions abound in the absence of real information. Suddenly, a vote has been taken and people are still trying to figure out what the facts are. Sometimes, we vote when we don't fully understand.

**Talk to each other
reason things out....**



2014-2017 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27)
Groups at Work p. 22

When using KBDM, we are able to take time to talk with each other and reason things out. Sometimes, there is no need for a motion at all. All we needed was an airing of the topic. If a motion comes to the floor, there is little need to debate the wording or the punctuation. The motion reflects the discussion.

KBDM has five basic elements

1. Open communication
2. Dialogue before deliberation
3. Common access
4. Culture of trust
5. Confidence in our partners

In the next slides, we will go over the KBDM process and see how we can use it to inform our decision makers.

Here are the elements of the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making process. Think about how each element could work in our districts or in our Assemblies.

1. Open communication between leadership and membership - Flow of information goes all ways.
2. Dialogue before deliberation - Talk to each other, reason things out.
3. Common access to full information for all decision makers - Information is not used as a tool to forward our personal agenda.
4. Existence in a culture of trust - Presume goodwill. Don't question people's motives.
5. Confidence in the competency of our partners - I am not the ultimate authority

Can we agree that these elements are in alignment with our spiritual principles?

Open communication

“Today I believe the process of discussion, review of our literature, and a vote is a good way for our group to make decisions that just about everyone can accept.”

Paths to Recovery (B-24), p. 149

In the knowledge-based approach, the more members know, the more insight and understanding they have on an issue. When the leadership shares what it knows and invites others to do the same, we reach better solutions. When everyone has the same information, everyone is able to contribute – that’s our principle of equality.

Dialogue before deliberation

“...listens to all ideas of the group and collects all pertinent information available before deciding...”

Paths to Recovery (B-24), p. 151

Dialogue before deliberation

“Some simple group decisions may be decided quickly; however, others may take time. It is by taking the time necessary to hear from all members who want to participate that a group conscience evolves.”

2014-2017 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P24/27)
Groups at Work p. 53

It does take time. Being informed and having clarity takes time. We need to allow enough time to gather information; time to share what was discovered; and enough time to allow for a conversation. The vote isn't worthwhile if it is rushed.

Common access

- ▶ Robert's Rules of Order
- ▶ Knowledge-Based Decision-Making

There are many processes for reaching decisions. We have long used aspects of parliamentary procedure such as Robert's Rules of Order. But does the use of Robert's Rules alone allow for common access to information?

We are finding that the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making process ensures that all decision makers have access to the same information. KBDM allows time for discussion and promotes the practice of principles above personalities during the discussion. Through this process, groups are often able to reach unanimity in their decisions. (See page 53 *Groups at Work* (P-24)). Sometimes after the process, the body decides that no action needs to be taken and no motion needs to be made.

We exist in a culture of trust

“Over time we learn to recognize and accept that in the long run the wisdom of the group, informed by thorough discussion and guided by a Higher Power, ultimately will be the best for the group and its individual members.”

Paths to Recovery (B-24), p.146

Trust comes hard to many of us. Living with alcoholism we have learned not to trust. Through recovery and service we are given the opportunity to learn confidence and trust in our trusted servants. Our responsibility is to elect our leaders based on their ability and competence. We can learn to trust that they are doing what is best for Al-Anon. And, we can trust that our Higher Power is overseeing our work.

“Each member puts forth his or her ideas, willing to sacrifice them, believing that the best outcome will come from the discussion.” (*Service Manual* p.69) We need to be respectful with one another as we have our discussions.

Confidence in our partners



Confidence in the competency of our partners:

By supporting our trusted servants, we support the decision of the group conscience.

Consider:

1. Do we announce the topics on our agenda ahead of time so no one is surprised?
2. Do we provide adequate background information to everyone involved ahead of time?
3. Do members have the opportunity to ask questions?

Now, let's review the five basic elements of Knowledge-Based Decision-Making, with some general questions about how we might put them into practice...

1. Do we announce the topic on our agenda ahead of time so no one is surprised?
2. Do we provide adequate background information and clarity on the issue to be discussed to everyone involved, ahead of time?
3. Do members have the opportunity to ask questions?

Consider:

4. How can we create and maintain an atmosphere of trust in our Assembly?
5. Do we have confidence in the competency of our partners?

Let's consider:

4. How can we create and maintain an atmosphere of trust in our Assembly?
5. Do we have confidence in the competency of our partners?



Here are some ways this decision-making process aligns with our spiritual principles:

- Equality - gives equal weight to everyone's opinions and distributes information equally before the discussion.
- Trust - allows thorough examination of all information by encouraging us to keep an open mind.
- Unity - promotes unity when we work together toward a common goal.
- Humility - allows for decisions to be more important than who makes the decisions.
- Respect - allows for a conversation and often a conversation is enough - a motion may not be necessary.

We accept the group conscience:

- ▶ Trust in our Higher Power
- ▶ Hear everyone's ideas
- ▶ Present pertinent information
- ▶ Use spiritual principles
- ▶ Discuss as needed
- ▶ Adhere to the unenforceable
(Twelve Traditions)



Directed by Higher Power

We accept the group conscience because:

- we have trusted that our Higher Power has guided our discussions
- we have had a chance to be heard
- we have had plenty of pertinent information
- we have used our program's spiritual principles
- we have had ample discussion
- we adhere to the unenforceable

Even though the decision may not reflect our cherished opinion, we abide by the group conscience knowing that it is our Higher Power's direction.

How does KBDM help us?

- ▶ Allows time for collection of information to help us make decisions
- ▶ Helps us decide if a topic is one we want to pursue

How does Knowledge-Based Decision-Making help us?

- It allows time and effort in collection of information, not just opinions, to help us make decisions.
- It helps us decide if a topic is one we want to pursue.

Members take responsibility for actions taken because they have had sufficient information and have had ample occasion to have their voices heard. Decisions become “we” decided rather than “they” decided.

Decision makers, who have fully participated in the process, are better able to provide information to their Area, district, group, or AIS because they fully understand the topic.

Sometimes just having information lets a group know if it wants to move forward on an issue or not.

Decisions are not always necessary – information and open discussion are.

In summary:

“By being part of an informed group conscience, gathering the information we need, letting our loving God guide us, and remaining trusted servants, we are all part of the group and support its decisions.”

Paths to Recovery (B-24), p. 145

Let's look at the KBDM process and then the KBDM questions.

KBDM Process

- ▶ Provide background and framing
- ▶ Send out questions
- ▶ Compile responses
- ▶ Share the responses
- ▶ Discuss

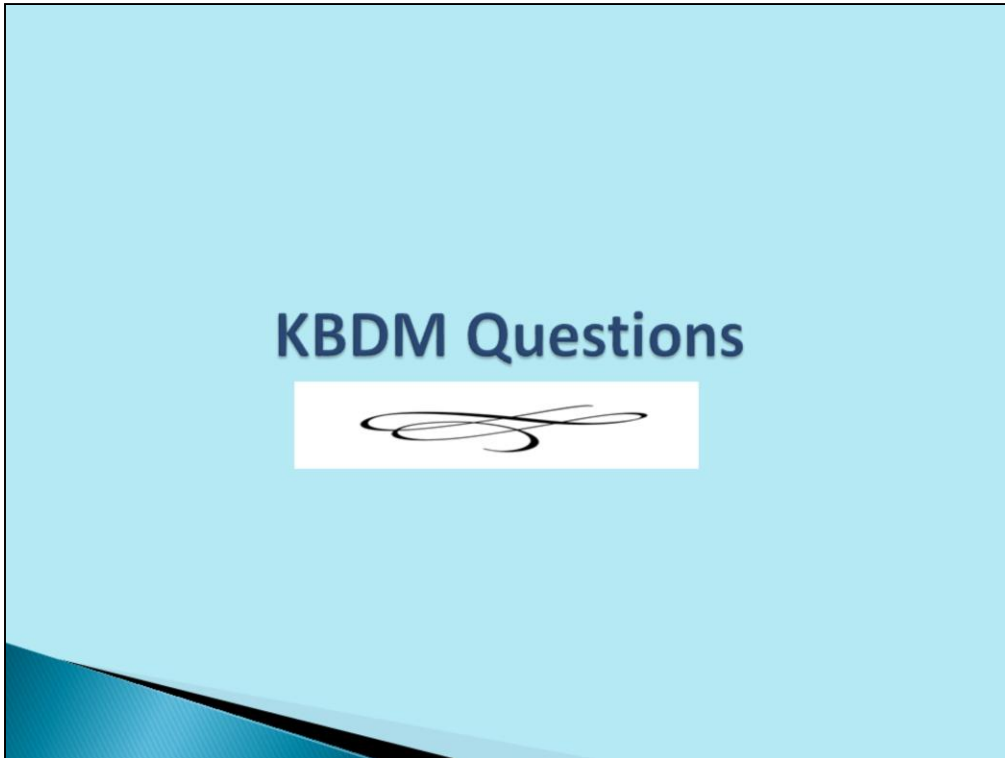
To ensure the best participation, send out the KBDM questions and provide background and framing to give everyone an equal start to the discussion. This should be done well in advance of the meeting.

Compile the responses and share them with the decision-making body in advance of the meeting.

During the discussion, everyone can add to the information. Encourage all input, as there are no wrong responses or opinions. This input will provide a wide variety of information, experience, and perceptions.

Finding responses to each of the questions can form a common basis of information for everyone. Opinions should be backed up by experience, principle, or knowledge so that the information is meaningful. Share the responses with all decision makers.

People may disagree upon what question a response goes under. We all see things slightly differently and some responses can fit in more than one place. *Where* it is recorded is less important than *that* it is recorded. Take enough time to discuss.



Next let's look at the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making questions and how they can help us get the information we need to have an informed group conscience.

These five questions are designed to do just that: reach an informed group conscience. These questions can be enhanced or modified to make them more relevant to the topic at hand.

In order to look at the five questions, our topic will be: **We want to provide Nanaimo bars at every Assembly.**

Question 1

- ▶ What do we know about our members' or prospective members' needs that is relevant to this discussion?

What do we know about our members' or prospective members' needs that is relevant to this discussion?

What are we trying to accomplish, and whom does it serve? What do people need?

Depending on the discussion, some answers to this question may be:

1. We know some members are always hungry.
2. We know members love food.
3. Some members are gluten intolerant.
4. Some members would prefer fruit.

Anything else that we know?

Question 2

- ▶ What do we know about the resources and our vision for the organization that is relevant to this discussion?

What do we know about the resources and our vision for the organization that is relevant to this discussion?

1. We don't know if we have enough money.
2. We have had food in the past and it is always eaten.
3. Making Nanaimo bars are less expensive than buying from a bakery.
4. We know we have some Nanaimo bar makers.
5. Goodies inspire unity.

Question 3

- ▶ What do we know about the current realities and evolving dynamics of the world and our fellowship that is relevant to this discussion?
- ▶ What are the Pros and Cons?

What do we know about the current realities and evolving dynamics of the world and our fellowship that is relevant to this discussion?

For example: Some Nanaimo bars are healthier than others

-Some Nanaimo bars have peanut butter icing.

-There are sugar free Nanaimo bars.

What are the Pros and Cons?

Pros:

-Nanaimo bars make people feel good.

-While we eat Nanaimo bars, we like to talk.

-It might attract members to service.

Cons:

-Nanaimo bars make people think about calories.

-Some might like something else for a snack.

-People who have nut allergies, might not participate in service

Question 4

- ▶ What are the ethical implications of our choices?

In other words :

- ▶ Will our decision be consistent with our spiritual principles?

What are the ethical implications of our choices? **In other words** Will our decision be consistent with our spiritual principles?

Is it within our principles and our policies?

Will it help us fulfill our primary purpose?

Is it within our Traditions?

If we decide to take an action will it be the “right” thing to do?

Is it legal? Just because we are Al-Anon it doesn't mean we are above the law or above other ethical considerations. We live in a changing world and we need to protect our members and our program's name from harm.

Question 5

- ▶ What do we wish we knew, but don't?

What do we wish we knew, but don't?

This is a great question which tells us that before we make a decision, we might need to do some additional work or research to help us make a sound decision. Not every question can be answered but we can sure try to find answers to some questions before moving forward. After our best efforts, we make a decision, trust in our Higher Power, and trust in each other.

Is there any other information we need in order to have an informed group conscience?

Decision...



Now after the five questions have been discussed, consider:

What have you learned?

Do we have enough information to make an informed group conscience?

Do we need more information?

Do we want to:

1. make a motion,
2. table this discussion to allow time to get more information,
3. or drop it?

We now have additional information that some of us didn't know or consider before the five questions.

We have been entrusted to make this decision and now it is up to us.

Let's have a conversation!

- ▶ What did I learn about KBDM today?

Let's have a conversation! Ask yourselves:

What did I learn today about Knowledge-Based Decision-Making in order to arrive at an informed group conscience?

Sharing our experience, strength, and hope

- ▶ Will you share something you've learned today?
- ▶ Do you still have questions?
- ▶ How can you envision using this model in your Area?

Let's have a conversation!

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