

# Steps in St Kilda Beginners Meeting

## Chairperson's Script

Introduce yourself and welcome members and newcomers.

Explain that this is a **Beginners Meeting** and that:

- The meeting is in the format of a 'discussion' with topics suggested from the floor. We like to have about four or five topics suggested.
- You are welcome to share if you identify as an alcoholic and have not had a drink today.
- Focus is placed on the first three steps of recovery and problems encountered by beginners.
- New members are encouraged to share and to suggest topics.
- All discussion should be directed through the chair.
- Speakers are requested to be brief and to stay on topic.

Ask each member introduce themselves by first name and Home Group (if they have one) and to suggest a topic for discussion. Take a note of the names and the topics suggested.

Select topics to be discussed and ask members to share on each topic. (See over the page for some suggestions on how to direct the meeting.)

If insufficient topics have been suggested: call for others to be suggested, select one from the list of suggested topics provided or suggest one of your own.

If members arrive late: at an appropriate break ask them to identify.

**Soon after 8:00pm:** stop for the final question.

- We always finish the meeting with this question –  
"What's been the best thing about being sober this week?"

Ask each member to share briefly on this question.

Hand back to the Secretary

# Suggestions for Chairing the Beginners Meeting

Here are some ideas to consider when chairing the Steps in St Kilda Beginners meeting. These are not hard and fast rules, but are suggestions that come from the group's collective experience.

## The focus of the meeting

The important thing about chairing a Beginners Meeting is to bring out the aspects of the AA program that are especially important to newcomers. So the focus of the meeting is on the first three steps and the experience of early sobriety.

The chairperson needs to be familiar with the format and also be aware of who is new in the room and which members have been around a while.

Newcomers need to feel welcome and be encouraged to participate. At the same time, they should not feel under pressure to share or say anything if they don't want to.

For the other members in the room, a Beginners Meeting is an opportunity to practice their 12<sup>th</sup> Step by carrying the AA message.

## To start off the meeting, select a topic related to the First Step

Always start the meeting with a topic related to the First Step. As newcomers, we need to first identify with the problem, then we are willing to listen for the solution.

Examples:

1. How do I know I am an alcoholic?
7. Why is one drink "too many"?
13. What brought us out of denial?
19. Why did we decide to stop drinking?
25. Why do we need abstinence?
31. When did we first notice that we were different from 'normal drinkers'?
37. How did we take Step One?
61. What made us admit defeat?

If none like this have been suggested, it's OK for you to throw one in yourself and ask someone you know to start the meeting by sharing about it.

It's good to call a few members who are early around to share on this type of topic. And it's often good to end this topic by calling an older member who is likely to talk about the disease concept.

## Start with someone who is familiar with the format

Start by calling a member you know has been to the meeting before. It's uncomfortable for a person, no matter how long they have been sober, to be asked to share first when they are not familiar with the format and don't know what to do or how long to share.

## Discourage applause after each speaker

In this meeting, we generally don't applaud after each speaker – it can seem judgemental when some get more enthusiastic applause than others. We simply say 'thanks'.

If it starts to happen, you can suggest that we save applause for the end of the meeting when we are giving out sobriety chips.

## Order the topics logically

Select topics in an order that progresses logically. It generally works best to start with topics about the problems, move through to topics that are about the program and solutions, and end with positive topics. People remember a meeting through what they 'felt' during a meeting more than what they heard, so we want members to identify early and then leave with hope in their hearts.

## Include newcomers

When a newcomer has brought up a topic and shared about it, it is tempting for the chairperson to immediately call an older member to give the "correct answer". But it's usually best to get some other relative newcomers to share on the topic first. This lets beginners see that other newcomers have the same questions and are feeling the same way. This identification is as important as hearing about the solution. You can then call a more experienced member before moving on to the next topic.

## Who not to call

Members are welcome to share if they "identify as an alcoholic and have not had a drink today". At the start of the meeting, when everyone is identifying with their first name and home group, take note of anyone who identifies as an "addict", "observer" or a "member of alanon". These people don't get called to speak. (Those that identify as "alcoholic / addict" are OK to share).

If someone reveals that they have been drinking that day, it is OK to interrupt them and suggest that they talk to members after the meeting. Compassion is the key in these circumstances.

## Keep control of the meeting

If someone talks too long or goes way off topic, it's OK to tactfully interrupt them to bring the focus back to the purpose of the meeting.

Never throw the meeting open and ask people to volunteer to speak.

## You are a trusted servant

The wisdom is in the room. Your job is to bring it out, so you don't need to say too much yourself.

Remember, the group has asked you to chair the meeting because of your experience and because we trust your judgment.

***Thanks for being of service.***