

CROSS-SHARING Step One: Share Magazine January 2012

This last week my round-robin group finished a bit before time. The meeting was opened up and there was further sharing from members. The subject of cross-sharing came up and it was plain that some members were not clear what this meant. We discussed the issue and, hopefully, the matter was clarified.

This might seem obvious to some, but more and more I hear (especially newer) members prefacing their own sharing with something like "I don't want to cross-share, but...." So what is cross-sharing anyway? I am not an expert, but this is what I have learned:- Cross-sharing is done during the course of a meeting and is never positive, it does not come from a place of love, patience or tolerance. Negative motivation is the basis of cross-sharing. It is usually directed by one person to another. It is devious and judgemental; it is undermining and is often malicious. To some, it may appear to be phrased in neutral or even loving words - this behaviour can be very subtle. It might even sound as if someone is only "trying to be helpful."

It is always offensive in some way. There appears to be very little emotional sobriety attached to cross-sharing. On the receiving end, feelings can range from confusion to hurt or, even, to outrage (i.e. 'whose side of the street are you on, anyway?') I might not know what I am feeling exactly, but it is absolutely never a good sensation.

Identifying with another member, who is sharing their experience, strength and hope, is not cross-sharing. We are encouraged to openly identify, one with another. I don't have to look any further than Bill, Bob and Bill D. What they did was to share their common experience and realise that if they could just talk and share this common experience with people like themselves - in love and good will - they might stay sober. They weren't being snide or spiteful. They weren't taking pot-shots at each other! And they weren't trying to sabotage the other ones' emotions. They were doing everything in their power to keep sober and to ensure the others did, too.

'We are people who normally would not mix. But there exists among us a fellowship, friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful.' (Big Book, p17) When I identify positively with something shared across the table, I feel safe - I am not alone.

Sometimes I need to share back, in a loving and positive way. This might give us both the opportunity to take a step forward together in recovery. The Big Book tells me that the concept of 'Fellowship' is part of our common solution. Our preamble tasks me to share my experience, strength and hope with my fellow AAs so that we can recover from alcoholism. And Tradition Twelve reminds me that it is my duty to '*place principles before personalities*'.

So, for me, recognising me in other members' shares and passing on what I have been given must come from a place of love - cross-sharing never does. Each day, inside and outside our rooms, I have a choice.