

# Wednesday Evening Meeting of Sex Addicts Anonymous: Anorexia / Compulsive Avoidance Focus

*The facilitator may see a newcomer who does not have the camera on **and** is an unrecognized person, **and** does not introduce themselves/remains silent,*

*in such cases the facilitator has the following tools:*

- *they may choose to remind the group "this is a closed meeting for those working with sexual avoidance."*
- *they may ask the person if they are in fact a newcomer, or this is their first meeting.*
- *they may write in the chat window to the newcomer.*

*If newcomers come in after the "Introduction" part of our meeting, the facilitator can also exercise the tools just mentioned when appropriate.*

*The facilitator, in the interest of group safety, may have to eject members if they feel they are not respecting group boundaries. Feel free to get experience, strength, and hope from others about whether this is needed.*

Welcome to the Wednesday evening meeting of Sex Addicts Anonymous; this meeting starts at 6:30 pm and lasts until 7:30 pm. The focus of this meeting is recovery from Sexual Anorexia. The only requirement for SAA membership is a desire to stop "acting in" or "acting out" with sexually compulsive behaviors and avoidance of intimacy. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, I am recovering from Sexual Anorexia, and I am your Trusted Servant for this meeting.

Please join me in a moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer.

**SERENITY PRAYER:** [Pause] 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.

Who would like to read the **SEXUAL ANOREXIA PREAMBLE**? (*or Choose someone before the meeting starts, then say, "I have asked \_\_\_\_\_ to read our Preamble."*)

**SEXUAL ANOREXIA PREAMBLE (Our Addiction in Regular Meetings – read every meeting)**  
*(paraphrased from Sex Addicts Anonymous, p. 3, paragraphs 1-2)*

## **SEXUAL ANOREXIA PREAMBLE**

Before coming to Sex Addicts Anonymous, many of us never knew that our problem had a name. All we knew was that we couldn't control our sexual behavior and avoidance. For us, avoiding sex, deprivation, and hiding were a consuming way of life. Although the details of our stories were different, our problem was the same. We were addicted to

avoidant sexual, emotional, and social behaviors that we returned to over and over, despite the consequences.

Sexual Anorexia is a part of Sexual Addiction, and is a disease affecting the mind, body, and spirit. It is progressive, with the behavior and its consequences usually becoming more severe over time. We experience it as **compulsion**, which is an urge that is stronger than our will to resist; and as **obsession**, which is a mental preoccupation with sexual behavior and fantasies. In SAA, we have come to call our Sexual Anorexia “**acting in.**”

### **MEETING GUIDELINES:**

In this meeting, we do not engage in crosstalk. Crosstalk means interrupting a speaker or directly responding to the shares of other members as we might in a conversation. In addition, by group conscience, only the Trusted Servant may interrupt a member who is speaking. However, if an individual is triggered, they may choose to either leave for a few minutes or raise their hand. At this time, a speaker should modify their share as it might be too detailed. The Trusted Servant may then interrupt the speaker if they do not modify their speech.

This is one of the ways we can keep this meeting safe for everyone, especially the newcomer. In addition, so many of us have been unheard, disbelieved and had our boundaries violated that we practice learning to respect boundaries—our own and each other’s—this is one way we can practice treating each other with the respect we deserve and learn how to have boundaries as we share our experience, strength, and hope with each other.

**Regarding Literature:** Due to the scarcity of SAA-approved literature around sexual anorexia, in this meeting we may use outside literature on the topic of sexual anorexia for study and discussion and we may use our SAA Green Book when desired. We do not have a literature table while we are meeting online, but if you are interested in getting a copy of the SAA Green Book, Sexual Anorexia, Voices of Recovery, or SAA pamphlets, please post in the chat and we will connect you.

Who would like to read **OUR ADDICTION?** [Do not read on 1st or 3rd weeks, which are reading meetings](#) (OR choose someone before the meeting starts, then say “I have asked \_\_\_\_\_ to read *Our Addiction.*”)

### **OUR ADDICTION**

As anorexics or as people with anorexic tendencies, we may have a wide range of feelings and behaviors. In the same way that “acting out” sex addicts have a range of behaviors, anorexics can have very little anorexia, they might be “sexual bulimics” who binge and purge (“act out” for a period and then “act in”), or they might be totally averse to sexual behavior and describe themselves as very anorexic.

To us, anorexia can refer to sexual, social or emotional behaviors, and arises from the same spiritual sickness that creates the “acting out” version of the disease. We have come to believe that it may have originated from some form of sexual exploitation in our early lives or from some type of traumatic rejection. We believe that our current behaviors are still largely affected by the early trauma we suffered.

For example, some of us feel overwhelmed in social settings and are prone to isolation. Others of us get high by socializing with a great many people in order to keep ourselves from real intimacy with one person. Some of us have used alcohol or drugs to become emotionally and sexually withdrawn, some of us cannot be sexual with our partners without a mood-altering substance, while others have used these substances to become sexually, emotionally, or socially daring.

Some of us are confused by our inability to be sexual with our partner, and yet we can “act out” online, on the phone or with prostitutes or strangers. Some of us have only felt indifferent about sex, while others have gone to any lengths to avoid sexual contact. Some of us avoid making phone calls and go through our lives virtually alone without love and support from friends and family. Whether we were “acting out,” avoidant, indifferent or terrified of sex, we believe our addiction involves being emotionally unavailable.

We have come to believe that working the Steps of Sex Addicts Anonymous can bring us relief from our need to hide, avoid and deprive ourselves of emotional, physical and sexual support. For some of us, we are seeing glimpses of the kind of behavior we want to have and our hope of regaining our sexuality and creativity is moving closer to becoming a reality. For others of us, we hold onto the hope that we can find peace and serenity working the Twelve Steps. Together we love, encourage and support one another as we grow toward healthier sexuality, healing our shame, fear and dependency in the process.

**NEWCOMERS AND BIRTHDAYS:** Is there anyone at this meeting for the first time? If so, could you please state your first name only so that we may welcome you? *[Give the newcomer a copy of the sexual anorexia newcomer greeting and have a greeter read it out loud to them and share their own experiences that led them to seek healing from sexually anorexic behavior, other members may choose to share their experiences as well.]*

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## **NEWCOMER GREETING**

Dear Newcomer,

Welcome to the Compulsive Avoidance Meeting of Sex Addicts Anonymous. Sexual Anorexia/Avoidance, also known as "acting in," is any compulsive sexual behavior that serves to avoid or block sexual, emotional, or spiritual connection/intimacy with ourselves, others, or our Higher Power. As anorexics or as people with anorexic tendencies, we may have a wide range of feelings and behaviors. Some examples are picking fights with a partner to avoid sex, isolating oneself in an attempt to avoid human contact, or "losing" oneself in work. Anorexics can have very little anorexia, they might be "sexual bulimics" who binge and purge (act out for a period and then act in,) or they might be totally averse to sexual behavior and describe themselves as very anorexic.

When we came to our first Anorexia/Avoidance meeting, we felt many things. We were relieved to have found a place where people understood the pain, despair, and loneliness of compulsive sexual avoidance, which impacts so many areas of our lives, not only sexual, but also social and emotional. Some of us were angry to find yet another way in which our lives were unmanageable. Some of us felt even more shame around these acting-in behaviors than we did about our acting-out behaviors.

The only requirement for SAA membership is a desire to stop addicting sexual behavior, which includes compulsive sexual avoidance.

However, this is an anorexia focused meeting, where we talk about our acting-in/avoidant behaviors, and share how we are recovering from them. In order to keep the focus on anorexia, we ask that you NOT discuss the details of your acting-out behaviors in this meeting. If you need to share specifics of acting-out behavior, that is best done with a sponsor or program friend rather than in this meeting.

The SAA program's most basic goal is abstinence from those sexual behaviors that are addictive for us. We call this sexual sobriety, and with the help of a sponsor or other recovering members, we each make our own individual definitions of what that is for us. For many avoidants, this involves both acting-in and acting-out behaviors. While we all strive for sexual sobriety, its achievement is not a requirement for attendance or participation. We work toward this goal by attending meetings, working the 12 Steps with a sponsor, and using the other recovery tools of the program.

All participation is voluntary. We are not required to speak or read if we don't want to. Just by listening, we can learn how other members become honest, confront their addiction, find support from fellow addicts/avoidants, and practice the program. Please note that (although we don't meet in person at this time) some SAA members may not want to be hugged or touched. We suggest that you ask first.

If you identify yourself as a Compulsive Sexual Avoidant, we welcome you to this meeting. If you do not identify with these behaviors/issues, you may wish to try other SAA meetings, as your needs are more likely to be met there.

We encourage you to:            TAKE IT ONE DAY AT A TIME!  
   BE GOOD TO YOURSELF!  
   AND... KEEP COMING BACK!

Is anyone celebrating a program anniversary? (Congratulate any celebrants).

## **THE TWELVE STEPS**

Now let's go around the room and introduce ourselves by our first name only, reading the **TWELVE STEPS OF SEX ADDICTS ANONYMOUS** and the **TRADITION OF THE MONTH** from the **TWELVE TRADITIONS OF SAA**.

## **THE TWELVE STEPS OF SAA**

One of the most dangerous aspects of sexual anorexia is our inability to see it for what it is. This difficulty of recognizing what we are doing, understanding how risky and serious it is, and how much harm it may cause, we call denial. Some of us come into the program with risky acting out behaviors; we may come into the program with social or legal issues that require us to focus on our acting out behavior first. Later, we may begin to realize that there is something else that causes us problems in our relationships. Then, there are those of us who have, from the start, various degrees of acting in behaviors with small periods of acting out. We believe that working the Twelve Steps of SAA can lead to sexual sobriety or abstinence from both our acting out and acting in, and can lead us to face our sexual issues and our fear of intimacy.

We have learned from hard experience that we cannot achieve and maintain abstinence if we aren't willing to change our way of life. But if we can honestly face our problems, and are willing to change, the Twelve Steps of SAA will lead to an awakening that allows us to live a new way of life according to spiritual principles. In time, we believe that we

can discover our unique self and creativity, without which we cannot create the loving, committed, spiritual and sexual relationship that we believe our Higher Power intends for us. Taking these steps allows fundamental change to occur and be sustained in our lives. These steps are the foundation of our recovery.

1. We admitted we were powerless over addictive sexual behavior and 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. Were 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 the result of these steps, we practice these principles in our lives.

*(Only the tradition of the month is read)*

## **TWELVE TRADITIONS OF SAA**

*(Adapted from the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 564)*

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SAA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate 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 SAA membership is a desire to overcome sex addiction and sexual anorexia.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or SAA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An SAA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the SAA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every SAA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Sex Addicts Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. SAA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Sex Addicts Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SAA 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 film.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Would anyone like to introduce themselves who did not get an opportunity to do so?

### **TOPIC OR DISCUSSION**

Currently, this meeting alternates formats between topic/discussion and literature study. The 1st and 3rd weeks are literature meetings in which we read from the text by Patrick Carnes on Sexual Anorexia as well as any other available literature on sexual anorexia. The 2nd and 4th weeks are topic/discussion meetings in which someone picks a topic and we share how we relate to the topic and how we use the program to face that issue. You may also get current if you like.

In the case of a 5th week, the group conscience will decide what the format will be, including possibly having a speaker.

### **FOR LITERATURE MEETINGS:**

This is a literature meeting. We will take turns reading a portion of the book for approximately 15-20 minutes, then the meeting is open to discuss how we relate to the literature or to get current. We will mark the group copy so we can keep track of where we stop reading.

### **FOR TOPIC/DISCUSSION MEETINGS:**

This is a topic/discussion meeting. The topic is selected to relate to the meeting focus of sexual anorexia. After the topic has been suggested, please share your experience, strength and hope as it relates to the topic. You may also get current if you wish. Please only share once for three or four minutes until everyone who wishes to has a chance to share, after which anyone can share again or add a short P.S. Does anyone have a topic or a problem related to Sexual Anorexia?

*[Trusted Servant can pick a reading from SAA literature or from Patrick Carnes' book on Sexual Anorexia if no one has a topic. A step or tradition can also be chosen.]* The topic is \_\_\_\_\_. *May we have a volunteer to keep time [if more than four people].*

The meeting is now open for discussion or getting current. Please remember to share only for 3 or 4 minutes at a time. Also remember to avoid crosstalk and avoid private conversation while someone is sharing. Please share from your own experience, using "I" rather than "we" or "you." Please raise your hand or step outside if something feels triggering to you. Also, please practice having good boundaries by stopping your share if asked to do so by the trusted servant.

**[After sharing time]:** "We are out of time..."

### **PROGRAM-RELATED ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Are there any program-related announcements? Any non-program-related announcements can be shared after the meeting.

*[Pause and wait and see if there are any announcements; if none, continue]*



*[If tomorrow is the first Thursday of the month - Intergroup - announce the business meeting:*

*Tonight is our business meeting. The business meeting is a time for discussion of group issues, making new suggestions for workshops or other activities, adding donations received, voting for the purchase of literature and donations to Intergroup, and for discussing items to be taken to Intergroup by our group representative.]*

### **SEVENTH TRADITION:**

We will now practice the 7th Tradition which states that we are fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

Would someone read **THE PROMISES** or **HOW WE LIVE**? (volunteer can choose which to read, only one is read each month)

### **THE PROMISES**

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through.

We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.

We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.

We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace.

No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.

That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.

We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our community.

Self-seeking will slip away.

Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.

Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.

We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.

We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

### **HOW WE LIVE**

*[Adapted from Sex Addicts Anonymous, page 61, paragraphs 1 & 2]*

“Practicing these principles in our lives means applying program principles at home, at work, and wherever else we gather with others for a common purpose. As we grow spiritually, we find opportunities for service in virtually any situation. Our closest relationships may offer the most challenges to our honesty, compassion, and integrity, but we are often rewarded beyond our expectations. We find that spiritual principles can guide us in the everyday challenges of life, and they can help us face even loss, grief, and death with fortitude and grace. What we gain in this program is a blueprint for full and successful living, whatever may come.

“We maintain our recovery by working a daily program, in the knowledge that although we can never be perfect, we can be happy today. We can live life on life’s terms, without having to change or suppress our feelings. Our serenity and sobriety grow as we continue to live according to spiritual principles. We enjoy the gifts that come from being honest and living a life of integrity. We ask for help when we need it, and we express our love and gratitude every day. We realize that everything we have been through helps us to be of service to others. We learn that we can be much safer in the world than we had ever known before, because we are always in the care of a loving God.”

## **CLOSING**

In closing, we would like to say that the opinions shared here are strictly the opinions of the persons who gave them. Take what you like and leave the rest. What you have heard was spoken in confidence and needs to be treated as confidential. Keep it within the walls of this room and the confines of your mind.

A few special words to those of you who haven’t been with us long: whatever your problems, there are those among us who have had them too. If you keep an open mind, you will find help. You will come to realize that no situation is too bad to be bettered and no pain is too great to be lessened. We aren’t perfect. The welcome we give you may not represent what we have in our hearts for you. You will come to realize that though you may not like all of us, you will come to love us the same way we already love you. Talk to each other, reason things out with someone else, but let there be no gossip or criticism of one another. Instead, let the love and peace of the program grow in you one day at a time.

Will all who care to join in the closing prayer?

Here we look each other in the eye to remind ourselves that we are growing from shame to grace. And now, for those who are sick and suffering, both in and out of the program.

**SERENITY PRAYER:** God (or “Higher Power of your choice”), 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. Keep coming back. It works if you work it and (because) you’re worth it!