

The Role of the Supporter

What I may dismiss as valueless may someday turn out to be very valuable indeed.

~A Restful Mind

What is the Role of the Supporter?

Since Dual Recovery Anonymous (DRA) was founded in 1989, our community has valued the role of the supporter. While many people in recovery may take leadership or service positions, founder Tim Hamilton organized the program to include people who are not in dual recovery in the role of supporter or as “assistants.” Here is a breakdown of the ways in which supporters are needed (Questions & Answers Document, page 12).

Organizing the Meetings

Finding a good place and time for a DRA meeting is the first step in creating a solid recovery group. DRA meetings can be held in a variety of places: Clubhouses, Hospitals, and Recovery Centers are just a few examples of where DRA meetings are held. Some of these locations have staff that may take on the role of the supporter; they may help to organize the room, day, and time of the meetings. The specifics of these choices are important. Is the room private? Is it on a day that works best for the community? Does the time gel with the schedule of the environment? These issues are just a few thoughts to consider when organizing a meeting.

Recruiting New Members

Sometimes a supporter is the first person to initiate a meeting. Finding people who are in dual recovery and are interested in helping with this process is key to developing a new meeting. Hanging signs, attending lunches, offering rides, and keeping the day and time of a meeting consistent are just a few ways to recruit new members. Working with the community as a whole to raise awareness about the meeting is important. If people don't know about the meeting, then they won't attend. Also, DRA meetings are for people recovering from *all types* of addictions and *any* mental health challenge. Establishing a welcoming environment for all types of recovery is a helpful way to draw interest to the meeting.

Chairing the Meetings

As a rule, DRA meetings follow the DRA Format as established by founder Tim Hamilton. Following the Format sets the tone for the meeting. It highlights the key ingredients to DRA including the 12 Steps, the Preamble, and Accepting Differences. The person who opens the meeting by “kicking off” the Format is often called a chair, host, or facilitator. Choosing the reading for the day or guiding the Step-work is another role of the chair. The meeting topic is prompted at the end of the Format Opening and helps to structure the time.

A question often asked is: Who should chair the meeting? The answer to this is everyone! Ideally, the chair or better yet, co-chairs of the meeting should change frequently. Encouraging new members to chair is a useful way of getting people involved and helps members to take responsibility for the group, it is an opportunity for service and helps to strengthen recovery. For these reasons, supporters may find that it is best to chair only when necessary, passing the opportunity around to others in an effort to facilitate good recovery throughout the community.

Modeling Good Self Care

Should a supporter participate? In ALANON, a community of individuals indirectly impacted by addiction get together to work on their own health and wellness by using the 12 Steps. In DRA, supporters are welcome to do this as well. DRA is an opportunity to work on yourself, regardless of your specific challenges. The 12 Steps can be applied to any challenge in life, not just drugs and alcohol. However, some supporters may feel that it is better to hold off sharing and keep the focus on the members who are in dual recovery; either of these approaches are appropriate. There is no single, correct way of helping out and supporting the community.

Supporting the Community

Sometimes the role of the supporter feels like a management position. That is understandable given the leadership skills necessary to being a strong supporter. However, it is important to remember that the role of the supporter is a service position, not a position of authority. All participants in a DRA meeting should be answering to the group conscience and checking in with the community regularly.

Also, it is important to remember that DRA is a *self*-help group where participants explore their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Supporters can best help this process with an earnest attempt to do the next-right-thing in their own lives in a humble and transparent manner. In DRA we relate to each other through our humanity, supporters and members alike.

Challenging Moments

DRA is a place for healing. Each participant brings their own valuable perspective to the community and DRA members are welcome to share about their lives in a way that is helpful to them without crosstalk or judgement from the community. No topic is off limits and at times participants may be triggered by one another. It may be helpful for supporters to encourage members to refrain from being overly graphic however, it is not the role of the supporter to “police” the participants during the meeting. Instead, it is helpful to have a generally encouraging attitude and hopefully relate to the very real struggles that are shared. Supporters may also choose to offer a kind ear to participants individually either during or after a meeting in an effort to help them feel comfortable and safe. Sometimes one-on-one conversations are needed when feelings get stirred.

Cultivating a Healthy Meeting

When meetings are on a roll, there will be a consistent and dedicated community of participants invested in dual recovery. However, most meetings go through periods with less involvement. This can be especially true when meetings are being newly formed. Participation at a meeting may be sparse and it’s important not to get discouraged. Each member is encouraged to get involved at a pace that works for them, without undue pressure or expectations. That being said, there are plenty of ways to generate enthusiasm in a meeting. Sharing a new meditation reading or pulling Fishbowl Topics can help to keep members invested. Also, creating a supportive, safe, and predictable environment for members gives the meeting an important value and will keep people coming back!

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