

Suicide Anonymous Readings

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Note – Some meetings read “How it Works” and “The Promises” from Alcoholics Anonymous. Those readings are not included in this document.

Suicide Anonymous

Preamble

Suicide Anonymous is a fellowship in which we share our experience, strength and hope with each other that we may solve our common problem and help others recover from suicidal preoccupation.

The only qualification for membership is a desire to stop living out a pattern of suicidal ideation and behavior. Membership is open to all who want it. There are no dues or fees for SA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

To counter the destructive consequences of suicidal preoccupation we draw on four major resources.

1. Our willingness to stop acting out in our own personal bottom line behaviors on a daily basis.
2. Our capacity to reach out for the supportive fellowship within SA.
3. Our practice of the Twelve Step program of recovery to achieve sobriety.
4. Our developing a relationship with a power greater than ourselves which can guide and sustain us in recovery.

We need to protect with special care the anonymity of every SA member. Additionally, we try to avoid drawing undue attention to SA. As a fellowship SA has no opinion on outside issues and seeks no controversy. SA is not affiliated with any other organizations, movements or causes.

Suicide Anonymous

The Problem

We came from a variety of backgrounds. Most of us had experienced a crippling depression. We felt inadequate, unworthy, alone and afraid. Our insides never matched what we saw on the outsides of others. As our feelings of helplessness and worthlessness grew, dying seemed our only relief. Suicide became our option.

At first fleeting, thoughts of suicide began to grow until, as our mental state deteriorated, they filled our days. Some felt trapped by intensely painful circumstances. We tuned out with suicidal fantasy and preoccupation.

Many of us became true addicts. Others were survivors of suicide. The problem we faced was the same. The pursuit of the perfect suicide, the trance-like effect induced by ruminating about death became the drug we used to cope with our unbearable pain. We lost the sense that suicide was taboo or forbidden and began to view it as an acceptable alternative, a personal privilege. Many times we came to the brink of action, retreating with hearts pounding, exhilarated by the illusion that we were God-like in the power we held over our own lives. Some of us retreated from that decision, hoping it was not our sole choice, only to tire and decide we could no longer endure the pain.

Many of us made an attempt or attempts to end our life, only to awaken sickened by the realization that our best efforts had failed. This increased our guilt, self-hatred, remorse, emptiness, and pain. Morning after promises to stop these fantasies of death were made to our desperate families and friends.

But suicidal fantasies killed any chance for true life. Soon the seduction of suicide again overtook us and before long we were caught up in the fantasy of death, believing this would give us the eternal peace we craved. Instead we were victimized by internal turmoil and overwhelming humiliation. Alone we were powerless and our most sincere promises to stop this deadly preoccupation had become fantasies themselves.

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The Solution

For most of us the knowledge that others shared our obsession with suicidal thoughts and actions was surprising and a relief. We had struggled and made promises to stop but could not. As we attended the SA meetings and heard the stories and shared the pain of our fellows we began to understand that we were not alone. We felt safe in sharing our own pain and helplessness in our addiction. We came to believe that there was hope and to trust the guidance we were offered.

Our spiritual bankruptcy was such that we needed desperately to learn how to fill the hole left in our souls. We learned that there were steps we could take to begin to do this and that these steps would teach us how to live our lives with serenity and peace. We became willing to surrender. We came to believe. We turned our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

These steps initiated our emergence from the soulsickness of the past into the promised freedom of today. One day at a time, sometimes one hour at a time, we learned to lean on the guidance of our Higher Power. Our lives are not ours but His. By working the steps we learned to live and not just endure each day.

One day we realized that the promises not only can come true, but are true for us today. We were not perfect but progressing. As our faith grew, and the bond of fellowship among us grew, we were healing. The promises were there for us.

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The Twelve Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over suicidal preoccupation – 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 him.
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 him 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 him, praying only for knowledge of his 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 those who still suffer and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

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(Some meetings use a reading of the SA Steps that includes all or a portion of “How it Works” Alcoholics Anonymous.)

Suicide Anonymous

The Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as this Power may be expressed through our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for SA membership is a desire to stop living out a pattern of suicidal ideation and behavior. Any two or more persons gathering together for this reason may call themselves an SA group, provided that as a group they have no other affiliation.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or SA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to those who still suffer from suicidal ideation and behavior.
6. An SA group or SA as a whole ought never endorse, finance or lend the SA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every SA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions
8. SA should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. SA as such ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. SA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SA name ought never be brought 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, T.V., film and other public media. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all fellow SA members.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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The Twelve Characteristics

The characteristics are based on the experiences that Suicide Anonymous members have shared about their patterns of suicidal thoughts and behaviors. If one or more of these characteristics resonate with you, then our fellowship may be helpful to you.

1. I will never be good enough. I do not relate to and am afraid of most people, especially those who seem the happiest or most successful. They can trigger hopelessness, shame, and even suicidal thoughts.
2. I hate myself. I think people in my life would be better off if I were gone. I believe that life is not worth living.
3. My suicidal thoughts help me to stay in control and give me an indescribable peace. They comfort me and help me overcome depression, sadness, loneliness, and fear.
4. Sometimes I enjoy hurting myself. I take unhealthy risks with medications, guns, or other methods of harm to bring me relief.
5. I never talk about my suicidal plans with anyone. I am afraid that people will find out who I really am and/or try to stop me. This secrecy brings me peace.
6. My suicide plans include researching suicide methods, selling or giving away my things, watching old home videos, collecting paraphernalia for suicide, and writing suicide notes. The intensity of the obsession makes it difficult to complete even simple tasks.
7. I isolate myself so that no one can hurt me, and I can't hurt others. When I am alone, I don't have to pretend to be ok.
8. When attempting suicide, I can go into a trance and/or dissociate. I can also become hypervigilant with racing thoughts, increased heart rate and disturbed sleep.
9. I visualize my funeral and wonder how many people will attend. I imagine their grief and feel satisfied. I hope they will see how badly they hurt me and punish themselves with guilt. Sometimes, I fear that if I complete suicide, I will ruin peoples' lives and they will never forgive me.
10. I first noticed suicidal thoughts at an early age, even in childhood.
11. After a failed attempt, I go into withdrawal. I experience deep pain and shame when facing family, friends, and caregivers. I fear their anger and resentment over my suicidal behavior.
12. I have noticed that once I attempt suicide, it gets easier to make more attempts. It begins to feel addictive.

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Bottom Line – Definition

Bottom line behavior is any self-destructive, suicidal or emotional act which, once engaged in, results in worsening self destructive consequences. Each person defines his/her own bottom line behavior.

Staying away from this behavior defines your sobriety.

Examples:

1. I will not attempt suicide – will call group member before acting on suicidal impulse.
2. I will not “stockpile” drugs, weapons, ropes or other tools for suicide – will call group member if I feel the need to do so.
3. I will not allow myself to fantasize about the relief I believe suicide will give me – will call for support.
4. I will call for support if I find myself starting to make a plan.
5. I will call for support if I begin to feel trapped, angry or afraid.

(Your bottom line behavior may change as you progress in the program.)