

SUGGESTIONS FOR NEW SA GROUPS

I. THE GROUP

General. The primary purpose of an SA group is for its members to stay sexually sober and help other sexaholics achieve sobriety. Traditionally, as with AA, any two or more sexaholics meeting for purposes of sexual sobriety by following the SA program may consider themselves an SA group, provided that as a group they have no other group affiliation and receive no outside support.

Starting the Group

1. Find a weekly meeting place and set the time. At first, this may be a private home or office, where anonymity and privacy can be assured. Churches are often willing to provide facilities. Check with churches and other organizations where AA meetings are held; often such facilities are made available to other self-help groups. Check with SA General Service Office (GSO); offers for meeting places have come in from sympathetic individuals and organizations around the country.

2. Select a group secretary, treasurer, and literature chairman. These are explained below. Members who accept these responsibilities serve the group; they do not govern, in accordance with Tradition Two.

3. Advise SA GSO of the secretary's name and numbers and meeting particulars.

Secretary: Should have successful sexual sobriety; length of that sobriety should be agreed upon by the group conscience. Suggested term of office is six months or a year, although each group is autonomous and may hold elections whenever it wishes.

Secretary's responsibilities include:

a. Selects a person to lead each meeting and provides that person with meeting format. In most groups and for most meetings, probably the most important thing the secretary will do is select the sober member who will lead that meeting. A good idea is to select the leader a week in advance.

b. Is responsible for the meeting place and notifying members.

c. Maintains communications with SA GSO; notifies GSO of any changes.

d. Maintains communication with other nearby SA groups and SA as a whole.

e. Handles necessary correspondence and phone calls or delegates these.

f. Calls business or group-conscience meetings.

g. Is the guardian of the 12 Traditions for that group; that is, sees to it that the group is holding to the Traditions.

Treasurer: Should have successful sobriety; length of that sobriety should be agreed upon by the group conscience. Same term of office as secretary. Responsibilities include:

a. Custodian and disburser of money received by passing the basket at meetings. Collections are usually counted and recorded by the treasurer and one other member.

- b. Keeps detailed account of group's finances and reports on this at business meetings.
- c. If directed by the group, sends regular group contribution to SA GSO for national and world services. Some groups have the policy that a certain percentage of excess money left over after paying all group expenses be sent regularly to GSO. (Member and group contributions are the only means of supporting the work of the General Service Office.)
- d. All member contributions to the General Service Office are tax-deductible, since SA is a non-profit, charitable, exempt organization as registered with the IRS.

Literature Chairman: Orders literature from SA GSO and from AA. Sees to it that meetings always have a supply of the Big Book, Twelve and Twelve, the SA booklet and brochure and whatever other AA or SA literature is available. Following AA's experience and example, we do not use non-SA or non-AA literature in meetings.

Steering Committee: This is a means for handling the business and policy matters in groups (or intergroup) large enough to have one. Service on this committee, like most SA responsibilities, is on a rotating basis. All of the group officers are usually included in the steering committee, with as many other members added as needed. The steering committee serves the group or groups by providing a convenient experienced cross-section of sober group membership to take care of group(s) functioning.

Other Positions: Some groups may find it convenient to have refreshment and set-up and clean-up committees to have refreshments available and maintain the meeting place in a clean and orderly condition. Some groups operate well with only a secretary and treasurer. It is the members of a group who decide the service structure it needs.

II. THE MEETINGS

Closed Meetings. At the present time, it is suggested that all SA meetings be closed to all but sexaholics. Only those men and women desiring sexual sobriety for themselves may attend. There are hundreds of thousands of people out there with sexual and marital problems of every conceivable description and motivation—many misguided. The experience of SA to date has taught us this hard lesson: SA is not for everybody. Just as AA is not for everybody. AA is not for those who want to "control and enjoy their drinking" but who want to stop. SA is only for those who want sexual sobriety. There are many troubled people who want the support group but who are not willing to change their old ideas; they seem more intent on changing SA to suit themselves. Keeping the meetings "closed" in the AA sense ("closed" equals sexaholic only) will help keep out the curious, the exploiters, and those perennial "groupies" with vague impulses of wanting to feel better or get magically "fixed." SA is for all those who want to stop their sexually self-destructive thinking and behavior. "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober." (Third Tradition)

General Meeting Format. Suggested meeting formats are included with this guide. Length of meetings is usually an hour and one-half. Meetings should begin promptly; being responsible to this helps our recovery; we're acting for the good of the whole instead of for our individual self-obsession. Acting for the good of the whole turns out to be the best for us as individuals.

Types of Meetings:

- a. Participation meetings allow opportunity for all members to share.
- b. Step study meetings use the Twelve and Twelve and corresponding passages in the SA booklet. Portions are read and then discussed by members in terms of their own sobriety (or lack of it) and needs. Seeing how this is done in good AA step study meetings can be very valuable to new SA groups with no prior experience in such meetings.
- c. First Step inventory meetings (optional for groups and individuals) allow an opportunity for members to give their First Step inventory. (See Step 1 in SA booklet.)
- d. Speaker meetings. After the standard preliminaries, one or two sober SA members tell their stories, following the time-tested: What it was like, What happened, and What it's like now. Speakers are only those who are sexaholics in SA who have achieved a considerable period of successful uninterrupted sexual sobriety. Notes or prepared speeches are not used. The experience of AA and SA has shown that it is better to speak extemporaneously from where the person is at the present time. We can only bear witness to the truth of our own experience. Again, following AA's experience and example, we do not have non-sexaholics speak in SA meetings. Let's keep it in the fellowship.
- e. Combination participation and speaker meetings.

III. TWELFTH STEP WORK

Twelfth Step work is carrying the message of our recovery to other sexaholics. Contacts are made in our own personal lives where we live and work in the world. SA GSO can often supply names of serious inquirers in any given area. These are ready-made contacts, waiting for that precious person-to-person encounter to introduce them to sexual sobriety. GSO also can make available to groups the experiences of other groups that have gone through similar problems and issues.

IV. HOW DO WE DEAL WITH NEWCOMERS?

Many groups use the following approach: Before inquirers attend their first meeting, one or more sober SA members talk with them on the phone or, preferably, meet with them for screening. If the inquirer is a man, there should be a man present, and if a woman, there should be a woman SA member present. Telling them our story usually encourages them to tell their own; and once a newcomer does this, we feel better about inviting them to a meeting.

Nevertheless, we still should feel free to determine certain information and ask questions: a) What is his/her problem? b) What does he/she want from SA? c) "Do you want sexual sobriety as we must have it for ourselves?" We don't hesitate to read from page 4 of the SA booklet on "What is a Sexaholic and What Is Sexual Sobriety?" d) "What do you want to stop?" e) "Are you here for any other reasons?" f) "Are you connected with the media in any way?"

Our common experience to date indicates that if we let people into our meetings who really are opposed to our concept of sexual sobriety, they can cause division and other problems. We recognize, however, that the desire for sobriety can grow and work in stages, one level at a time. However, it soon becomes apparent when someone begins

trying to change SA to suit his/her own disease.

What can we do about those who attend meetings yet do not want sobriety, or those who otherwise adversely affect group spirit and unity? One of the groups suggests the following approach: First, concerned individuals may confront such a person one-to-one. We can ask, "Why are you here, and what do you really want?" We can remind them that the desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober is the requirement for attending meetings (Third Tradition). We can communicate our concern.

If there is no resolution after such a one-to-one, a few concerned members can then confront the individual together, expressing their common concern. If there is still no resolution, the matter can be brought before a business meeting of the whole group with the individual present. (We're not at the mercy of negative forces; we can take a stand.)

V. PRECAUTIONS

1. We suggest that no ads of any kind be placed in newspapers, periodicals, on bulletin boards, etc., even in other 12 Step meetings, that disclose the whereabouts of SA meetings. Advertising time and place of meetings to the general public is not even done in AA.
2. For the same reason we suggest that no signs be put up outside meeting places identifying them as SA meetings.
3. We suggest that before seeking or consenting to media interviews or coverage, members contact GSO. Our national policy is still that we are not granting interviews at the present time. In today's instant-media climate, this can affect other SA groups and/or SA as a whole. The long form of AA's Fourth Tradition reads, "...And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect A.A. as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount." We will do well to follow this example. Once an article appears in the press, it becomes common property of the media. Thus, an article in some local newspaper may wind up getting onto one of the national wire services, and if it happens to mention our address, we can be inundated with thousands of inquiries with no means to handle them. At present we feel it wiser to grow from the inside out, rather than from the outside, in. Please contact the General Service Office if questions regarding the media arise.
4. Before a group lists a telephone number in the name of Sexaholics Anonymous, it should be carefully considered by the entire group, neighboring groups, and perhaps even GSO at this time. Such a listing assumes on the part of the public an office and staff. It is not a step to be taken lightly, even if no address is given. Once it is done, there must be those who will always be available to answer and carry out the responsibilities that ensue. In that act you are offering a public service; you become subject to the public.
5. Only SA members should know when and where SA meetings are being held. This includes all those agencies and institutions that want to put us on their referral lists. We can give them a P O Box number or phone number of the SA member available for Twelfth Step work, but we should not give these well-meaning people our meeting places.
6. Smoking. We suggest limiting smoking to outside the meeting area proper. Increasing numbers of people are not smoking, and some members have medical problems related to cigarette smoke. Some have found, through years in AA, that meetings where smoking

was relegated to break time and before and after outside the meeting area had a healthier tone to them. Not resorting to a smoke when the urge strikes often results in a heightened awareness and benefit. And with the air quality and oxygen supply improved, the general quality of the meeting is often seen to improve. Increasing numbers of other groups are practicing this approach as the awareness increases. Each SA group is autonomous and must consider this problem for itself. However, if this precedent can be accepted from the very beginning, the question need never become an issue. To date, we seem to be discovering that most SA members do not smoke.

VI. BUSINESS MEETINGS

Group officers or individual members can call for business meetings to decide on all matters pertaining to the group: election of officers, terms of office, length of sobriety required, finances, and other matters affecting the group and its relation to other groups and SA as a whole.

The group conscience determines the length of sexual sobriety required before a member can vote in the business meeting.