

Your Group Services Team Talks Rotation of Service

Being introduced to service positions as newcomers helped us to feel part of the group at a time when we might otherwise have found it difficult to connect with others. For some of us, the simple contribution of reading from one of the pieces of Conference Approved Literature in a meeting began the journey of recovery in service. If even this small act remained only one person's responsibility, it could exclude many people from feeling they belong.

But there are many service opportunities to consider within the group and beyond. Service is about sharing the responsibilities of our Al-Anon group or our service structure. Since the early days of Al-Anon, this principle of service has been important for all to embrace.

Likewise, the concept of rotation of service warrants understanding from the beginning. The general length of time for District and Area service positions is three years. This can work magnificently—the first year is spent learning the responsibilities of the role; the second year is spent effectively carrying out the duties; and by the third year, the experience gained can be shared with the incoming trusted servant. This set length prepares us to rotate out of the position at the end of our term.

But what happens when no one steps up to fill a vacancy? Will the group go unrepresented or disconnected from the District or Area? Will our group funds be mismanaged and our bills become delinquent? How will potential members ever find us if we don't have a way to keep our meeting information current?

It is important to recognize the perils of remaining in a service position at the end of the term simply because no one else volunteers. Groups can become reliant on those who are always ready to take charge. The group's health can suffer when all members don't get the opportunity to serve. Encouraging rotation of service helps to foster the understanding of shared leadership.

It may take a while for members to step into service, and it is okay for a vacancy to exist. Perhaps members can encourage each other to "test-drive" or share a service role. This may lead to serving out the full term. Taking a turn at various service positions can provide experience applying recovery principles that could not be obtained otherwise.

The sense of belonging we may have lost as a result of someone else's drinking can be restored as we serve our fellowship. As we serve, we develop self-esteem and a sense of self-worth. We learn how to listen to others and receive encouragement, love, and support. Service is that third leg of the stool that provides balance, as referenced in the introduction to [*Paths to Recovery—Al-Anon's Steps, Traditions, and Concepts \(B-24\)*](#), and all members deserve the chance to experience it.

Our Cofounder Lois W. wrote a letter to long-time members, which can be found in [*Many Voices, One Journey \(B-31\)*](#) on pages 146–147, about the importance of rotation of service. Her letter says that “if we try to dominate and do not give the newer members a chance to develop, we are stunting our groups and keeping newcomers away.”

Dominance is explained in “Three Obstacles to Success in Al-Anon,” as found in the [*2022–2025 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual \(P-24/27\) v2*](#): “Our leaders are trusted servants; they do not govern. No member of Al-Anon should direct, assume authority, or give advice. Our program is based on suggestion, interchange of experience, and rotation of leadership.”

Rotation of service brings an interchange of experience. Letting go of a service position can be uncomfortable. The next trusted servant may not do things the way we think they should. Such interchange of experience does, however, allow new ideas to be planted. The opportunity to serve helps *all* members practice the principles of Al-Anon. What better expression of self-care is there?

Having regular business meetings in groups, Districts, and Areas to discuss service positions encourages the rotation of service. Concept Four, “Participation is the key to harmony,” helps us understand that when we choose to participate in service, we gain more than we give. When we rotate out of a service position, we allow others that same opportunity to receive in abundance more than can ever be given back. Letting go is one aspect of rotating; participation is another. Rotation of service ensures that we remain healthy in our service positions and our recovery.

As the year comes to an end, consider how you can continue to support your group and links of service by rotating out of current roles and acting as a Service Sponsor to an incoming trusted servant. Or consider challenging yourself with a new service role and seek the support of someone who went before you.

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