

Disclaimer. The provision of the following information does not constitute an endorsement or approval by General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland. It is offered as a guide to groups, who should at all time follow their Group Conscience.

AA Zoom Meetings

Keeping AA online meetings anonymous, private and free from unwanted interruptions.

Introduction

Zoom is an online video conferencing platform that allows meetings of up to 100 people for a very reasonable cost. It is easy to use and has very low barriers to entry and has been widely embraced by groups and members of the fellowship. Many members have described it as a "lifeline" during a time when it is not possible to attend regular meetings.

All technology comes with certain risks and anything on the internet is particularly challenging for both anonymity and privacy. The 12th Tradition states that "Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions..." and yet the internet is a very public place where it is very difficult to maintain anonymity and confidentiality.

With a little care and attention, Group/Meeting Secretaries using Zoom meetings can implement a set of controls to maximise the confidentiality and anonymity of the people attending the meeting without making the meetings inaccessible to people with limited technical experience.

The suggestions presented here have been arrived at with a focus on adjusting the Zoom platform to meet the needs of the 12-step recovery meeting format. They are trying to find a balance between providing security without precluding people from Zoom meetings who may be less experienced with technology.

The privacy and anonymity afforded by the Zoom platform can never match what you would get in an AA room. It is strongly advised that participants in online meetings are made aware of this and adjust their sharing accordingly.

The suggestions in this document have not been reviewed or approved by General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland (GSBAA).

It is likely that this document will be updated so keep an eye on our website updates at www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie

Some Problems to look out for.

Zoom is an online platform for running video conferences. It is designed to be used by small and medium sized companies to hold virtual meetings, share files, chat and allow participants to share their screens and even to allow one participant remotely control another participant's computer. As such the default settings for a Zoom meeting are inappropriate for the AA meeting format and it is really important that the secretary of the meeting change these settings.

Recording enabled by default

The Zoom platform has a number of options for recording meetings and these are completely incompatible with the 12th Tradition. Some of these are enabled by default. Nothing should ever be recorded at an AA meeting so please ensure that all facilities for recording are turned off.

Strongly Recommended Settings

The following settings are of vital importance and failure to set these properly leaves your meeting open to disruption and even being controlled by a third party.

Unfortunately, these settings are all enabled by default!

No sharing of desktops (this is enabled by default)

No recording of any kind (some recording is enabled by default)

Use a waiting room (waiting room is not enabled by default)

Enable ability to suspend a participant (participant suspension is disabled by default)

Disable file sharing (file sharing is enabled by default)

Where possible, use a laptop or a tablet rather than a phone

On a phone you can see a maximum of 4 or 5 participants while on a laptop you can see 25. Finding participants quickly makes for a much smoother meeting but also reduces the potential for disruption.

- Strongly encourage people to enter their first name and initial
- You should discourage the use of surnames, following AA tradition.
- Strongly encourage video
- A first-time attendee at an online meeting should be greeted by people with whom they are familiar. A couple of familiar faces will lead to a very positive experience. 100 strangers might be too much for some
- Please remember Tradition 3 - the only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking - so endeavour to be as inclusive as possible and as your groups proficiency with the Zoom platform grows you can extend to a wider audience.

Privacy & Anonymity

Compared to a physical meeting it is not possible to achieve the same level of confidentiality and anonymity in an online setting. Even after the host has turned off all recording on the Zoom platform, there is nothing to stop a participant using other software to record sound or images. It is very important that attendees at online meetings are aware of this and that they adjust their sharing accordingly.

