

# **LAA** *Love Addicts Anonymous*

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**Meeting Type:** Ordinary ODAAT Business Meeting

**Location:** [Zoom Link](#)

**Date:** January 6, 2024

**Start time:** 10:30 a.m. PST (10 mins.)

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**Attendees:** Andrew, Chris, Sarah, Katya, Rich, Norma, Alex, Gaby, ili, Jennifer, Lindsey, Lisa, Paula, Vincent, Dorinda, & Pamela

## **Meeting Service Positions:**

Chair: Andrew

Secretary: Pamela

Timekeeper: None

- I. Opening Verse:** Moment of Silence followed by the Serenity Prayer
- II. Review & Approval of Prior Minutes:**
  - i.** Pamela screen-shared the meeting minutes from 12/2/23 for final review and approval. Andrew motioned to approve the minutes and Pamela seconded. The December meeting minutes were adopted and unanimously approved.
- III. IBM & Committee Reports:**
  - i.** **IBM** – Katya reminded everyone that LAA is actively recruiting to fill the IBM treasurer position. Members also are invited to join the safety committee, the LAA literature committee, the LAA literature committee, and the identity committee. Katya advised that her term limit as IBM chair has expired, and she is ready to step out of the role. She has continued to serve in this role because she does not want to leave the position vacant.
  - ii.** **ODAAT Host Coordinator** – Lindsey reported that Tisha has tendered two months' notice to leave her Thursday PM host position. She expressed appreciation that Tisha has given ample notice and encourages other hosts to do the same. Lindsey thanked Lisa H. for volunteering to host the Wednesday PM meeting. She has been actively recruiting and training cohosts.
  - iii.** **ODAAT ad hoc Literature Committee** – Pamela reported that the committee met in December to discuss proposed changes to the ODAAT meeting script. The committee recommended adding a pitch to recruit for cohosts and committee

posts, inviting members to attend the monthly business meetings held every first Saturday, and to make minor word changes in the after-hours portion of the script. The committee is scheduled to meet on February 1<sup>st</sup> to review/edit the script. Once the meeting script is finalized, the committee will present the draft at the next business meeting for review and feedback. Pursuant to group conscience, Pamela will post the finalized draft on the WAGs for fellowship-wide review and feedback. It should be noted that the LAA literature committee and the ODAAT ad hoc working group are two different committees. The LAA literature committee was established to edit/develop the LAA body of literature, while the newly formed ODAAT ad hoc literature committee was formed to review/edit the ODAAT meeting script and to develop an ODAAT host training manual.

#### IV. Discussions & Motions:

- i. **ODAAT Speaker Qualifications** (Norma) – Norma, the Saturday AM host, asked if LAA has any existing guidelines that address a member’s qualifications to share their experience, strength, and hope (ESH). She proposed that a speaker’s share should reflect that they have worked at least nine of the twelve steps, and their shares should reflect recovery. Norma believes speakers also should have active involvement in LAA for at least one year before speaking. Katya concurred with Norma’s proposal. Rich dissented, stating that putting such requirements on speakers will severely limit the number of people available to share their ESH in LAA. Sarah agreed with Rich, adding that the LAA program is still developing, which means that putting rigid restrictions on speaker qualifications could make it less likely that members step up to share their ESH.

Based on Vincent’s experience in other recovery programs, the steps are suggested, not mandatory. He added that in other fellowships, there is typically a three-month sobriety prerequisite to qualify as a speaker. For LAA, the sobriety requirement would mean three months of no contact with qualifiers. Vincent said he is aware of individuals who *claim* to have worked the steps, but in his experience, these same individuals do not “love” the steps. In other words, they’re not *living* the steps. Norma attends an LAA step study group in which there are nine members who have successfully completed the steps. In Chris’s experience, speakers in other fellowships have shared their ESH based on the steps they have completed to date (e.g., the first three steps). Sarah suggested there is no way to know for certain whether a member has actually worked the steps.

Andrew opined that a speaker’s qualification should not only be about time and attendance in program, but about the length of sobriety, which is not always easy to determine because of the potential for relapse. Because love addiction is a process addiction, Katya stated, she is not sure how anyone could judge another person’s recovery and time sober. She sees relapse as more of a “slip,” but it’s a tough call to make, said Katya.

Norma referenced a recent speaker share that generated some controversy. In her handling of the controversial share, Norma expressed feeling alone and unsupported in her host role. Norma acknowledged that recovery and sobriety may look different for each person. Andrew suggested we should not “judge” a speaker’s sobriety, but rather we should take them at their word with the understanding that only the person can define what sobriety and recovery look like based on their bottom lines (e.g., contacting a qualifier). From Andrew’s perspective, if a person does not have a sobriety date this is problematic, especially in a recovery program that deals with process addictions. In the selection of speakers, Ili suggested that LAA might need to consider a different approach altogether, because the speaker in question has time, involvement, and sobriety in the LAA program.

As host coordinator, Lindsey offered her thoughts on this topic. First, the host of the speaker meeting *is* the “speaker seeker;” that’s part of their role. Second, if a speaker goes into detail about sex-related content, then that is a violation of meeting protocol. On the other hand, if a speaker identifies their sexual orientation as bisexual, for instance, acknowledging this fact is not in violation of anything. The mere mention of a person’s sexual orientation, sexual preference, or a reference to a past practice is simply a part of their history and nothing more. Lindsey advised there is one member, in particular, that “policing a lot” when certain words are merely mentioned. So long as a speaker avoids going into detail about sex-related topics, there is no need for censoring anyone in meetings.

Dorinda opined it is important for members to attend meetings, speak their truth, and not be judged. Thus, take what you like and leave the rest. Katya stated we should define “sex talk.” Going into details is “sex talk,” not the mere mentioning of certain words. Chris stated hosts are already empowered to run the meeting and enforce meeting guidelines; thus, issuing a gentle reminder of redirection should suffice.

Pamela shared her feelings about a host’s handling of a controversial share at a recent speaker meeting, exclaiming that she was upset and even appalled at the host’s shaming of the speaker. In Pamela’s view, hosts should never shame an invited speaker who is willing to be vulnerable by sharing their recovery journey, even if some of its content might be shocking or offensive to some. Pamela maintained the need for additional training so that hosts are better equipped to handle delicate situations such as the one in question. Katya opined that unless a speaker is in blatant violation of the guidelines around sexual content, that person should be allowed to share their ESH without censoring. She concurred that additional host training is warranted. Chris argued that hosts are not empowered to act as arbiter of what recovery is and looks like for each person; but rather the host is empowered to enforce guidelines to disrupt unruly behavior. A “gentle reminder” of redirection by the host is optimal, said Andrew—not shaming or correcting.

After a robust discussion on this topic, Andrew asked if a motion was being considered. Although Lindsey had previously established that the host of the speaker meeting is in fact the “speaker seeker,” as noted, Norma made a motion to that effect, and Andrew seconded. Andrew thanked everyone for their comments and feedback on this important topic.

- ii. **ODAAT Business WAG (Katya)**– Katya disclosed that she has been the target of personal criticism on the WAGs, particularly in her role as IBM chair. Recently, a member criticized Katya in the ODAAT Business WAG regarding an issue stemming from IBM. She felt the personal criticism was unwarranted and because she was mentioned by name, deemed the post a violation of her anonymity. Katya advised that the WAGs are not to be used for public dissension, personal attacks, nor to stir up controversy. She advised that WAG administrators have only 48 hours to delete posts deemed inappropriate or offensive. After 48 hours, posts become a permanent record and cannot be removed. To ensure inappropriate or offensive posts are timely removed, said Katya, administrators would need to check the WAGs every two days, which is impractical and burdensome. A---x is considering developing an app that might give WAG admins more control over member postings.

Acknowledging that he is not on the WAGs, Andrew opined that the same rules and protocols that apply to meetings should also apply to the WAGs. Offensive conduct, for instance, whether it occurs in meetings or on the WAGs, are safety concerns that should be timely addressed by the safety committee, especially since there is a 48-hour window to remove offensive/inappropriate posts. The current safety guidelines under draft do in fact include the WAGs, said Katya. As it stands now, the safety committee is comprised of only two members who reside on opposite sides of the globe. That said, LAA has a dire need for additional members to serve on the safety committee. Over the past three years, since Katya has been a member of LAA, inappropriate conduct has been occurring throughout the fellowship, which is frustrating and disappointing.

On the WAGs, Vincent posted a comment that a draft of the safety guidelines, as referenced in the minutes, had not been made available to the wider fellowship. Vincent indicated that his comments were met with criticism. His frustration centers on the fact that LAA does not have a reporting and appeal process for grievances. Katya referenced two incidents by the same member who vented “personal dissensions” and was highly critical of her in the WAGs. Absent an appeal process, stated Katya, all LAA members are welcome to raise any questions or concerns about anything at a business meeting without feeling shamed or judged.

Andrew reminded everyone that “our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon LAA unity,” which is a foundation of our traditions. Andrew further reminded everyone to “place principles before personalities.” LAA needs to be a safe place for love addicts to recover.

Referencing the prior ODAAT minutes, Andrew clarified that no member was mentioned by name. In prior minutes, only behaviors and guidelines were discussed, not any specific individual. Vincent objected to Katya's use of the term "repeat offender" because, in his opinion, the term is accusatory and inflammatory. Katya disagreed with Vincent's assessment, suggesting the term is merely practical. Vincent rebutted, adding that the term "repeat offender" is based on opinion rather than group conscience.

Andrew reminded everyone that if any member has a safety concern, whether the concern stems from a meeting or a WAG, the safety committee has created an avenue to elevate that concern. The URL is [safety@loveaddictsanonymous.org](mailto:safety@loveaddictsanonymous.org). Once in the hands of the safety committee, the issue can be closely examined, recommendations can be made, and the appropriate action can be taken pursuant to group conscience.

Andrew asked whether there is a need for an ODAAT safety committee, separate and apart from IBM. Sarah indicated that WAGs, in the context of 12-step recovery, are a relatively new phenomenon, post pandemic. Because the use of WAGs in 12-step groups is so new, said Sarah, we won't have all the answers or solutions to issues right away that have been cropping up. Sarah suggested that we may need to create a separate safety committee to address issues stemming directly from the WAGs. During this discussion, Lisa volunteered to serve on the safety committee. Vincent announced that, going forward, he will refrain from posting any comments on the ODAAT business WAG that might be construed as criticism. He will only use the ODAAT business WAG to ask clarifying questions. Katya requested that members refrain from using personal names in their comments on the WAGs.

- iii. **ODAAT Ad hoc Literature Committee** – Andrew raised the question of which literature falls under the purview of the ODAAT ad hoc working group. A few years ago, Chris served on the LAA literature committee. Changes were made to the meeting script with a focus on recovery. He also created an electronic folder of LAA "conference-approved" literature. Chris clarified that the LAA literature consists of the basic text, step workbook, and the meeting readings (not the script), as well as meeting guidelines and the LAA promises.

As chair of the newly formed ODAAT ad hoc literature committee, Pamela's understanding of the purpose of the ad hoc literature committee was to make minor revisions, as suggested in prior business meetings, to the host/meeting script and to develop an ODAAT host training manual. Katya indicated the LAA literature committee is defunct at this time. Andrew volunteered to revive and serve on the LAA literature committee. Pamela offered to serve on the LAA literature committee as well.

- iv. **Addressing Interpersonal Grievances**— Sarah recommended that handling interpersonal grievances be added to the agenda for the next business meeting. She observed that a considerable amount of time was spent discussing a dispute between individual members—in essence placing personalities before principles, and that witnessing personal dissension could deter some members from stepping up to serve in various capacities. Sarah proposed that dissension between individual members in LAA would be better addressed in a way that does not dissuade anyone from participating in business meetings and doing service. Andrew agreed that the venting of personal dissension between members did take up a considerable amount of time today. He reiterated that the portal [safety@loveaddictsanonymous.org](mailto:safety@loveaddictsanonymous.org) was established to submit member safety concerns and complaints. Katya countered that she did in fact bring her grievance to the safety committee, but until the committee is fully functioning, she sees nothing wrong with raising a safety concern at a business meeting. Andrew argued that if LAA does not have a fully functioning safety committee, then that is a very serious concern, given that LAA should be a safe haven for recovering love addicts. At the same time, Andrew expressed concern that venting interpersonal dissension in a business meeting could be dissuasive to other members. Given that our personal recovery depends upon LAA unity, principles should always come before personalities.

Chris suggested posting a message to all the WAGs to remind admins that they are empowered to delete an offensive or inappropriate post without elevating the matter to the safety committee. In the event of recurring offenses, said Andrew, the member in question should be reported to the safety committee. Andrew proposed that admins also should be reminded that they have a 48-hour window to delete a post. At one time, Lindsey was admin on all the WAGs, which, over time, became burdensome. Recently, Lindsey added a few other LAA service members as admins to alleviate some of the burden and to increase the likelihood that offensive posts can be caught in time and deleted. To elevate a business-related grievance, Andrew suggested that members use the appropriate WAG or raise the concern at a business meeting. Andrew thanked everyone for their service and concluded the discussion.

- V. **Closing:** Andrew adjourned the business meeting with the LAA Closing Prayer:

*God,*

*We pray for inner strength and wisdom*

*to do together*

*what we cannot do alone.*

*Thank you for the courage to change.*

*Show us how to open our eyes  
to your unconditional love for us,  
and teach us how to love ourselves and others  
in a healthy way.*

*May we find hope for a brighter tomorrow  
and pass that on to others in need.*

*Thank you for a better way to live.*