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Opening

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

[Read Newcomers' Introduction if there are any newcomers to the program]

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 us after the meeting.

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. And keep coming back!

Moment of Silence / Serenity Prayer

Please join me in a moment of silence for the sex addict who still suffers, followed by the Serenity Prayer.

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.

Introductions

Chairperson asks all present to introduce using first name only.

Hi, I'm _____, and I'm a (recovering) sex addict.

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.

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.

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*".

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.

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 and 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 in our lives.

They are the heart of our program and the foundation of our recovery. 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.

These are the steps we took:

The Twelve Steps

[From Sex Addicts Anonymous, pages 20-21]

1. We admitted we were powerless over addictive sexual behavior and 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.

The Twelve Traditions

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

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SAA 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 SAA membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or SAA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the sex addict who still suffers.
6. An SAA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the SAA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every SAA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Sex Addicts Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. SAA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Sex Addicts Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SAA 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.

Sponsorship

[From Sex Addicts Anonymous, page 13]

“A sponsor is a person in the fellowship who acts as a guide to working the program of SAA – a fellow addict we can rely upon for support. Ideally, a sponsor is abstinent from addictive sexual behavior, has worked the steps, and can teach us what he or she has learned from working the program. We can learn from a sponsor’s experience, struggles, successes, and mistakes. Our sponsor can help explain program fundamentals, such as how to define our sexual sobriety. Most importantly, sponsors guide us through the Twelve Steps.”

Every newcomer to SAA is encouraged to obtain a sponsor as soon as he or she is comfortable doing so. A temporary sponsor may be used until the newcomer gets to know others in the group better. This will speed the process of getting started in the recovery program. After attending a few meetings, the newcomer may meet a person with whom he or she readily identifies and with whom long-term sponsorship seems to be promising. Changing sponsors is an acceptable practice. Finding a sponsor who works well with the sponsee is paramount.

Importantly, a sponsor can hold the sponsee accountable for attendance at meetings, as well as progress in the program.

Sponsorship serves to advance the recovery program for the sponsee and, at the same time, to reinforce sobriety and recovery for the sponsor.

How We Live

[From Sex Addicts Anonymous, page 61]

Practicing these principles in our lives means applying program principles at home, at work, and wherever else we gather with others for a common purpose. As we grow spiritually, we find opportunities for service in virtually any situation. Our closest relationships may offer the most challenges to our honesty, compassion, and integrity, but we are often rewarded beyond our expectations. We find that spiritual principles can guide us in the everyday challenges of life, and they can help us face even loss, grief, and death with fortitude and grace. What we gain in this program is a blueprint for full and successful living, whatever may come.

We maintain our recovery by working a daily program, in the knowledge that although we can never be perfect, we can be happy today. We can live life on life's terms, without having to change or suppress our feelings. Our serenity and sobriety grow as we continue to live according to spiritual principles. We enjoy the gifts that come from being honest and living a life of integrity. We ask for help when we need it, and we express our love and gratitude every day. We realize that everything we have been through helps us to be of service to others. We learn that the world is a much safer place than we had ever known before, because we are always in the care of a loving God.

Abstinence in SAA

[From Sex Addicts Anonymous, pages 14-15]

Our goal when entering the SAA program is abstinence from one or more specific sexual behaviors. But unlike programs for recovering alcoholics or drug addicts, Sex Addicts Anonymous does not have a universal definition of abstinence.

Most of us have no desire to stop being sexual altogether. It is not sex in and of itself that causes us problems, but the addiction to certain sexual behaviors. In SAA we will be better able to determine what behavior is addictive and what is healthy. However, the fellowship does not dictate to its members what is and isn't addictive sexual behavior. Instead we have found that it is necessary for each member to define his or her own abstinence.

We are individuals, and our addictive behaviors, while similar, are unique to us. What may be healthy for one member could be clearly addictive for another. SAA simply cannot predict every possible way of acting out and define them all for everyone. As a fellowship, we wouldn't want to deny that any particular behavior might be acting out for a member. Nor would we want to restrict behaviors that are healthy for some of us. Since different addicts suffer from different behaviors, and since our sexuality is experienced in so many different ways, it is necessary that SAA members define for themselves, with the help of their sponsors or others in recovery, which of their sexual behaviors they consider to be "acting out".

Sharing / Topic

[From Sex Addicts Anonymous, pages 11-12]

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.

All participation is voluntary. We are not required to speak if we don't want to. Just by listening we can learn how other members become honest, confront their addiction, find support from fellow addicts and practice the program.

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

Option 1. The topic for this meeting is _____, and is taken from page from the book Sex Addicts Anonymous. [Read selection.]

Option 2. The topic for this meeting is _____.

Option 3. Does anyone have a topic for discussion? If none is suggested, it is the responsibility of the chair to come up with one. If anyone has an urgent need to talk about their own recovery, now is the time.

Option 4. First Step presentation – Have the presenter's sponsor read the First Step Introduction.

First Step Introduction

_____, you are about to share with us your First Step. We acknowledge and affirm your courage in taking this step. We want to clarify some things about this experience for each of us.

The primary purpose for you giving this formal First Step presentation is to aid you in your program of recovery. It need not be done to please the group or gain status. There is no right or wrong way to give a First Step. Any effort you make is legitimate.

Here are some suggestions from others who have gone before you have found helpful. We encourage you to be specific about your behaviors and to speak from the heart in order for you to be in touch with the pain and reality of your addiction. Try not to bury yourself in shame. Let us hear you, not your addict speaking.

The group has a responsibility to be loving, caring and accepting of you. The members will avoid judging you or giving advice to you.

I will let you know when 20 minutes of the meeting time remains. This will allow you a few minutes to complete your presentation and allow time for members to give you feedback about what it was like sharing your First Step with you. If you do not finish you may have more time next week.

Remember, we are here for you! May God grant you serenity.

Half Time

Seventh Tradition

Our 7th Tradition states: “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.

Announcements for the good of the group or the fellowship as a whole

Sobriety / recovery milestones – chips

Sample text: *We are a chip-giving meeting, which means that we give out chips to celebrate milestones of sobriety or time in the program. Whatever you have worked out with your sponsor.*

Is anyone celebrating an annual milestone of 2 or more years?

18 months? 1 year? 9 months? 6 months? 3 months? 2 months? 1 month?

And for the most important milestone - Is anyone celebrating 24 hours, or a recommitment to sobriety and a willingness to start again?

24-hour sobriety commitment

In this meeting we offer members the opportunity to commit to sexual sobriety over the next 24 hours.

Sample Response: *I’m Joe, and I commit to 24 hours of sexual sobriety.*

The Promises

[Alcoholics Anonymous, Third Edition, pp. 83-84]

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through.

- We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.
- We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.
- We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace.
- No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.
- That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.
- We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.
- Self-seeking will slip away.
- Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.
- Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.
- We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.
- We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will ***always*** materialize if we work for them.

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!