

Group Guide: Handbook for SAA Groups



May 2007

This document has been approved by the Literature Committee for distribution by the ISO of SAA, pending further review and final approval.

Optional SAA Meeting Agenda

1. Opening
2. Reading of “Who We Are” and “Our Addiction”
3. Moment of Silence/Serenity Prayer
4. Introductions and Newcomer Introduction

Chairperson asks all present to introduce themselves using first names only and to share whatever each is comfortable with for their own recovery.

"Hi, I'm _____ and I'm a sex addict."

"My name is _____ and I'm a recovering sex addict."

8. Reading of “Our Program”
9. Reading of the Twelve Steps of SAA
10. Read and Comment on One of the Traditions
11. Reading of Meeting Boundaries
12. Topic Presentation, Twelve Step Reading, or First Step Presentation
13. Introduction to Discussion/Sharing
14. Medallions and Anniversaries
15. Fellowship Business
16. Seventh Tradition – Pass the Hat
17. Reading of How We Live
18. Reading of the Closing
19. Closing Prayer

Opening

Hello, my name is ____; I'm a (recovering) sex addict. Welcome to this meeting of Sex Addicts Anonymous.

Who We Are

We are sex addicts. Our addiction nearly destroyed our lives, but we found freedom through the recovery program of Sex Addicts Anonymous. In the fellowship of SAA, we discovered that we are not alone and that meeting regularly together to share experience, strength, and hope gives us the choice to live a new life.

Our addictive sexual behavior was causing pain—to ourselves, our friends, and our loved ones. Our lives were out of control. We may have wanted to quit, making promises and many attempts to stop, yet we repeatedly failed to do so. For each of us, there came a moment of crisis. When we finally reached out for help, we found recovery through the program of SAA.

We have found, through long and painful experience, that we are unable to achieve recovery from sexual addiction through our own efforts. Our program is based on the belief, confirmed by our experience, that a Power greater than ourselves can accomplish for us what we could not do alone. By surrendering our addiction to a Higher Power, we receive the gift of recovery, one day at a time.

Sex Addicts Anonymous is a spiritual program based on the principles and traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. Although we are not affiliated with AA or any other organization, we are deeply grateful to AA for making our recovery possible.

Our primary purpose is to stop our addictive sexual behavior and to help others recover from sexual addiction. We find a new way of living through the SAA program, and carry our message to others seeking recovery. Membership is open to all who have a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior. There is no other requirement. Our fellowship is open to women and men, regardless of age, race, religion, ethnic background, marital status, or occupation. We welcome members of any sexual identity or orientation, whether they are gay, lesbian, straight, bisexual, or transgendered.

In our groups, there is a collective wisdom that has grown and been handed down over the years. We learn many new solutions to old problems. Central to these are the Twelve Steps, a spiritual program of recovery. Following these steps leads to freedom from addictive sexual behaviors and to the healing of our minds, bodies, spirits, relationships, and sexuality.

Desperation brought us together. We found in each other what we could find nowhere else: people who knew the depth of our pain. Together we found hope and the care of a loving Higher Power. Our commitment is to help others recover from sexual addiction, just as we have been helped.

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous* pages 1-2]

What is Sex Addicts Anonymous?

- Sex Addicts Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other so that they may find freedom from addictive sexual behavior and help others recover from sexual addiction.
- Membership is open to all who share a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior. There is no other requirement.
- SAA is supported through voluntary contributions from members.
- We are not affiliated with any other twelve-step programs, nor are we a part of any other organization. We do not support, endorse, or oppose outside causes or issues.
- Sex Addicts Anonymous is a spiritual program based on the principles and traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. We are grateful to AA for this gift which makes our recovery possible.

Moment of Silence/Serenity Prayer

Please share with me a moment of silence, followed by the Serenity Prayer.

The Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference.

Our Addiction

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous* page 3, paragraphs 1-2]

Before coming to Sex Addicts Anonymous, many of us never knew that our problem had a name. All we knew was that we couldn't control our sexual behavior. For us, sex was a consuming way of life. Although the details of our stories were different, our problem was the same. We were addicted to sexual behaviors that we returned to over and over, despite the consequences.

Sex addiction is a disease affecting the mind, body, and spirit. It is progressive, with the behavior and its consequences usually becoming more severe over time. We experience it as compulsion, which is an urge that is stronger than our will to resist, and as obsession, which is a mental preoccupation with sexual behavior and fantasies. In SAA, we have come to call our addictive sexual behavior “*acting out*.”

Our Program

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous* page 20]

“Attending SAA meetings starts us on a new way of life. But while the SAA fellowship supports our recovery, the actual work of recovery is described in the Twelve Steps. Meetings are forums for learning how to integrate the steps into our lives. Working the Twelve Steps leads to a spiritual transformation that results in sustainable relief from our addiction.

When we start attending meetings of Sex Addicts Anonymous, many of us are surprised to meet people who are enjoying life, experiencing freedom from the painful, compulsive behaviors that had brought them to SAA. Listening to other members share about their recovery, we gradually realize that in order to make the same kind of progress, we need to be willing to do whatever it takes to get sexually abstinent, and to stay abstinent. We have learned from hard experience that we cannot achieve and maintain abstinence if we aren't willing to change our way of life. But if we can honestly face our problems, and are willing to change, the Twelve Steps of SAA will lead to an awakening that allows us to live a new way of life according to spiritual principles. Taking these steps allows fundamental change to occur and be sustained in our lives. They are the foundation of our recovery.”

The Twelve Steps of Sex Addicts

Anonymous

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous* pages 20-21]

1. We admitted we were powerless over addictive sexual behavior—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God’s will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts and to practice these principles in our lives.

“These steps are the heart of our program. They contain a depth that we could hardly have guessed when we started. As we work them, we experience a spiritual transformation. Over time, we establish a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves, each of us coming to an understanding of a Higher Power that is personal for us. Although the steps use the word “God” to indicate this Power, SAA is not affiliated with any religion, creed, or dogma. The program offers a spiritual solution to our addiction, without requiring adherence to any specific set of beliefs or practices. The path is wide enough for everyone who wishes to walk it.”

Twelve Traditions of SAA

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon S.A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for S.A.A. membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or S.A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the sex addict who still suffers.
6. An S.A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the S.A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every S.A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. S.A.A. should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. S.A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. S.A.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the S.A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

(Adapted from "Alcoholics Anonymous," Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., Third Edition.)

© Sex Addicts Anonymous, 2005

Reprinted for adaptation by permission of AA World Services, Inc.

Meeting Boundaries

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous* page 12,
first sentence through the end of paragraph 1]

“[In this meeting,] we use the words ‘I’ or ‘we’ instead of ‘you’ when sharing about our recovery. We do not interrupt or give advice unless asked. We address our sharing to the whole group, not to one or more individuals. A meeting is not a place to meet sexual partners, nor is it group therapy. We try not to use offensive language, or descriptions that are too explicit. We avoid mentioning specific names or places associated with our acting-out behavior. Because of the nature of our addiction, we are careful about touching or giving hugs to others in the fellowship without permission. Our focus remains on the solution, rather than the problem.

We strive to practice anonymity and confidentiality, so that the meeting will be a safe place for each and every sex addict. We generally use only our first names in the group, to help ensure anonymity. Who we meet or what is said in a meeting is treated as confidential and is not discussed with non-group members.”

Will all present introduce themselves using first names only. New members need not admit to a sex addiction. Hello, my name is ____; I’m a (recovering) sex addict.

Phone List

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous* page 64, paragraph 1]

“Most of us use the telephone on a regular basis, just to let someone else in the program know how we are doing or to reach out when we are struggling with our addiction. Some of us have made a commitment to call a friend in recovery whenever we’re in a slippery situation or when obsessive thinking and desires begin to arise. Sometimes all we need is for someone to ask us what is going on and to listen to the answer. Before long, we know what is bothering us, and once we know the urge to act out usually passes.”

Seventh Tradition

According to our Seventh Tradition, “Every SAA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.” This means:

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous* page 88, paragraph 1]

“Each group must meet certain basic requirements in order to sustain itself. We need members who are willing to meet together and share experience, strength, and hope on a regular basis. We need a meeting place that is reasonably accessible to sex addicts who wish to attend. We need to have SAA literature and meeting schedules available. Once a group has established itself, it can usually pay the rent and other expenses by passing a basket and taking voluntary contributions during the meeting. Experience has shown that if we are unable to fully support ourselves this way, it is better to lower our expenses than to rely on fundraising or other special events to sustain us. When we have met our own basic needs, most groups pass any extra funds on to the local intergroup or the ISO, in support of coordinated services and outreach efforts.”

[Pass the contributions basket.]

Closing

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous* page 98, paragraph 6]

“This is how recovery has been for us. Each of us has taken steps of courage and leaps of faith. Each of us has contributed, not only to our own recovery, but to the recovery of other suffering sex addicts as well. We have contributed by showing up at meetings and by sharing our experience, strength, and hope. We have listened to our fellow addicts and supported them in their recovery journey. Like the first members of our fellowship, we continue to remain sexually sober by helping our fellow addict stay sober. Our prayer is that every sex addict who seeks recovery will have the opportunity to find it. And keep coming back.”

Let's close with The Serenity Prayer (or prayer of your choice).

Newcomers' Introduction

We would like to welcome you to our meeting. We know the courage it takes walking into these rooms for the first time. All of us in this room were in your shoes at one time.

After we have finished our opening and beginning readings, we will open up the meeting for sharing. This is a time when you may share your thoughts or feelings on the topic, the reading, or whatever else is on your mind. We avoid cross-talk or interruptions when another person is sharing. We also do not offer advice or criticism. Stick around and talk to one of us after the meeting if you have any questions.

We recommend that you come to at least six meetings before you decide whether SAA has anything to offer you. You will find that each meeting is a little bit different. It is our sincerest hope that you find what you are looking for.”