

Self Sabotagers and Misery Addicts Anonymous Standard Phone Meeting Format

Rev. 08/28/18

Meeting Leader: Thank you for doing the service of leading this meeting. It is deeply appreciated. Here is the key to this meeting format.

- *Words in red/italics are notes for you and should not be read aloud.*
- *Words highlighted in yellow are sections read by attendees.*
Please don't be shy about waiting and asking repeatedly for someone to read - you will be doing them a service. That extra minute or two might be just what someone needs to step forward and participate in their own Recovery. Silence is a time for our Higher Power to speak. When there is silence, it's a time to go within.
- *Text highlighted in blue is optional and can be read at your discretion.*
- *Text highlighted in bright yellow is said by the entire group.*

Choose the appropriate Welcome for your meeting:

- Welcome to the Monday phone meeting of the One Day at a Time group of Self Sabotagers Anonymous.
- Welcome to the Tuesday phone meeting of the Tuesday Step and Tradition Study group of Self Sabotagers Anonymous.
- Welcome to the Wednesday phone meeting of the Serenity with Unity group of Self Sabotagers Anonymous.
- *The Thursday phone meeting uses the experiential format*
- Welcome to the Friday phone meeting of the Friday Step and Tradition Study group of Self Sabotagers Anonymous.
- Welcome to the Saturday phone meeting of the 'Let It Begin With Me' group of Self Sabotagers Anonymous.
- Welcome to the Sunday Night Speaker meeting of Self Sabotagers Anonymous.

My name is _____. I am a Self Sabotager Recovering From Misery Addiction and the leader for today. This is an open meeting, and we are glad that you are here, especially newcomers.

Please join me in a moment of silence to reflect on the reasons we are here followed by the Serenity Prayer. *allow at least 10 seconds of silence*

Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,

The courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Some details about how we conduct this meeting:

We are protected by the tradition of anonymity. People in recovery know we must speak the truth to get better. Please do not reveal the identities or stories of the people who are here.

We do not cross talk, please do not offer advice or judgements.

Self Sabotagers Anonymous is a fellowship where we share our experience, strength, and hope so that we may solve our common problem and help others recover from misery addiction. It is for anyone who is addicted to self-sabotage which results in unhappiness, sadness, joylessness, isolation, avoidance, rebellion, or resistance, or anyone who is fearful of joy, success, happiness, intimacy, or well-being.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop self-sabotage. Our primary purpose is to stay in recovery and to help other misery addicts find recovery.

Would someone please read "How It Works" available on page 262 of the *When Misery is Company* book and in all of the meeting formats on our website. *Please be patient and wait for someone to come forward to read. Sometimes a moment or two is silence will give someone the opportunity to find their courage. Consider that you are doing the service of giving them the opportunity to strengthen their recovery by participating.*

How It Works (12 Steps)

Many Twelve Step meetings include a reading of "How It Works," which is taken from chapter 5 of Alcoholics Anonymous (the Big Book.) The principles in that chapter still work, making a powerful statement about what is required for recovery.

What follows is a translation of "How It Works" for compulsive self-sabotagers.

- 1. We admitted we were powerless over self-sabotage - 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 Our God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*
- 6. Were entirely ready to have Our God remove all these defects of character.*
- 7. Humbly asked Our 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 our 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 misery addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

Many of us exclaimed, "What an order! I can't go through with it!" Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything close to perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The

principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Our description of the Self-Sabotager and our personal adventures before and after starting recovery make clear three pertinent ideas:

- *That we were addicted to self-sabotage, misery and avoidance and could not manage our own lives.*
- *That probably no human power could have relieved our self-sabotage addiction.*
- *That a Higher Power could and would relieve us of this addiction if that Power was sought.*

The Tradition of the Month is: *Leader reads the tradition with the number that matches the number of the month*

The Twelve Traditions

- 1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SSA unity.*
- 2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.*
- 3. The only requirement for SSA membership is a desire to stop self-sabotage.*
- 4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or SSA as a whole.*
- 5. Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the self-sabotager who still suffers.*
- 6. An SSA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the MAA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.*
- 7. Every SSA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.*
- 8. SSA should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.*
- 9. SSA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.*
- 10. SSA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the MAA 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, films and other media of communication.*
- 12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.*

Are there any visitors or anyone here who considers themselves new to SSA/MAA. If so, please introduce yourself by your first name so that we can welcome you.

If there are any newcomers, the leader:

- *Can request that the following Welcome Reading be read or ask an experienced member to share a 5 minute version of their story.*
- *Can invite any newcomers to stay after the meetings for a couple minutes so we can get their email address IF they are interested in receiving correspondence regarding the fellowship.*

Welcome Reading:

When we say we are addicted to misery, it doesn't mean we enjoy being miserable. It means that we are addicted to a pattern of behaviors we have unconsciously developed to protect ourselves. At some point, possibly early in childhood, our wires got crossed and we ended up with a deeply ingrained pattern of choices, behaviors, or blindness to choices, that do not serve our well being.

At the center of this pattern of behaviors we find avoidance, self sabotage and a fear of losing what little we have. This pattern may create a fog. In this fog we miss deadlines, waste opportunities, and see no point in accepting help offered to us. On a very basic level, a part of us has given up.

We may have used other addictions or compulsions to create avoidance. These serve the dual purpose of giving us a security blanket which offers comfort and helps us avoid our misery, fear, and/or hopelessness. Some of our secondary addictions include compulsive use of: food, shopping, illness, work, gambling, TV, game playing, excess technology, exercise, clutter, extreme religiosity, over-spending and debt. Other avoidance behaviors include codependence, caretaking, self-abuse, self-denial, sleeping too much or too little, under earning and addiction to alcohol, drugs, nicotine and caffeine. We crave avoidance like an alcoholic craves a drink.

We have developed plans that would make our lives better and then suddenly forget or abandon our plan when our pattern of self sabotage takes over. If this happens many times, we experience a loss of self-trust. As our lives become littered with more failures, we may become convinced that we ourselves are failures.

So what's the use?

Here are some good reasons for facing this addiction: We were born for a purpose and our lives have value. We deserve to reclaim our inner, authentic selves. Recovery from all other addictions will be successful when the addiction to misery is addressed. We'll be healthier because as we heal emotionally, our bodies will heal too. By learning to access and embrace feelings of joy and happiness, we will be blessed with an abundance of intimacy, fulfillment and serenity.

What do we do next?

Even if we can't fully embrace the Misery concept yet, we can begin working the Steps - coming to meetings, listening and sharing, leading meetings, doing readings and getting a sponsor can aid our Recovery.

We finally have Hope. Together we can do this. Many have recovered and we can too.

<<End of Welcome Reading>>

Meeting Logistics

Are there any SSA/MAA birthdays for the month of _____?

Are there any SSA/MAA announcements? *pause to let others respond first, then make the following announcements*

- On Sept 17th, our Monday morning meeting will be changing its meeting time from 9:30 AM to 10 AM ET.
It is our sincere hope that this new time will work out better for everyone.
Until Sept. 17th, the meeting remains at 9:30 AM ET | 8:30 AM CT | 7:30 AM MT | 6:30 AM PT
Beginning Sept. 17, the meeting time will be 10:00 AM ET | 9:00 AM CT | 8:00 AM MT | 7:00 AM PT

- Our meeting hosts a short Group Conscience meeting every month.

It's held on *read the line for your meeting*

- Monday the first week of the month immediately after the meeting.
- Tuesday the last week of the month immediately after the meeting.
- Wednesday the first week of the month immediately after the meeting.
- Saturday the first week of the month immediately after the meeting.

Please join us, we'd love to get your input.

- *During the last 2 weeks of the month, promote the Sunday Night Speaker meeting:*

Our monthly Sunday night speaker is held the last Sunday of the month at 9 PM ET | 8 PM CT | 7 PM MT | 6 PM PT.

Please see the Meeting Schedule page on the website for this month's topic

- MAA/SSA has no dues or fees, we are self-supporting through our own contributions. Online donations are secure through our Paypal account. Please consider making a monthly donation by clicking on the Donate tab on our website.
- Being self supportive through our own contributions does not only apply to money. People with strong Recovery know that we get out of it what we put into it and service is a great way to strengthen our recovery. We do service by leading meetings, doing readings, attending Group Conscience meetings, working the steps and sponsoring. Another service we can do is to call or text other members to remind them about an upcoming meeting. It might be just what they need and you'll feel good too.
- Who would like to do the service of leading this meeting next week or for this month?
Please allow for at least 10 seconds. Sometimes people are hesitant to step forward but given a little extra time, they may find the courage they need.
 - *If someone volunteers say the following:*
 - Thank you for volunteering for that service. It is truly appreciated.

- *If no one volunteers move the meeting forward by saying:*
 - Someone attending next week can do that service.
- Self Sabotagers Anonymous is about living the solution not the problem. Only one of the 12 steps deals with the problem, the other 11 steps focus on the solution.
- Why do we read the same things at every meeting?
 - Repeated exposure to information creates new neural pathways. We can best support our recovery by reading and hearing recovery related information regularly.
 - Many of our long term members consider the reading of the Steps as a time to meditate or pray for our Recovery.
- Let's verify who is on the call.
Share the names you have captured and ask if there is anyone else.
- Since there are _____ *<number of people>* on the call, we will each have _____ minutes to share.
 - *Time available for each person is calculated by dividing the minutes remaining by the number of people on the call. Subtract 5 minutes for the meeting closing.*
 - *Be conservative with your estimate to ensure that all who wish to have time to share.*
 - *You may find it helpful to have timekeeper. You can keep time, or ask if someone else will be the timekeeper.*
 - *When each person has 30 seconds left, the timekeeper says "30 seconds". When time is up, the timekeeper says "It's time".*
- *Leader may share first or last according to their preference.*
- You are invited to share on today's topic or on anything else that is important to you. We do ask that all sharing be focused on our experience, strength and hope.
- You are welcome to give out your phone number before or after your share.
- The phones are sensitive and background noise is distracting, please use the mute button on your phone or press *6 until it's your time to share. Thank you.
- Anyone wanting to share a second time please wait until everyone else has had a chance to share.
- *Sharing can be leader led (where the leader calls on each person to share) or popcorn style where folks just speak up when they want to share. For larger meetings, leader led sharing can be more effective.*

State the topic and/or format for the meeting (examples are included below - choose the one appropriate for your call)

- *Today is a Book Study meeting and we are reading from << insert words here >>*
- *Today is a Topic meeting and the Topic is << insert words here >>*

Please feel free to use any of the optional Abstinence articles included below as a reading or meeting topic at your discretion. If you do select an article, say:

- *I have selected the article titled <insert title of article> for this meeting.*

<<START OF OPTIONAL SSA/MAA ABSTINENCE ARTICLES>>

Article 1: What Does MAA/SSA Abstinence Look Like?

That is the million dollar question and a topic debated over the years in MAA/SSA.

Alcoholics, drug addicts, and compulsive eaters have substances that can be completely removed from their lives - if the substance is used, abstinence has ended.

Abstinence in MAA/SSA is not as obvious but there are signs that tell us if we are living in Recovery:

1. We are becoming increasingly more aware of detrimental behaviors we use to create avoidance.
 - a. Some of our avoidance behaviors include compulsive use of: food, shopping, illness, work, gambling, TV, game playing, excess technology, exercise, clutter, overspending and debt. Other avoidance behaviors include codependence, caretaking, self-abuse, self-denial, sleeping too much or too little, extreme religiosity, under earning and addiction to alcohol, drugs, nicotine and caffeine.
2. We're becoming more open to new ideas and willing to try new things.
3. We are becoming more mindful, making choices that support our needs rather than doing something mindless.
 - a. We can choose an activity that supports our Recovery:
 - Eating something healthy
 - Attending a meeting
 - Contacting a recovery friend
 - Doing some prayer or meditation.
4. We are practicing good self care and we take time for ourselves.
5. On occasion, we may feel a pull to engage in old self sabotage behavior but we get better at catching ourselves and making a different choice.
6. We are living wholeheartedly.

<<End of Article 1>>

Article 2: One of the Founding Principles of The 12 Steps

Any life run on self-will can't be a success because we inevitably collide with something or someone. Though we believe our motives are good, the reality is that *we are trying to control things*. We believe that if people would do as we wished everything would be great and life would be wonderful. In our desperation to control things we may use different strategies - sometimes being kind, considerate, patient, generous even modest and self-sacrificing. At other times, being mean, egotistical, selfish and dishonest. Usually we demonstrate a bit of both.

What happens? Life doesn't go the way we want. We might begin to think life doesn't treat us right. So we exert ourselves, becoming more demanding or gracious. Life still doesn't go our way. Admitting we may be *somewhat* at fault, we are *sure* other people are more to blame.

What is the root of our trouble? *We are trying to control something that is not ours to control.*

What is the solution? We release ownership for the situation, surrendering our will to a Higher Will. As our recovery evolves, this practice of Letting Go becomes easier.

If we suddenly feel out of alignment with ourselves or with others, we might ask "Is this mine to control?" If the answer is that **it is not mine to control, we let it go.**

If the answer is that **it is ours to control, we ask for help** from our Higher Power, a trusted friend or our sponsor.

<<End of Article 2>>

Article 3: Addiction to Control

One of our long term members relates the following experience with recovery from food addiction. They discovered that when they did the defined abstinence of no refined sugar or white flour, weighed and measured portions 3 times a day, they were a model of physical recovery for 5 years.

They were perfectly abstinent as defined. But were they happy, joyous and free? Nope.

After observing their recovery attempts in OA & CODA for many years, they came to the conclusion that one of their misery vehicles is the **need to control their recovery** by checking constantly, "Am I better today? Am I abstinent? Did I have any slippery thoughts?"

Instead of doing an objective daily 10th Step which would have helped them to grow in their Recovery, they found that they were judging themselves on the amount of control they were able to exert on themselves and others. They have come to believe that **control may be as destructive as abuse of food, drugs or alcohol.**

Abstinence from misery and self-sabotage is being comfortable with ourselves, being open to experiencing pleasure and being willing to practice good self care.

Defining MAA abstinence is like trying to define what love is, what God is, what art is. We know it when we experience it.

<<End of Article 3>>

Article 4: Addiction to Perfection

We live in an imperfect world where there is no such thing as perfection, only perfect moments. Perfection as a whole is an illusion. Yet many of us expect perfection in ourselves and in others, a belief that keeps us unhappy and dissatisfied. Even when things are good, the expectation of perfection can turn them sour. The addiction to perfection is, at its core, looking for approval. The question is, approval from whom or what? And why do we think we need that approval?

Happily, the perfection addiction is one that we can let go of **right now**. We don't need perfection for things to be good. We can focus on the good in our lives, recognizing our efforts, what we did well, and what we got right. We don't need anyone else's approval but our own, we are right where we need to be.

Our positive attitude and outlook will attract more of the same and we may be surprised to find that happiness, serenity and peace of mind have become our new way of being.

One of our members found it helpful to name their addiction to perfection, calling it Pretty Polly Perfect. They gave Polly the act of opening their packet of oatmeal every morning. "Okay, Polly. Here it is! Your moment of perfection." It the package opened neatly, they celebrated with Polly on the moment. If it didn't, they comforted Polly and then used their tools to open it. When their tools were readily available, they complimented themselves on doing a good job of self care. Then they told Polly she would get another chance tomorrow.

What did this accomplish? First, it made them smile and smiling is always a gift. Second it set expectations where they belonged. By recognizing that there are perfect moments in life and that they are rare, they are able to celebrate the perfect moments and then let go of the expectation for more.

Letting Go of expectations and accepting the idea that there may be a Higher Will guiding us is a wonderful way to live.

The word Miracle comes from the Latin word miraculum which means "object of wonder", but its ultimate root means "to smile upon." When we are smiling upon our lives, we naturally attract miracles.

We intuitively know how to handle people, places and things that used to baffle us. With our focus on the positives in our lives, we are doing the footwork and leaving the outcome to our Higher Power. And THAT is a moment of perfection!

<<End of Article 4>>

Article 5: Developing and Maintaining Healthy Behaviors

Like most addictions, the SSA/MAA addiction is insidious. Just as we are starting to feel better, we may find ourselves abandoning positive actions and returning to old habits simply because they are familiar. This is one of the core behaviors of our addiction.

Behaviors that make up our self sabotage addiction may include but are not limited to:

- lateness
- breaking promises
- not showing up
- acting on assumptions rather than validated facts
- not expressing our needs
- not accepting help when it is offered
- 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.

Regular, consistent support and working the first three steps daily can give us a solid foundation but **to truly recover, we'll want to change** - and that is where working the 12 Steps with a sponsor comes in.

For more information about a *Helpful Daily Practice*, see page 196 in the *When Misery is Company* book.

For more information about working the 12 Steps, seek out a sponsor by announcing that you are looking for one at the meetings you attend.

<<End of Article 5>>

Article 6: Abstinence as Defined in the Book

We can find a description of abstinence beginning on page 266 of the book *When Misery is Company*. This description 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.
- 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 along with some helpful activities. You may want to do them with a friend, sponsor or as a topic (or two) for your meeting.

A handy overview document is available on the website. It's titled *Abstinence By the Book* and is available from the main menu, in the Member Writing section or at this link: [Abstinence By the Book](#)

<<End of Article 6>>

<<END OF OPTIONAL SSA/MAA ABSTINENCE ARTICLES

Closing the meeting:

Start closing the meeting five minutes before the ending time whenever possible.

Does anyone have a burning desire to speak another time?

Thank you all for being here. We hope to see you next time.

Our next meeting is *<calculate the next meeting from the list below>*:

- Mondays
Until Sept. 17th, the meeting remains the same - 9:30 AM ET | 8:30 AM CT | 7:30 AM MT | 6:30 AM PT
Beginning Sept. 17, the meeting time will be 10:00 AM ET | 9:00 AM CT | 8:00 AM MT | 7:00 AM PT
- Tuesdays at 10:30 AM ET | 9:30 AM CT | 8:30 AM MT | 7:30 AM PT
- Wednesdays at 6:30 PM ET | 5:30 PM. CT | 4:30 PM MT | 3:30 PM PT
- Thursdays at 9:00 PM ET | 8:00 PM CT | 7:00 PM MT | 6:00 PM PT
- Saturdays at 10 AM ET | 9 AM CT | 8 AM MT | 7 AM PT
- Last Sunday of every month - Sunday Night Speaker meeting
Time: 9 PM ET | 8 PM CT | 7 PM MT | 6 PM PT (1 hour)

Please see the Meeting Schedule Page on the website for the topic for this month.

Remember that just by attending a meeting, you do a service to others. We couldn't have a meeting if you weren't here.

Remember, too, that anonymity, like recovery, is a treasured possession. What we say here, what you hear here, when you leave here, please let it stay here.

Working the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions with a sponsor is key to quality, sustained recovery. Is there anyone on the call who is available to be a temporary sponsor? If so, please give us your name and telephone number now so that anyone seeking a sponsor can contact you.

As an additional service to our Recovery, this meeting maintains a group text meeting reminder list which is used to send a reminder approximately 10 minutes before the meeting. Please let us know at this time if you would like to be added to it.

Would someone please read The SSA/MAA Promises?

The SSA/MAA Promises

These are the SSA/MAA Promises as they are today. They are still a work in progress and we are open to edits and suggestions.

At the end of the promises, the statement: "We see these promises coming true" is made. Everyone is invited to come off mute and respond with an enthusiastic "YES WE DO!"

- As we live The Twelve Steps, we find freedom from misery addiction and discover our authentic selves.
 - Self-sabotage, avoidance, and fear leave us as trust grows.
 - Compassion increases as we love and accept ourselves *just as we are at this moment*.
 - We no longer use guilt, shame and regret to hurt ourselves or others.
 - As we release perfection and control, we become more successful, secure and happy.
 - Recovery brings clarity, intimacy and joy. It draws us into harmony with life.
 - As good things happen again and again, we experience our Higher Power doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.
- We see these Promises coming true: **YES WE DO!**

Let us now form a virtual circle. I put my hand in yours and together we can do what we could never do alone! No longer is there a sense of hopelessness, no longer must we each depend upon our own unsteady willpower. We are all together now reaching out our hands for power and strength greater than ours. And as we join hands we find love and understanding beyond our wildest dreams.

In closing, I invite everyone to come off mute and join me in the We version of the Serenity Prayer.

We Version of the Serenity Prayer:

God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change,
 The courage to change the things we can,
 And the wisdom to know the difference.

Thank you for joining us. Know that without your presence there could be no meeting.

Remember that it works! AND WE ARE WORTH IT!

Please say it with me now, We ARE WORTH IT!