

CROSSTALK

What is it? Why does it hurt?

Webster says that crosstalk is "interference in one track of a recording caused by another track." In 12-step programs the term "crosstalk" is used to describe various forms of "interference" in meetings. We speak of crosstalk with reverence or vehemence, but, there is confusion about its actual definition within the fellowship.

Suggested CEA-HOW guidelines are:

1. The only appropriate comment about anyone's share – a speaker's or another member's – is: "Thank you for your share."
2. Any comments, negative or positive, about another's share, experience, life, program, or remarks are crosstalk – that is, interference.
3. A member may talk about his or her own experience as it relates directly or indirectly to another's share, but should not refer to that person's share. Even comments such as "When you talked about...it reminded me of my own experience," are possibly inappropriate.
4. Any form of interruption – remarks, side conversations, gestures, laughter, an extreme facial expression, or a spontaneous outburst – is crosstalk.
5. Any advice given during the meeting – whether asked for or not – is crosstalk. If advice is requested, it can be offered after the meeting or by phone.

Why does CEA-HOW strongly discourage crosstalk? There are several reasons:

~We need to feel safe about expressing our experience, strength, and hope without fear of direct or indirect response ("interference"). For many members, these rooms are the first place we have felt safe speaking about our experience.

~Crosstalk is frequently judgmental, expressing an opinion, whether good or bad, of the person's share. Being judgmental is a character defect many of us are trying to let go of.

~Crosstalk can break a person's anonymity by introducing information not mentioned in the person's share, revealing relationships outside the meeting.

Avoiding crosstalk helps to guarantee safety, protect privacy, and ensure anonymity for all of us.

It is suggested that each meeting do two things to eliminate crosstalk: 1) Define crosstalk in a group conscience at a business meeting; and 2) include the definition and the prohibition of crosstalk in the format at the opening and the closing of the meeting.

Avoiding crosstalk in our meetings should not discourage anyone from sharing, but, rather guarantee that each member speaks just about his or her own experience, strength, and hope.

(taken from various intergroup newsletters)