

# Essentials For Recovery from Self Sabotage & Misery Addiction (SSA/MAA)

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## SSA/MAA Abstinence

Abstinence means refraining from the activity or substance to which we are addicted. For the compulsive SSA/MAA this may include abstinence from many different behaviors including but not limited to overworking, over exercising, excessive computer time, excessive game playing, too much or too little sleep, excessive self sacrificing and caretaking, excessive gambling, excessive cleaning, excessive television, compulsive eating, compulsive shopping, compulsive sexual activity.

We also want to consider abstinence from behaviours/substances that make up our self sabotage addiction including but not limited to: lateness, breaking promises, not showing up, acting on assumptions rather than validated facts, not expressing our needs, chasing people away who can help us, not acting when action is needed, expecting others to read our minds, not taking helpful medications or dietary supplements as prescribed, sacrificing ourselves for others, not practicing good self care.

Like most addictions, the SSA/MAA addiction is insidious. Just when life is starting to feel better, we may find ourselves abandoning the positive action we have made or to returning to our old habits simply because they are familiar. We find this to be one of the core behaviors of our addiction. Regular, consistent support and working the first three steps daily can give us a solid foundation but **to truly recover, we'll need to change** - and that is where working the 12 Steps with a sponsor come in. For more information about a helpful daily practice, see page 196 in the When Misery is Company book.

## The Steps

The 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous are the basis of all 12 Step fellowships. They are the fundamental process by which we are able to **change and thereby recover** from addiction.

Working the 12 Steps with a sponsor allows us to:

- Free ourselves from feelings of unworthiness or uselessness.
- Recognize and modify behaviours that are causing us pain

- Deal with our past issues
- Clean our side of the street
- Move forward into a new life guided by new principles and a conscious contact with our Higher Power
- Give us solid ground to stand on where we can finally let go of our desperate need to control and begin to Trust that there is a natural ebb and flow to life
- With humility, acceptance and the knowledge that we are valued and loved, our relationships with everyone, including ourselves, become deeper and more satisfying.

### **Resources for Working the Steps:**

- When Misery is Company, Chapters 20 - 24
- AA Big Book
- Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions (referred to as the 12x12)
- The Joe & Charlie Big Book Study can be a valuable tool for enhancing our understanding of The Steps (<http://joeandcharlie.net/> )
- A Woman's Way through The Twelve Steps  
By Stephanie S Covington, Ph.D.
- A Gentle Path Through the 12 Steps\*  
By Patrick J Carnes  
\* Be sure to get the 2nd edition - it includes new science based information on addiction and recovery
- The Green Book  
By Food Addicts Anonymous

### **Other Helpful Texts**

- The Spirituality of Imperfection  
By Ernest Kurtz & Katherine Kercham
- Experiencing Spirituality  
An unofficial volume 2 of The Spirituality of Imperfection  
By Ernest Kurtz & Katherine Kercham
- Drop the Rock: Removing Character Defects - Steps Six & Seven  
By Bill P., Todd W. and Sara S.

## **Sponsorship**

Sponsors are SSA members who are living the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions to the best of their ability. They are willing to share their recovery with other members of the fellowship and are committed to abstinence.

We ask a sponsor to help us through our program of recovery on all three levels: physical, emotional and spiritual. By working with other members of SSA and sharing their experience, strength and hope, sponsors continually renew and reaffirm their own recovery. Sponsors share their program up to the level of their own experience.

Ours is a program of attraction; find a sponsor who has what you want and ask that person how he or she is achieving it. A member may work with more than one sponsor and may change sponsors from time to time. However, many of us choose to work with just one sponsor and find it is helpful to avoid changing sponsors frequently.

## **Anonymity**

Anonymity is a central tenant of 12 Step recovery and one that brings with it many benefits:

- It helps us to place principles before personalities.
- It offers each of us freedom of expression and safeguards us from gossip.
- It assures us that only we, as individual SSA members, have the right to make our membership known within our community.
- At the level of press, radio, films, television and other public media of communication, it means that we never allow our faces or last names to be used once we identify ourselves as SSA members. This protects both the individual and the Fellowship.

Within the Fellowship:

- Anonymity means that whatever we share with another SSA member will be held in respect and confidence.
- What we hear at meetings will remain there.

Anonymity does not limit our effectiveness *within the Fellowship*. It is not a break of anonymity to use our full names within our group. Also, it is not a break of anonymity to enlist help for group members in trouble, provided we are careful to refrain from discussing any specific personal information.

Another aspect of anonymity is that it underscores that fact that we are all equal in the Fellowship, whether we are newcomers or seasoned longtimers. The same applies to our status outside the program - it makes no difference in SSA; we have no stars or VIPs. We come together as equals - compulsive self sabotagers and misery addicts striving to recover.

### **Making the Connection** (phone calls/email, texts in person, etc.)

Member-to-member contact helps us feel connected and can help with the isolation that is so common among us. Many members call, text or email their sponsors and other SSA members daily. As part of the surrender process, reaching out to ask for and receive help is key to a strong recovery program. Contact also provides immediate support for those hard-to-handle highs and lows we may experience.

Members always respect the tradition of anonymity when leaving voicemail or electronic messages.

### **Literature**

Our literature includes "*When Misery Is Company*" by Anne Katherine, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (the AA Big Book) and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (the AA 12x12).

Many SSA members find that reading literature daily supports our efforts to live the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions by providing insight into our common problem of compulsive self sabotage and real solutions we can use to build a new life. We are right to have hope - there really is a solution and it really does work.

### **Meetings**

Meetings are gatherings of two or more compulsive self sabotagers who come together to share their personal experience, as well as the strength and hope SSA has given them. Any fellowship between 2 or more is a meeting. Meetings give us an opportunity to identify our common problem, discuss our common solution through the Twelve Steps and share the gifts we receive through this program.

Our meetings are predominantly by phone at this time, with just one face-2-face meeting in the Atlanta Georgia area. We are hopeful that as we grow, more face-2-face meetings will be established and we are happy to facilitate this. The [Member Map](#) on our website will give you a bird's eye view of where some of us reside but it is incomplete.

We ask that our members provide the name of the city and state in which they reside so we can connect them with members that are in the same area. If you have an interest in joining a face-to-face meeting, please send your information to [Alena1960@live.com](mailto:Alena1960@live.com).

## **Service**

Carrying the message to the compulsive self sabotager who still suffers is the basic purpose of our Fellowship; therefore, it is the most fundamental form of service. Any form of service—no matter how small—that helps reach a fellow sufferer adds to the quality of our own recovery. Members who are new to SSA can give service by going to meetings, reaching out to the newcomers, and doing whatever needs to be done to serve the group (such as leading a meeting or doing one of the readings).

There are many ways to give back what we have so generously been given. We are encouraged to do what we can when we can. “A life of sane and happy usefulness” is what we are promised as the result of working the Twelve Steps. Service helps to fulfill that promise.

## **Healthy Practices**

“*When Misery is Company*” provides tried and true practices that can bring great value to our recovery.

Here is a list of passages many have found helpful:

- Mindfulness (pg 216)
- Healthy Feeling process (pg 204)
- Grounding (pg 217)
- Dealing with Shame (pg 209)
- Blame vs. Truth (pg 217)
- Compassionate Communication (pg 219)
- Gratitude Journal (pg 227)
- Forgiving (pg 228)

- Tool Belt (pg 228)
- Sponsorship Guide (pg 175)
- Daily Practice/Review (pg 196)
- Tool Addiction Abstinence (pg 186-196)
- Brain Healing (pg 231)
- Respond Immediately to self sabotage w/Recovery Related Action (pg 266)
- Therapy (pg 239)

## **Feelings**

*"When Misery is Company"* advises that appropriate handling of our feelings is our number one protection against relapse (page 199).

While feelings can be overwhelming when we are getting started, as we grow in our recovery we'll find that we are often able to relax and ride the feelings like the powerful waves they are. Our connection to our Higher Power reminds us that we will move through our feelings when we allow ourselves to feel our feelings all the way through to their unfolding. Here we'll discover whether they're really about what is happening now or if the current event has triggered feelings from the past. We may discover that feelings from the past, while appropriate for the past, are not appropriate for the present.

We can gently connect with our feelings in prayer saying "I believe that you are meant to bless me. Why have you come? What do you want me to see? What lesson do you bring? What is it time for me to remember?" Sometimes we may need to speak openly and honestly about our feelings in a meeting, or engage in meditation, writing and work with a sponsor, to uncover the Truth and with it a response to the current situation that is healthy and appropriate. Like all new skills, the more we practice this, the better we get at it until one day we'll find it has become our new normal most of the time.

There may be occasions when our feelings are so strong that we momentarily fall out of recovery and back into our addiction. With our pattern triggered and we suddenly act out our childhood emotions, feeling with renewed vitality the anger, sadness, shame and fear we knew as a child.

Happily, the way back into recovery is simple. We take 3 long slow deep cleansing breaths and then we pray saying something like: "God, grant me the serenity, to accept the things we can not change, the courage to change the things we can and the wisdom to know the difference.

With our Conscious Contact restored, we pray for knowledge of our Higher Powers will for us and the power to carry that out. We know that our Higher Power can and will relieve us of addiction when It is sought. We have come to believe that our Higher Power will provide us with Guidance and we seek It through every avenue: prayer, meditation, attending a meeting, calling our sponsor, making an outreach call, writing and Service.