

Relationship Anonymous Meeting Format

The Meeting Leader opens the meeting with:

"Hello, everyone. My name is _____ and I'm your leader for today. Welcome."

The Leader reads the Preamble:

The parallel between the progression of the disease of alcoholism and relationship addiction is clear. Addiction, whether to a mind-altering chemical, or to a relationship, ultimately affects every area of the addict's life in a progressively disastrous way. We seek recovery from our addiction by practicing the Twelve Steps adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous.

The leader calls for a moment of silence, then join in saying the 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.

The St. Mary's House requests that there be NO SMOKING in the house, on the porch or on the grounds. Also, the altar area is off-limits.

The Leader asks for the group to read (in circular fashion) the
"Characteristics of Relationship Addiction:"

**An Alternate Serenity Prayer
(for Codependents and Relationship Addicts)**

God, grant me the serenity
to accept people for who they are,
the courage to change the only person I can,
and the wisdom to know that person is me.

Characteristics of Relationship Addiction

1. Typically we come from dysfunctional homes in which our emotional needs were not met.
2. Having received little real nurturing ourselves, we try to fill this unmet need vicariously by becoming caregivers, especially to people who appear, in some way, needy.
3. Because we were never able to change our parent(s) into the warm, loving caretakers we longed for, we respond deeply to the familiar type of emotionally unavailable person whom we can again try to change, through our love.
4. Terrified of abandonment, we will do anything to keep a relationship from dissolving.
5. Almost nothing is too much trouble, takes too much time, or is too expensive if it will "help" the person we are involved with.
6. Accustomed to lack of love in personal relationships, we are willing to wait, hope and try harder to please.
7. We are willing to take far more than 50 percent of the responsibility, guilt and blame in any relationship.
8. Our self-esteem is critically low, and deep inside we do not believe we deserve to be happy. Rather, we believe we must earn the right to enjoy life.
9. We have a desperate need to control people and our relationships, having experienced little security in childhood. We mask our efforts to control people and situations as "being helpful."
10. In a relationship, we are much more in touch with our dream of how it could be than with the reality of our situation.
11. We are addicted to people and to emotional pain.
12. We may be predisposed emotionally, and often biochemically, to becoming addicted to drugs, alcohol, and/or certain foods, particularly sugary ones.

13. By being drawn to people with problems that need "fixing," or by being enmeshed in situations that are chaotic, uncertain and emotionally painful, we avoid focusing on our responsibility to ourselves.
14. We may have a tendency towards episodes of depression, which we try to forestall through the excitement provided by an unstable relationship.
15. We are not attracted to people who are kind, stable, reliable and interested in us. We find such "nice" people boring.

Relationships Anonymous Twelve Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over relationships; 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. ~~W~~ere 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 a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other relationship addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

STAGE TWO RECOVERY: A NEW WAY OF LIFE

Steps to Personal and Spiritual Growth

1. Admitted that our lives lacked depth and meaning and were significantly dysfunctional.
2. Came to believe that a Spiritual Power within ourselves could fill this void.
3. Made a decision to enter into a new relationship with this Spiritual Power.
4. Made a searching and fearless attempt to discover the reality of ourselves.
5. Communicated to our Spiritual Power, ourselves generally and a friend what we had discovered.
6. Were entirely ready to let our Spiritual Power help us reach our fuller potential.
7. Humbly asked our Spiritual Power for insight and guidance in this quest.
8. Made a list of all our relationships in need of healing and became open to new attitudes and behaviors.
9. Reached out to these people in new and healthy ways, when to do so would not injure anyone including ourselves.
10. Continued to explore our inner depth and richness honestly and to share our self-knowledge with others.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to deepen our new relationship with our Spiritual Power, praying only for continued awareness of reality and the strength to act in accordance with it.
12. Having grown spiritually and personally as the result of these steps, we tried to witness these insights to others and live this new way of life on a daily basis.

Relationships Anonymous Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends on unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one 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 RA membership is a desire to heal from relationship addiction.
4. Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other RA groups or the Anonymous programs as a whole.
5. Each RA group has but one purpose--*to help ourselves and each other recover from relationship addiction*. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps of RA ourselves and by welcoming and giving comfort to other relationship addicts.
6. RA groups ought never endorse, finance or lend our name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary spiritual aim. Although separate entities, we should always cooperate with other Anonymous programs.
7. Every RA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. RA Twelve-Step work should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. Our groups, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. RA groups have no opinion on outside issues, hence our 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. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all those to whom we've been addicted.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place *principles above personalities*.

The leader asks the group to share their first names.

INTRODUCTIONS

The leader asks if there are any ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The leader passes the sign-up sheet and gives the key to the person chairing the next week's meeting.

The leader reads the SUGGESTED GUIDELINES:

1. Each person must have a safe place to talk without comments, questions or advice from others. We avoid advice-giving and cross-talk during the meeting. We meet to help ourselves and others by sharing experience, strength and hope. Sharing should proceed in order around the circle once or twice after which discussion may occur more freely. An individual may request feedback from the group on what that person has shared.
2. We avoid talk about "them." We are here to learn to change our focus to ourselves. It is important to talk about our own lives, not another's. We also avoid indulging in blame, resentment and self-pity as these hinder our recovery.
3. We avoid dominance by any individual through rotation of leadership and through limiting our sharing so that everyone has time to speak. Remember: No one is going to solve all their problems in one meeting--and it is important NOT to try.
4. RA is an anonymous program. We ask that you respect the anonymity and confidentiality of each person in this meeting. We ask that: **WHAT YOU SEE HERE, WHAT IS SAID HERE, WHEN YOU LEAVE HERE, LET IT STAY HERE.**

The leader introduces a topic for discussion, related to recovery from relationship addiction, a step or a tradition.

After the introduction of the topic, the group will number off in to 2-4 smaller groups for discussion, if attendance requires it.

The leader announces the Seventh Tradition.

Our Seventh Tradition reminds us that we are fully self-supporting. We have no dues or fees and all contributions are voluntary. If all you do is pass the basket, we will love you for this service.

The Promises of Recovery from Relationship Addiction

1. We accept ourselves fully, even while wanting to change parts of ourselves. There is a basic self-love and self-regard, which we carefully nurture and purposefully expand.
2. We accept others as they are without trying to change them to meet our needs.
3. We are in touch with our feelings and attitudes about every aspect of our lives, including our sexuality.
4. We cherish every aspect of ourselves: our personalities, our appearances, our beliefs and values, our bodies, our interests and accomplishments. We validate ourselves rather than searching for a relationship to give us a sense of self-worth.
5. Our self-esteem is great enough that we can enjoy being with other people who are fine just as they are. We do not need to be needed in order to feel worthy.
6. We allow ourselves to be open and trusting with appropriate people. We are not afraid to be known at a deeply personal level, but we also do not expose ourselves to the exploitation of those who are not interested in our well-being.
7. We question, "Is this relationship good for me? Does it enable me to grow into all I am capable of being?"
8. When a relationship is destructive, we are able to let go of it without experiencing disabling depression. We have a circle of supportive friends and healthy interests to see ourselves through crises.
9. We value our own serenity above all else. All the struggles, drama and chaos of the past have lost their appeal. We are protective of ourselves, our health and well-being.
10. We know that a relationship, in order to work, must be between partners who share similar values, interests and goals, and who each has a capacity for healthy intimacy. We also know that we are worthy of the best that life has to offer.

Closing

The first phase in recovery from loving too much begins when we realize what we are doing and wish we could stop.

The second phase comes from our willingness to get help for ourselves, followed by our actual initial attempt to secure help.

After that, we enter the phase of recovery that requires our commitment to our own healing and willingness to continue with our recovery program. During this time, we begin to change how we act, think and feel. What once felt normal and familiar begins to feel uncomfortable and unhealthy.

We enter the next phase of recovery when we start making choices that no longer follow our old patterns, but enhance our lives and promote our well-being instead. Finally, genuine self-love evolves.

Once self-acceptance and self-love begin to develop and take hold, we are ready to consciously practice simply becoming ourselves without trying to please, without performing in certain ways calculated to gain another's approval and love.

"Nothing, absolutely nothing happens in God's world by mistake... unless I accept life completely on life's terms, I cannot be happy. I need to concentrate not so much on what needs to change in the world as on what needs to be changed in me and my attitudes."

The leader closes the meeting by suggesting the group join in a closing prayer.