

## Abstinence as Defined in the Book

On page 266 of the book *When Misery is Company*, the author gives a description of abstinence. It includes, but is not limited to:

- Mindfully choosing to recover from misery addiction by choosing to respond to habitual self sabotage with recovery related actions.
- Recovery related actions can include attending a meeting, contacting another member, reading, writing, listening to music, walking and reaching out to our Higher Power as we understand It.
- The challenge is that self-sabotage behavior is not always obvious to us. We may need to reach out to our recovery community for guidance and support.

The Chapter titled Abstinence (page 179) provides specific guidelines for abstinence from the most common avoidance behaviors. There are also helpful activities in this chapter. You may want to do them with a friend, sponsor or as a topic (or two) for your meeting.

Here is an overview of the information from this chapter:

| Behavior  | Recommendation(s) for Abstinence  |
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| Alcohol, narcotics, prescription pain medicine, diet pills or controlled substances | <p>Work a 12 Step program for that substance for a year and then come back to this book</p> <p>Complete abstinence from these substances for at least one full year is a prerequisite for MAA/SSA recovery</p>  |
| Caffeine and Nicotine   | <p>You can work the SSA/MAA program even if you continue smoking or drinking coffee or caffeinated sodas - but if you drink more than five cups a day or chain smoke, your brain chemistry may interfere with the concentration you'll need.</p> <p>(see page 181 for more information)</p>   |
| Self Sabotage   | <p>This is the essential behavior of misery addiction and it can take an almost infinite number of forms, some of the most common are included in this chapter</p> <p>Practicing good self care, like getting enough sleep, sufficient nutrition, medication as prescribed (if needed) and reasonable exercise, is an excellent first step</p> <p>Abstinence from anything that dulls or alters your consciousness is a great second step</p> <p>Regular consistence support, daily working of the Steps and following the Daily Practice described on page 196-198 are recommended</p> <p>If you don't want to do the Daily Practice, your recovery may be out of whack - got to a recovery meeting ASAP or call your sponsor promptly</p> |

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| <p>Food Addictions<br/>Compulsive Eating</p>   | <p>Food addiction recovery has to be worked alongside SSA/MAA Recovery</p> <p>It is strongly recommended that we attend a 12 Step food recovery program (like Overeaters Anonymous, Food Addicts Anonymous, HOW, A Vision for You or other 12 Step food program) and that we get a sponsor and attend multiple meetings per week</p> <p>Abstinence consists of not eating any foods that contain refined sugars or NutraSweet (aspartame) in addition to requirements specific to your food plan</p> |
| <p>Anorexia</p>                                | <p>Ask a doctor, HMO, hospital, psychologist or other appropriate professional about a program that will help you get sufficient daily nutrition.</p> <p>Abstinence consists of eating 3 nutritious meals a day that provide at least the minimum daily caloric requirements for your body</p>   |
| <p>Compulsive Activities</p>                   | <p>Complete the Activity Inventory on page 183 for recommendations specific to your needs</p>  |
| <p>Overworking</p>                             | <p>Abstinence consists of not overworking or not working compulsively</p> <p>This includes not volunteering excessively for extra work or responsibilities</p>   |
| <p>Overexercising</p>                          | <p>Exercising 3 to 5 days/week for 30 to 60 minutes each day is excellent but unless you are an athlete in training for competition, anything more is excessive</p> <p>Abstinence consists of staying within the 60 minute limit</p>   |
| <p>Internet Surfing</p>                        | <p>Set an alarm for one hour - when the alarm goes off, leave the computer promptly</p> <p>If you can't leave after an hour, avoid the internet and find information the old-fashioned way, at the library but not through its computers) - see page 188 for more information</p>  |
| <p>Excessive Card or Computer Game Playing</p> | <p>Set an alarm for one hour - when the alarm goes off, stop playing promptly</p> <p>If you can't stop promptly, abstinence may mean refraining from game playing entirely</p> <p>Gamblers Anonymous and SSA/MAA are your best resources</p>   |

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| Too Much Sleep                | Abstinence consists of limiting your sleep to a reasonable number of hours - usually no more than 9 hours per day  |
| Too Little Sleep              | Abstinence consists of giving yourself enough sleep so that you don't need your alarm more than twice a week   |
| Self Sacrificing & Caretaking | See exercises on page 189 & 190  |
| Gambling                      | Abstinence consists of not gambling, betting or wagering on anything and avoiding slippery places like racetracks, casinos, bingo halls and lottery counters. Gamblers Anonymous is your best resource.  |
| Obsessive Cleaning            | <p>Abstinence consists of shifting your consciousness from an attempt at total control over your environment for more fluid aspects of life, such as productive activities and relationships. (for details see page 192)</p> <p>If you compulsively clean your own body, you could have obsessive-compulsive disorder, which can be treated medically - you deserve the balm of therapy which will bring you far deeper and longer-lasting relief than soap and water ever can.</p>  |
| Excessive Television          | <p>Don't be shy about asking for support from a friend or sponsor until you are able to easily press the off button</p> <p>A couple suggestions for modified abstinence:</p> <p>Try setting a firm time to watch the TV - for example, watching your two favorite programs and committing to pressing the off button during the second set of credits</p> <p>Try recording your favorite 5 shows each week and watching them all <i>once</i> during a set time on the weekend</p> <p>If modified abstinence fails, then giving away your TV may be the only way to rescue your hours</p> |
| Compulsive Shopping           | <p>Abstinence consists of setting time limits for shopping, buying only what is on a previously prepared list, requiring a call to your sponsor for any purchase over a set dollar amount, shopping with a conscious friend and staying out of shopping centers unless there is something specific you need to purchase</p> <p>If this fails, you could pay someone else to shop for you</p>   |
| Excessive Tinkering           | <p>This is a catchall for any activity you do so often or compulsively that it interferes with your participation in the good things of life</p> <p>As in all of the previous examples, abstinence means setting</p>   |

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|                            | <p>limits</p> <p>The form moderation takes will depend on the degree to which the activity interferes with the rest of your life and on how well you can sustain that moderated level over time</p> |
| Compulsive Sexual Activity | Please see page 195 for more information  |