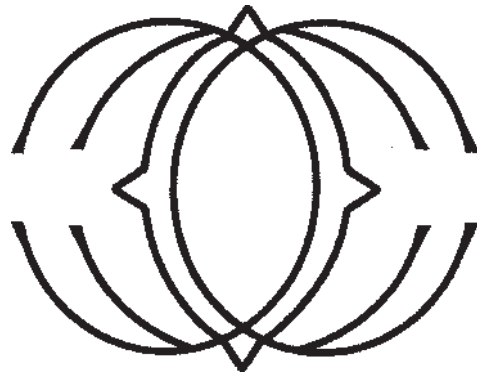


This printable version of the DRA Online Resource Center "Starting a DRA Meeting in your community", will be modified and updated from time to time. Some of the information included is from individual members of our Fellowship and may not accurately reflect the opinions of DRA World Services Inc. or the Fellowship of DRA as a whole.

Dual Recovery Anonymous



DRA TM

For those of us
who experience both
chemical dependency
and an emotional
or psychiatric illness

DRA Online Resource Center Starting a DRA Meeting in Your Community

Helpful Information and Ideas
Internet Version, revised 8/2003

Dual Recovery Anonymous
World Services Central Office
P.O. Box 8107 Prairie Village, Kansas, 66208
Toll Free 877-883-2332

DRA Web site: <http://draonline.org>

Contents

Contact Information	1
First Things First	3
Locating a place to hold your new DRA Meeting	3
Places to hold a DRA Meeting	4
Finding other's who want to attend	
Informing the Community	6
Registration	7
How are DRA meetings structured?	7
Should a DRA meeting be structured or informal?	8
Organization and Service Work	8
Identification and Naming	9
How a DRA Group makes Decisions	10
Your First DRA Meeting	11
A general description of DRA meetings	11
Anonymity and privacy	14

First Things First

You don't need to be an "expert" or have years of perfect recovery to start and help maintain a DRA Group and its meetings.

If you are interested in starting a DRA Group and holding DRA meetings, download or send for the meeting start-up packet (accessible from our main index page). In it is a great deal of the basic information and documents required to run a DRA meeting.

If there are other DRA meetings in your area you may want to ask their secretary or chairperson who started their meeting. See if you can schedule a time to speak with them about your plans. They will usually be glad to offer suggestions and tell you the steps they took to get their meeting off the ground.

Groups grow and evolve and we know of many DRA Groups that were started by people who had never before started or ran a 12 Step meeting of any kind. It is helpful to have a basic understanding of the Steps and Traditions. The 12 Traditions are the basic guiding principles for our Groups, meetings, and service work committees. Any two people who are interested in personal dual recovery may get together and hold a DRA meeting. Once they decide to invite others to join them and continue to hold meetings they can decide to become a DRA Group. DRA Groups hold DRA meetings. Meetings are a function of the Group. A DRA Group may have more than one meeting a week. Some Groups hold several throughout the week and some have just one a week.

If you have never before attended a 12 Step type meeting it would probably be very helpful to locate and attend a local 12 Step Anonymous meeting of some sort a few times to get the feel of how they are run. You may also find it interesting to read our description of what a DRA meeting is like from our document called, "Your First DRA Meeting" elsewhere in this booklet.

Locating a place to hold your new DRA Meeting

DRA Groups hold their meetings in just about any imaginable convenient location. Quite often they find rooms in churches or treatment facilities where they pay a token per use rental fee such as a percentage of their Seventh Tradition donations. This can enhance group autonomy and may help Groups feel more self-supporting. Before they agree to hold their meetings in a particular building or facility, they make it clear to the owner, administrator, or landlord, that they must maintain clear boundaries between their DRA Group's meetings and the establishment or treatment center. Thus, they do not name their meetings after churches, treatment facilities, mental health centers, or any other outside organization.

It is wise to tell the owner or administrator of the location ahead of time the purpose and nature of your meetings. This will help avoid any possible future misunderstanding that might cause disruption to your meeting.

LOCATION: Consider a location that is well known to the recovery community if possible. Try to identify a location that is near major streets, freeways, and bus routes. Take into consideration if there is ample parking space and if the parking area and the entrance to the building have safe lighting during evening hours. In addition, consider if the meeting room that the meeting is to be held in is near the main entrance to the building.

Where to Start

The easiest places to try might be with a service provider or organization that you are already familiar with. These might include:

- Substance Abuse/Chemical Dependency Treatment Center
- Community Mental Health Center or Drop In Center
- Hospital Outpatient Service Center or Day Treatment
- Veterans Center
- Your Church

Contacting a counselor, case manager, or a church elder that you already know may be the easiest way to proceed. Having the Meeting Start-up Informational Packet or at least the “Welcome to DRA” handout to leave with them can be beneficial.

12 Step Clubs

In many cities, AA members have formed Service Clubs. These are places that will often have meeting space available and may also offer other services such as a coffee shop; pool tables, community space, social events, and they may sell recovery literature. In many cases (but not all) they will allow various non AA 12 Step organizations to utilize their meeting rooms for a modest per use fee.

You can locate these clubhouses by contacting your local AA or NA Intergroup or local contact phone numbers. Look in the phone book under Alcoholism, Drug Treatment, Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous, Recovery Club or Alano Club.

Churches and other public spaces

Obtain published meeting schedules from AA NA, OA and any other 12 Step organization and notice where those meetings are held in your area. Quite often you will notice the same addresses coming up over and over again. In many communities certain churches, schools, or public facilities have developed a long history of allowing the various 12 Step organizations to utilize their unused rooms for meetings. They have realized the benefit to the community that such 12 Step Recovery meetings have. Many times, churches will rent space for 12 Step meetings at token rates; they understand many Groups have few financial resources.

Our Online Institutional Educational Session/Mock Meeting Database

The DRA Online Resource Center at <http://draonline.org> maintains a listing of various institutions and service providers who choose to list their facility with us that hold some sort of DRA Educational Sessions or Mock Meetings. In some cases these organizations may be open to the idea of starting an actual DRA 12 Step meeting on their premises. They may have clients or alumni who are interested in helping to start a local DRA Group in the community. They may be aware of new local DRA meetings that are as yet unregistered with the DRA World Services Central Office.

Places to hold a DRA Meeting

A DRA Group may hold their meeting just about anywhere that is acceptable to its members. The Following list is not complete but may offer some additional ideas:

- Substance Abuse/Chemical Dependency Treatment Center
- Community Mental Health Center
- Day or Drop In Center

- Integrated Services or Treatment Center for people with a dual diagnosis
- Hospital Outpatient Service Center or Day Treatment.
- Churches, Synagogues, Faith based buildings and counseling services
- Veterans Hospitals, Medical Centers, Outreach and Counseling Services, Domiciliary
- Mental Health Advocacy Organizations
- 12 Step and AA Service Clubs (Alano, U.R.S., or 12 x 12 Clubs)
- Community and Senior Centers (often run by the city or parks department)
- University and Community Collage Campuses (Make sure meeting room is open to the public year round and between terms)
- Social Service Agencies and Community Centers
- Advocacy Agencies and Alliances for Consumers of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
- Transitional Housing Facility, Halfway House
- Community Rooms of Apartment Complexes
- Municipal buildings, clubs, and lodges
- Conference rooms in local utilities and businesses
- Public libraries, YMCA/YWCA, health clubs
- Town hall or conference rooms in city government buildings

We know of DRA meetings that are held in private homes. Please take into account that you will be opening your home to ‘anyone’ who calls himself or herself a DRA member. This can cause issues with your anonymity, privacy, and may even affect your homeowner’s insurance rates. Please weigh all the possible implications before deciding to hold public DRA meetings in your private home or apartment. If a private home is all you have to start out with, it is a good idea to be on the lookout for a neutral public place as soon as possible. That way you don’t have to worry about a member accidentally breaking a priceless family heirloom or spilling coffee on your furniture and neither do the members who come to the meetings.

Remember that DRA Groups are autonomous. The meeting you start should be able to continue on even if you lose interest or your living situation changed abruptly. Perhaps this is the single best argument for holding meetings in neutral public facilities.

Finding other's who want to attend

Informing the Community

One of the keys to starting and maintaining a successful DRA Meeting is having enough interested people who are willing to attend regularly and perhaps become involved in the Group's service work. We have found that in most communities there are plenty of people who are interested in personal dual recovery and DRA meetings. It's a matter of getting the message about your new DRA meeting out to the right people and places.

There are several ways that a group can begin to inform the community:

DRA FELLOWSHIP: There may already be DRA meetings being held in the community. DRA Groups are run by DRA members that volunteer to become part of the Group's Service Work Committee. Group Service Work Committees guide and coordinate activities that help to carry the message of DRA to those in need and perform needed Group functions called service work that help keep the meeting going. There may also be a DRA Area Intergroup that conducts monthly meetings. In some communities, DRA members that form Service Committees produce schedules of meetings, have answering services, or print DRA newsletters to inform the community of a new meeting. They are all ways of working with the DRA Fellowship to announce a new meeting.

NETWORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY SERVICES: Providing information in order to carry the message of recovery is different than the concept of "promotion". A DRA group may want to design and reproduce brochures or flyers that provide information about DRA and offer a list of area meetings. Flyers and brochures may be mailed or faxed to other recovery self help groups, professional service providers, religious or spiritual organizations, recovery magazines or bookstores, and consumer or advocacy organizations. There may be community service providers and organizations that produce newsletters. Frequently, they identify new resources in their community and may offer to feature information on DRA and new meetings.

MEDIA: There are city and community newspapers that feature articles on health related issues. In addition, they may also provide public service information and list self help groups that meet in their community. Information about the DRA program and a list of DRA meetings may be provided to news agencies.

PERSONAL CONTACT: Members of the DRA group may want to personally visit the agencies and organizations that they intend to send brochures and flyers to. The purpose of the visit is to provide information about the DRA program and local meetings. It will also be helpful to provide printed materials for the people they are meeting with. In that way, those people will be able to share the information with their co-workers who in turn, can pass the information on to the men and women they provide services to.

Printed Flyers

One of the most effective ways to let the community know about your new meeting is by using printed flyers or handout sheets. The DRA web site has flyers suitable for this that you can download and print out. They include a place to write in your meeting information and some basic information about DRA. If you have a computer and printer you can design and print your own too.

You should ask permission before posting these flyers at recovery clubs or bulletin boards at treatment centers and social services agencies. Making a personal visit to treatment centers and community mental health centers where possible may open lines of communication that lead to new members or resources. Staff members may take an interest in the new meeting as an additional resource for their

clients. If the facility or institution is already registered in DRA's educational session and mock meeting database, they will already know about DRA and will be glad to see new meetings starting in their communities.

Telephone

People may need additional information or want to confirm that the meeting is still in existence or the information they have about time and location is current. A telephone number with an answering machine or messaging service is almost indispensable. This can be your own home phone, a voice mail service, or perhaps if you hold your meetings at a public facility such as a community mental health center or treatment center, they may allow you to use their phone number and offer to give meeting time and directions to callers. Please discuss this issue with the facility director or someone in authority before publishing their phone number.

Registration

Registering your new meeting with DRA World Services as soon as possible is a good way to let people know of your meeting. People often call the World Service Central Office toll-free phone number or look on our web site for meeting information in their area. Registering your new meeting and keeping the information current is one important way your Group can help carry the message of DRA. and let interested people know when and where your meeting is.

Mail

We get a lot of calls from professionals who are looking for meetings in their area to refer clients and consumers to. If and when the Group's budget will allow, it can help to send your printed flyer, or a "Welcome to DRA" handout along with your meeting information to local professionals. These may be sent to substance abuse treatment centers, mental health care facilities, community social service agencies, local chapters of NAMI (National Alliance for the Mentally Ill) and other advocacy organizations, private therapists, counseling agencies, shelters, and hospitals that provide substance abuse and mental health services.

How a new DRA can grow and begin to be organized

How are DRA meetings structured?

GROUP AUTONOMY: Every DRA group may decide for itself how they want to structure their meetings. They are free to decide what approach will best meet the recovery needs of their members. By using our Twelve Traditions as guidelines, all of our meetings will have a familiar and accepting feeling no matter where a member of our Fellowship may travel.

CLOSED OR OPEN MEETINGS: The first decision that most groups make is to decide whether their meeting will be closed or open.

Closed: A closed meeting is held for DRA members and individuals who are concerned about their own personal recovery. There may be members who only feel comfortable talking about their dual recovery in a group setting that is attended by other DRA members. There may also be individuals who are concerned about their confidentiality. Those individuals want their dual recovery and participation to remain a private matter. Anonymity is the right of every DRA member and must be respected at all times. Anyone attending a "Closed Meeting" must consider themselves a member of DRA according to our Second Tradition.

Open: An open meeting is held for DRA members, and individuals who are concerned about their personal recovery. In addition, it is also open for non DRA members to attend. For example, an open meeting may be attended by a family member or friend of someone in DRA. An open meeting might also be attended by someone who is looking for help for a loved one or friend who is affected by a dual disorder. An open meeting also provides a good opportunity for the fellowship to carry the message to others who may not have another means of learning about DRA.

MEETING FORMAT: Perhaps the majority of DRA meeting will follow the DRA Meeting Format as they open and close their meetings. The Meeting Format is presented in The Dual Disorders Recovery Book which describes the DRA program. It is also provided to individuals who contact DRA Central Service Office requesting information about the DRA program.

The Meeting Format provides an outline of how to open and close a DRA meeting. It presents the philosophy and purpose of DRA, in addition to presenting the Twelve Steps. The Meeting Format is divided into eight parts that include: Opening, Preamble, Announcements, Introductions, Accepting Differences, Getting Started In Dual Recovery, Roundtable Discussion, and Closing.

Should a DRA meeting be structured or informal?

Each group is free to decide if their meetings will be structured or informal. The group will decide on the approach that will best meet the needs of their members.

Most groups will open and close their meetings by following the DRA Meeting Format. The person who is chairing the meeting or another member will choose a topic for discussion. The topic may be on one of the Twelve Steps or a recovery theme. At that point, groups may differ on the way they conduct their discussions.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS: Some groups will follow a structured approach in the way they have their discussions. Each person sitting around a table or in a circle will have an opportunity to share when it is their turn. If they want to listen and would rather not speak at that time, they simply say, “I pass”.

OPEN GROUP APPROACH: Some groups will begin a meeting by following the Meeting Format, choosing a topic and open the meeting for discussion. Members take turns sharing, each waiting until another member has finished. However, they do not formally go in turn around a table or circle.

CROSS TALK DISCUSSION: Some groups will begin a meeting by following the Meeting Format to open the meeting and choose a topic. The members of the group will interact directly with each other in a manner that is referred to as “cross talk”. Some groups do prefer that approach for their discussions and feel that it is more direct and informal.

Organization and Service Work

A DRA Group functions with the willing efforts of its Service Workers. Service work starts at the Group level. Groups may form Group Service Work Committees that help guide and coordinate activities and to help keep the Group focused and stay on task. Service positions are usually rotated and can be as simple as a three-month commitment to set up the chairs and tables or put out literature each meeting, to a longer commitment to be a Group Officer such as the Group’s Treasurer or Service Representative. These are suggested guidelines and each Group may decide to add, delete, or combine certain responsibilities as necessary for their particular needs. Service positions do not imply authority or bring any special honor and distinction. We all have an equal partnership in dual recovery. Our leaders are service committee volunteers and do not govern.

ELECTING OFFICERS: A new DRA Group can benefit from electing officers to fill Group Service

Committee positions as they start the organizational process. The purpose of electing officers is twofold: First, having officers may help the group avoid the problem of having a single person assume the responsibility of doing all of the “leg work” for the entire group. That single individual may eventually begin to feel over stressed or burned out. When that occurs it is not healthy for either that person or the group as a whole. In addition, that individual may begin to feel that no one else is helping (even if they never asked for help). At the same time the other members may begin to feel that the other person is taking control of the group.

Second, having officers that form the Group’s Service Work Committee may help the group develop a strong core of support. They will feel more committed to attend meetings as the group is beginning to become more established. In addition, group officers will be more likely to share in the tasks that are required to help establish a new meeting.

IDENTIFYING OFFICERS: Every DRA group is free to give their officers any titles with which the group is comfortable. They may be identified as: chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, treasurer, and group service representative.

DUTIES: Every DRA group is free to designate the duties of their officers. Traditionally, the officers schedule and conduct regular business meetings. The business meetings are also open for members of the group to attend.

The Group’s Service Work Committee officers are usually the members who are responsible for registering the Group’s meetings with DRA World Services . The purpose of registering a group and listing their meetings is to have them be a part of the DRA International Directory. That is important not only for the group, but as a way to help carry the message to others. The DRA World Services Office frequently receives calls from people who request information about meetings in a specific location. The caller may be a DRA member who is planning to visit or relocate to a particular location. The caller may be an individual who has recently learned about DRA while in a chemical dependency or mental health program or in a corrections facility, and wishes to locate a meeting. In addition, the caller may be someone who is looking for help for a loved one or friend.

Identification and Naming

Groups often name themselves. In keeping with the spirit of the Sixth Tradition we have found it advisable to make sure our group names do not give the appearance of being linked to any outside enterprise, organization, political or religious institution, or treatment center. Ever mindful to keep principles before personalities we discourage naming groups after people, living or dead.

Due to our Tradition of non-affiliation and to help limit confusion in the public at large, DRA Groups that incorporate the words “**Double Trouble**” or “**Dual Diagnosis**” in their names will have “DRA Group” or similar wording appended to their names in our public database when they register their meetings. We respect other dual recovery organizations and must certainly distinguish our Fellowship’s Groups and meetings from meetings of organizations with those words in their names.

Self Support

Tradition Seven reminds us, “DRA groups ought to be self-supporting.” The principle of support is a process or cycle that occurs on several levels within our Fellowship: Group, Meeting, Sponsorship, and Personal. It may be expressed in many ways as cycles:

- “In order to offer support, we need support.”
- “We receive support, in order to offer support.”

Many of us have begun our dual recovery during periods of distress: physical, psychological, social,

financial and spiritual. Gradually, we begin to feel more stable in our dual recovery and want to help others through the DRA Group's Service Work.

DRA Groups work to carry our message and provide support through Service Work. The Group members develop the skills to coordinate their activities and manage their Group's finances. The Group's members offer contributions as they are able to (as there are no membership dues or fees in DRA). Frequently, a contribution 'basket' is passed at some point during a meeting. Members are free to contribute whatever amount they feel they can offer, without any sense of pressure to do so.

Groups must first meet basic needs. Those needs may include: literature, the fee (if there is a fee) for the meeting location, coffee, and other DRA related expenses as approved by the Group Conscience. As the Group grows, they may use some of their financial reserves to expand their meetings or hold special events. Latter they may use monies above their prudent reserves to help broaden the efforts of local area Intergroups and to help support the efforts of the DRA World Service Central Office.

Experience has shown that nothing can so surely damage a Group's spiritual footing as arguments and resentments over money. We do not need to accumulate wealth beyond a prudent reserve. Our Groups avoid debt and financial entanglement. DRA Groups may carry the message of hope and recovery out into their communities as they grow and as their Seventh Tradition contributions will allow.

How a DRA Group makes Decisions

The Fifth Traditions states, "Each group is independent, to better meet the recovery needs of our members. We are sensitive to the well-being and unity of other groups and to D.R.A. as a whole."

DRA groups are free to operate in ways that work best for them as long as they remain free from any outside influence. They can make their own mistakes and they learn from them. There are only two limits to this freedom: groups shall not do anything that will injure DRA as a whole and decisions affecting the group are made by taking an informed group conscience. All members have an equal voice.

DRA groups will face many decisions such as how long terms of service will be for the group's various service positions, should the meeting be smoking or non-smoking, or how will the treasurer handle the group's money. Through an informed group conscience taking, groups seek a substantial unanimity on issues before setting group policies or taking definitive actions that affect the group or its membership.

An "informed group conscience" is usually taken at a business meeting when all of the group's active members are aware the issues are up for discussion and have had some time to contemplate them. The idea is for all willing group members to fully share their individual points of view without interruption. Placing principles before personalities each member has an equal voice. A preset maximum amount of time may be allotted each member for sharing so no one monopolizes the process. The group works slowly until a clear sense of a collective view emerges and then a vote is taken. The Twelve Traditions and the principles of the Twelve Steps are the group's guides. An informed group conscience taking seeks the spiritual expression of the conscience of the group.

DRA members who travel and visit DRA meetings in other towns may find the meeting formats differ and some of the practices feel strange but at root the principles of the Steps and Traditions affirms our common goals and Fellowship in dual recovery.

DRA trusts the autonomy of the group and the group conscience explicitly. Mistakes will be made but each DRA group will eventually find and conform to the standards and principles that have ensured the survival and success of Twelve Step groups throughout the world.

Many DRA groups will periodically hold a group inventory meeting to evaluate how well they are adhering to the principles of the Twelve Traditions. This is a good chance for the group to discuss how well it is carrying the message of hope and recovery as a group and if it is meeting the needs of its members.

Your First DRA Meeting

Getting to a first ever DRA or any other Twelve Step meeting can be a big step forward in recovery but the fear of going to that very first meeting can be a big obstacle. For those of us with certain anxiety disorders and other psychiatric illnesses, this fear may feel overwhelming. A certain amount of anxiety and discomfort in these situations is entirely normal for all of us whether we have a dual diagnosis or not. Going to new places and being around people we've never met in the context of a new and unfamiliar experience is not easy. It is our hope to ease this apprehension by describing some of the common things that happen inside of a meeting and offer some general information about meetings.

Meetings are held in various locations including: churches, community centers, public buildings, recovery clubs, and sometimes private homes. They are held in just about any convenient place where space can be rented or donated for a public gathering. Some DRA meetings are held inside of hospitals and treatment facilities for the benefit of the facilities' clients and DRA members at large.

Meetings may be either **Open meetings**, (family members and the interested public may attend) or **Closed meetings**, (for members only).

In Dual Recovery Anonymous, there are no dues or fees for membership. D.R.A. has only two requirements for membership; a desire to stop using alcohol and other intoxicating drugs, and a desire to manage our emotional or psychiatric illness in a healthy and constructive way. Anyone who feels they may personally have a dual diagnosis and has even the smallest desire to get better can consider themselves a member of DRA. If you think you may meet the requirements and call yourself a member, then you are.

A general description of DRA meetings

Meetings vary considerably in their specific rituals, patterns, and format, from place to place and each has its own style and feeling. Most are an hour long. One thing to keep in mind is that the very nature of a DRA 12 Step meeting is to carry the message of hope to those who are in need. The first one of our Twelve Traditions states, "The primary purpose of D.R.A. is to carry the message of recovery to men and women who experience a dual disorder." That means the new person who is attending for the first few times is an indispensable part of the whole. You are wanted and welcome and have an open invitation to come and see if our fellowship is for you.

Generally members arrive a few minutes early and find a seat. Sometimes chairs are arranged in rows, sometimes in a circle, or around tables. These gatherings are very casual *come as you are* affairs. Some people may be on their way to or from work. Some may be coming from treatment facilities. Some may be parents, others are retirees, or even high school students. Before the meeting begins there is usually friendly chatter and many meetings have a pot of coffee brewing for anyone who wants a cup.

There are several types of meetings:

- Discussion meetings *
- Book or Step Study meetings
- Speaker meetings
- H&I (Hospital and Institution) outreach meetings

Discussion meetings are the most common. A Discussion meeting is described below in some detail. Book or Step Study meetings are vary similar except they are focused on particular recovery books or the study of the Twelve Steps. Typically groups read selections from “The Dual Disorders Recovery Book” or “The Twelve Steps and Dual Disorders” and then members take turns commenting on it from their own experience and perspective. Speaker meetings are more of a lecture or motivational/informational talk by someone with a lot of recovery experience. H & I outreach meetings are a free Twelfth-Step service provided by some DRA groups and Intergroups. DRA members go into hospitals, treatment facilities, or prisons to set up and run a DRA meeting. This helps carry the message of recovery and hope to individuals otherwise unable to attend DRA meetings.

Discussion Meetings *

(A chairperson will bring the meeting to order with an announcement.)

“Welcome to the Wednesday night, New Solutions Group, of Dual Recovery Anonymous. This is a closed meeting where we can discuss the Steps and matters of personal recovery. This meeting is open to DRA members and to other individuals who are concerned about their personal recovery. My name is Caroline, and I am in dual recovery.”

“Will you join me for a moment of silence, followed by the Serenity Prayer?”

(The chairperson is silent for a a few moments and the room becomes quite still. Then she leads the group in saying the following prayer. You don't have to pray along, you can just listen if you wish.)

*“God grant me the Serenity
To accept the things I cannot change,
The Courage to change the things I can,
And the Wisdom to know the difference.”*

(The chairperson then asks certain members to read various pieces of DRA literature. She usually hands the printed documents out before the meeting starts. Different meetings may omit or add to this list, or change the order.)

“Would someone please read the Preamble.” ...And whoever has it will read it aloud. Then she will ask someone else to read the 12 Traditions, Getting Started in DRA which includes the 12 Steps, and Accepting Differences.

(Then the chairperson may make a few general statements about how the sharing is done, possibly ask if there are any people from out of town or who are new to DRA, and welcome them to the meeting.)

“This is a closed meeting where we can discuss the Steps and matters of personal recovery. Everyone will have an opportunity to share as we go around the room. If you do not wish to share, simply say ‘Pass’. Please limit your sharing to 5 min. Also, please limit side talk in respect to the person sharing.”

“If anyone needs to leave early, please raise your hand, so that we can make sure you have a chance to share.”

(At this point the chairperson will usually share for a few minutes about his or her own experience, strength, and hope, in dual recovery. She may tell part of her personal story. She may pick a recovery topic to set the general theme of the meeting to follow, but members are always free to speak on any issues they may need to share at that time. After the chairperson has shared she will open up the meeting for other members to share.)

(Sometimes the sharing is done in turn around a circle. Sometimes the chairperson will simply point to or ask particular members if they wish to share, and in some meetings a person raises their hand and volunteers to share. If someone happens to be called upon or is otherwise asked to speak and does not care to do so, the standard replies for polite refusal are “Thanks, I’ll pass” or “Thanks, I’ll just listen tonight.” Everyone understands and accepts this and no pressure is applied to try to change the person’s mind who prefers not to speak.)

(Halfway through most meetings the chairperson calls for the Seventh Tradition. A basket is usually passed around and members make small donations to pay for the coffee, rent, and associated costs of running the meeting. There is no requirement or pressure to donate.)

“At this time we will pause for the Seventh Tradition. This Tradition reminds us that every DRA group is self-supporting. All donations are used for rent, literature and other group expenses.”
As the basket is being passed around the room the chairperson may ask if anyone has any recovery related announcements. (Some meetings have intermissions.) **“Now we will take a ten minute smoke break.”**

(After the 7th Tradition the chairperson brings the meeting back to order and sharing resumes.)

“My name is Caroline and I’m still a grateful recovering addict and alcoholic with a dual disorder. This is a closed meeting where we can discuss the Steps and matters of personal recovery. Everyone will have an opportunity to share as we continue to go around the room. If you do not wish to share, simply say ‘Pass’. Please limit your sharing to 5 min. Also, please limit side talk in respect to the person sharing.”

(Near the end of the meeting the chairperson ends the sharing and begins to close the meeting.)

“Tradition Twelve reminds us of our need for anonymity. We ask that you do not repeat the names of anyone who has attended this meeting or talk about what has been shared. Only by exercising this tradition can DRA provide a setting where we can feel safe to share in a way that will help our dual recovery.”

“If you know someone who might find help from the DRA program, feel free to bring them to a DRA meeting. However, PLEASE, bring them only if they express a personal interest. Recovery is always a matter of personal choice. We can do our best when we carry the message and practice the program. Would all who care to, join me in the Serenity Prayer?”

(All meetings are different. Some other 12 Step groups end with “The Lord’s Prayer”. It’s common practice at the end of many meetings for members to form a large circle and hold hands while saying the final prayer. Many members who may be uneasy saying these prayers still enjoy being part of the circle but they remain silent. Often, at the end of the prayer, everyone loudly says “Keep Coming Back, It Works!!!”)

(After that some members may help clean up the room, stack or move chairs, and put the coffee away. Some will hurry off and some will visit for a few minutes. It’s often a friendly time where people will introduce themselves to new members and invite them back.)

Identifying yourself

Some members begin their shares by identifying themselves as alcoholics or addicts and may include their diagnosis. It’s not uncommon to hear someone start out by saying “My name is Joe C., and I’m an alcoholic and manic depressive.” Others may simply state their names or add that they are in dual recovery. It is not required in order to speak, to identify or “label” oneself as an alcoholic, addict, or to identify one’s particular psychiatric diagnosis, though many members choose to do so. Some people prefer to identify themselves as ‘recovering’ alcoholics or addicts, and other’s just give their first

name. Newcomers are entirely free to say whatever they like about themselves in this regard. Since everyone present remembers their own first meeting, there is a great deal of empathy and acceptance of newcomers.

Anonymity and privacy

DRA meetings do not take attendance or keep membership roles, though there may be certain security requirements at some treatment facilities, hospitals, and other institutional facilities. It is traditional in 12 Step meetings to identify oneself by first name or first name and last initial only, though it is not a rule. Almost all meetings include a reminder to keep everything that is said in the meeting confidential. This tradition or right to anonymity and privacy, is taken very seriously by those who are familiar with most 12 Step programs. At many meetings, the chairperson will repeat a common 12 Step saying to remind everyone of the importance of confidentiality and anonymity, “Whom you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here.”

Before and After

DRA meetings generally begin and end on time. Some people usually arrive early and socialize before the meeting actually begins. After the meeting ends there is usually a period of time when people again socialize as they slowly filter out. We know these informal times can cause anxious moments for the newcomer. After a couple more meetings you will get to know the routine and the people well enough to feel more at ease.

During these before-and-after times you may be offered names and phone numbers by other members along with an offer to be of help if needed. This is a DRA and 12 Step Tradition of service and helping others. Please don't worry. No one is trying to sell you anything or take advantage of you. One of the most common tools of staying clean and sober is having other member's phone numbers to call when we get cravings in early sobriety.

What to share?

Many people who are new to DRA meetings and dual recovery choose to “just listen” during their first several meetings. This is just fine. Eventually they may ask the chairperson if they can read one of the shorter pieces of DRA literature at the beginning of the meeting to sort of “try out” speaking at meetings. Their first real ‘share’ may be very short and simple such as, “My name is George. I'm kind of down today, but I am really grateful to be here. Thank you.” Eventually George will feel more fully accepted and more at ease. Then he may wish to share more about why he is feeling down and what recovery tools he is learning to use that help him cope constructively with his feelings. He may better understand how not to revert back to drinking or drugging to numb the pain and he may wish to share that knowledge and experience with others.

God talk and prayer

The DRA is not affiliated with any religion, nor does it endorse or have opinions about them. There is no religious requirement for DRA attendance. Members are free to believe whatever they choose to believe, or choose not to believe. There are many agnostics and atheists in DRA, as well as many members of traditional, neo-pagan, ethnic, and so called new-age religions. For further information on this issue please see the DRA Questions and Answers document or the DRA pamphlet called, A Spiritual Dimension.

Who's the boss

In DRA we are all equal. There are no leaders. The chairperson, group secretary, treasurers, and such are all volunteers taking their turn doing “service work”. They do not govern. It would seem to be the

very formula for chaos but experience has shown that our common experience in dual recovery along with the guiding principles of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions leads us to a common goal of personal recovery and group harmony.

And finally

DRA is made of a diverse and often colorful collection of people with all kinds of personalities and issues in addition to that of their dual no-fault illnesses. Individual meetings also tend to acquire a special flavor and “personality” of their own. It is a good idea to go to several different meetings to find one that feels right to you. The DRA welcomes you with open arms!