# CONFERENCE APPROVED MEETING FORMATS AND READINGS

**S-ANON AND S-ATEEN**

## SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR S-ANON MEETINGS

**Explanatory Note**: Meetings should open and close on time, but there is no rigid formula for an S-Anon meeting. This Suggested Meeting Format is included because most new groups find a general outline to be helpful, especially if no one in the group has attended any Twelve-Step meetings. The format is printed for your convenience. Because S-Anon groups are autonomous, not every group chooses to plan its meeting in this way. However, this format is Conference Approved, which means that it reflects the experience of a wide variety of S-Anon individuals and groups. We suggest that you try it, and then adapt or vary the format to suit the needs of your group. We ask only that you keep in mind that “adaptation” does not mean substituting readings from material that has not been Conference Approved (Tradition One), or changing any words in the S-Anon Conference Approved suggested readings. **(Literature published by S-Anon, SA, Al-Anon and AA is Conference Approved for use in our meetings.)** Further suggestions for successful meetings can be found in Part 1 of the *S-Anon /S-Ateen Service Manual*. All of the Conference Approved readings for S-Anon and S-Ateen meetings can be found in Part 4 of the *Service Manual*.

#### Will those who care to, join me in a moment of silence, followed by the Serenity Prayer?

[Serenity Prayer is said.]

#### Hi, I’m , your leader for this meeting.

[To open the meeting, The S-Anon Welcome may be read.]

#### The Preamble to the Twelve Steps of S-Anon describes the purpose of our group:

[Preamble to the Twelve Steps of S-Anon may be read by the leader or another member.]

#### Here are the Twelve Steps we follow which are suggested for our recovery:

[The Twelve Steps of S-Anon are read. Many groups pass a copy of the Steps around the group and each member reads one (or more) of them.]

#### Our group experience suggests that the unity of the S-Anon Family Groups depends upon our adherence to the following Traditions:

[The Twelve Traditions are read; some groups read only the Tradition that corresponds to the month, for example, January – First Tradition.]

1. **Newcomer Welcome**

[At this point in the meeting, many groups have the leader ask if there are newcomers present, and if so, extend a further welcome as decided by the group members, assuring them that they are free to share or remain silent, as they wish. If a Newcomers Meeting is available, that information can be given at this point. Some groups set aside a specific time at the end of the meeting to deal with newcomers’ issues.]

### Introduction by First Name

[Group members introduce themselves by first name. Some groups wait until later in the meeting, after the announcements, to introduce themselves and join in saying the Serenity Prayer, so that those who come in after the meeting has started can be included.]

#### We are seeking recovery from our own progressive illness:

[The short or long version of The S-Anon Problem may be read at this time.]

#### Our recovery depends upon our willingness to adopt new ways of thinking about ourselves and our problems:

[The short or long version of Keys to S-Anon Recovery may be read at this time.]

#### There are three Obstacles to Recovery in S-Anon:

[Obstacles to Recovery may be read at this time.]

#### Our Seventh Tradition states that “every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.” We have no dues or fees for membership. The Seventh Tradition collection is used to cover group expenses and to support local and world services.

[Pass basket. For the benefit of newcomers, many groups say something like, “If this is your first meeting, we would like you to be our guest and not contribute.” Some groups pass two baskets, one for group expenses, and one to support S-Anon Twelfth-Step work at the national and international level. Some groups wait until the end of the meeting to ask for Seventh Tradition contributions.

### Announcements and Secretary/Treasurer reports.

[Leader asks if there are any S-Anon-related announcements or a Secretary or Treasurer’s report. Announcements could also be made at the end of the meeting or during the passing of the Seventh Tradition Basket.]

### Meeting Guidelines

[Before sharing begins, the leader reads the following:]

#### Because our common welfare comes first, here are the guidelines for sharing during our meeting:

***If you wish to share, please wait your turn to share or wait to be recognized by the leader, as there is no crosstalk. That is, we share with the group as a whole, rather than addressing comments or questions to individual members. We limit the length of our sharing so that everyone here will have a chance to speak. Our purpose in sharing is to discuss ourselves, not the sexaholic. Our meetings focus on the S-Anon approach to recovery, so we avoid the mention or discussion of specific titles and authors of publications other than S-Anon Conference Approved Literature. We leave our other identities outside the discussion – other Twelve-Step issues, philosophies, religions, therapies and occupations. We speak about and from the S-Anon point of view. Each member of the group is encouraged to remind other members, during the meeting if necessary, of our commitment to these guidelines.***

[These are the guidelines that most S-Anon (and other) family groups have found to best serve the recovery of all the members. They provide information to newcomers and serve as a reminder to all group members so that our meetings stay focused on recovery and provide a safe place to share feelings without having to explain or justify them. While all groups may not use these exact words, it is important that the guidelines you *do* use are supported by a group conscience of the members, and that a substantial majority of group members are committed to upholding them.]

### Leader Qualifies (optional)

[Sometimes the meeting leader “qualifies” (talks about his/her membership in S-Anon), with a limit of 5 minutes or less. They tell, from a recovery point of view, what they were like before S-Anon, how they have changed, and generally share experience, strength and hope in coming to terms with the family disease of sexaholism.]

### Meeting Opened for Sharing

[Leader announces the format of the meeting (for example, a Step or Tradition Meeting) or introduces the topic.]

### Closing Reminder

[When it is time for the meeting to end, the leader reads the following:]

#### This is an anonymous program. We ask all members to respect our anonymity. The stories you hear are told in confidence and should not be repeated outside, including to spouses or family members. They are told so that we might better understand this program and ourselves, and to give encouragement and help to the newcomer, so that we may keep what we have been given.

1. ***Please read the Gifts of the S-Anon Program.***

[The Gifts of the S-Anon Program may be read at this time.]

#### Will those who care to join us in the closing prayer:

[Leader asks someone to lead the group in saying the Serenity Prayer, Third Step Prayer, or other prayer from S-Anon Conference Approved Literature, as determined by the group.]

### KEEP COMING BACK! IT WORKS IF YOU WORK IT!

**SUGGESTED READINGS FOR S-ANON MEETINGS**

**SERENITY PRAYER**

##### God grant me the serenity

to accept the things I cannot change,

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

**THE S-ANON WELCOME**

We welcome you to the S-Anon Family Group and hope that in this fellowship you will find the help and friendship that we have been privileged to enjoy. We would like you to feel that we understand as perhaps few can. We too were lonely and frustrated; but here we have found that there is no situation too difficult to be bettered and no unhappiness too great to be lessened.

The S-Anon Family Groups consist of relatives and friends of sexaholics who realize that by banding together they can better solve their common problems. We urge you to try our program. Without spiritual help, living with, or having lived with a sexaholic is too much for most of us. We become nervous, irritable, and unreasonable; our thinking becomes confused, and our perspective becomes distorted. Rarely have we seen a person who was not greatly benefited by working the S-Anon program. The Twelve Steps of S- Anon, which we try to follow, are not easy. At first we may think that some of them are unnecessary, but if we are honest, open-minded, and willing to apply the principles of the Twelve Steps to our lives, we find that the benefits can be limitless, including God’s gift of serenity.

## S-ANON PREAMBLE TO THE TWELVE STEPS

* 1. non is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other so that they may solve their common problems and help others to recover. The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of sexaholism in a relative or friend. There are no dues or fees for S- Anon membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. S- Anon is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to recover from the effects upon us of another person’s sexaholism, and to help families and friends of sexaholics.

## THE TWELVE STEPS OF S-ANON

##### We admitted we were powerless over sexaholism - that our lives had become unmanageable.

* + 1. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
    2. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood him*.

##### Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

* + 1. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
    2. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
    3. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
    4. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
    5. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
    6. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
    7. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
    8. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous: 1. We admitted we were powerless of alcohol - 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 Him*. 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 Him 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 whenever 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 mediation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and power to carry that out. 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Step, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

(The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Steps and Traditions does not mean that AA is affiliated with this program. AA is a program of recovery from alcoholism – use of this material in connection with programs which are patterned after AA, but which address other problems, does not imply otherwise.)

## TWELVE TRADITIONS OF S-ANON

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one 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 relatives of sexaholics, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an S-Anon Family Group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation. The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of sexaholism in a relative or friend.
4. Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting another group or S-Anon or SA as a whole.
5. Each S-Anon Family Group has but one purpose: to help families of sexaholics. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps of S-Anon, by encouraging and understanding our sexaholic relatives, and by welcoming and giving comfort to the families of sexaholics.
6. Our S-Anon Family Groups ought never endorse, finance, or lend our name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual aim. Although a separate entity, we should always cooperate with Sexaholics Anonymous.
7. Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. S-Anon Twelfth-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. The S-Anon Family 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 S- Anon and SA members.

12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles above personalities.

## S-ANON’S TWELVE CONCEPTS OF SERVICE

1. The ultimate responsibility and authority for S-Anon world services belongs to the S-Anon groups.
2. The S-Anon Family Groups have delegated complete administrative and operational authority to their Conference and its service arms.
3. The Right of Decision makes effective leadership possible.
4. Participation is the key to harmony.
5. The Rights of Appeal and Petition protect minorities and assure that they be heard.
6. The Conference acknowledges the primary administrative responsibility of the Trustees.
7. The Trustees have legal rights while the rights of the Conference are traditional.
8. The Board of Trustees delegates full authority for routine management of the S-Anon headquarters to its executive committees.
9. Good personal leadership at all service levels is a necessity. In the field of World Service, the Board of Trustees assumes the primary leadership.
10. Service responsibility is balanced by carefully defined service authority, and double-headed management is avoided.
11. The World Service Office is composed of an Executive Director and staff members.
12. The spiritual foundation for S-Anon’s World Services is contained in the General Warranties of the Conference, Article 12 of the Charter.

###### THE GENERAL WARRANTIES OF THE CONFERENCE

In all proceedings the World Service Conference of S-Anon shall observe the spirit of the Traditions:

* 1. That only sufficient operating funds, including an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle;
  2. That no Conference member shall be placed in unqualified authority over other members;
  3. That all decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by unanimity;
  4. That no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy;
  5. That though the Conference serves S-Anon, it shall never perform any act of government; and like the fellowship of S-Anon which it serves, it shall always remain democratic in thought and action.

(The Twelve Concepts of Service reprinted and adapted with permission of Al-Anon World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Concepts does not imply that Al-Anon is affiliated with this program. Al-Anon is a program of recovery from the effects of alcoholism. Use of this material in conjunction with programs which are patterned after Al- Anon, but which address other problems, does not imply otherwise.)

## THE S-ANON PROBLEM (Short Version)

S-Anon members have much in common with the friends and relatives of other addicted people. Most of us grew up in families with secrets, and we were not taught to think about our own needs and take positive action to meet them. We chose friends and partners who could not or would not love and support us in a healthy way. We lived life from the standpoint of victims and perceived any personal criticism as a threat. For most of us, anger, fear, and depression were nearly constant. We acquired some unhealthy beliefs about ourselves very early in our lives – that we were not worthwhile and lovable, that we were able to control other people’s behavior, and that sex was the most important sign of love.

We have also felt the shame of thinking we were responsible for the sexaholic behavior of a family member or friend. Our self-esteem dropped to low levels, and we doubted our attractiveness, our emotions, and our sanity. We have felt betrayed by those we loved the most. Many of us were sexually abused, exposed to diseases, and otherwise placed in physical danger. We were often too ashamed to ask for help.

Some of us minimized the importance of the sexaholic behavior or denied it until we felt emotionally numb. Others focused on the sexaholic and the sexual behavior to the point of obsession and tried every known method to control it. Some of us participated in sexual behavior that made us ashamed of ourselves or used sex to manipulate the sexaholic. Some of us misused drugs, alcohol, or food, and others kept so busy that we didn’t have time to feel our emotions. We often neglected our health, our jobs, and our children. No matter how we tried to struggle against it, deny it, or minimize its effects, the failure of our efforts to cope with sexaholism brought us to the point of despair. This is what we mean when we say in the First Step, “Our lives had become unmanageable.”

## THE S-ANON PROBLEM (Long Version)

S-Anon members have much in common with the friends and family members of other addicted people. Most of us grew up in families with secrets, and we were not taught to think about our own needs and take positive action to meet them. As we grew up we felt more and more lonely and isolated as we chose friends and partners who could not or would not love and support us in a healthy way. We lived life from the standpoint of victims and perceived any personal criticism as a threat. For most of us, anger and depression were a way of life. We were so afraid of being left alone that anxiety and frustration were nearly constant. Whether or not we were exposed to sexaholism as children, most of us think that we acquired some unhealthy beliefs about ourselves very early in our lives – that we were not worthwhile and loveable, that we were able to control other people’s behavior, and that sex was the most important sign of love.

What is different is that we have felt the additional shame of being involved with the sexaholism of a family member or friend. It does not matter a great deal whether that person was a member of our birth family, a partner, spouse, child, or someone outside the family like a friend, teacher, or boss. It does not matter whether we were willing, unwilling, or unknowing participants in the relationship—sexaholism deeply affected our lives. Our self-esteem dropped to lower and lower levels and we doubted our attractiveness, our emotions, our sanity, and our human worth. We have felt betrayed by those we loved the most, and those of us who didn’t know about the sexaholic behavior felt even more humiliated and stupid for not knowing. Many of us were sexually abused, exposed to sexually transmitted diseases, and otherwise placed in physical danger. We were often afraid to trust others and reach out for help because we were afraid of what they would think of us or of the sexaholic.

Some of us reacted to sexaholism by denying its existence or minimizing its importance. We stuffed our feelings of anger and abandonment to the point that we felt emotionally numb. We told ourselves things like “Everybody does this,” “This shouldn’t bother me,” or even “It can’t be true—he would never do that.” Others focused on the sexaholic and the sexual behavior to the point of obsession. We tried every known method to control it. We lied and covered up, spied at doorways, listened to private conversations, checked up on the sexaholic’s whereabouts, read through journals and personal papers, begged, pleaded and threatened. Some of us participated in sexual behavior that we did not enjoy or that made us ashamed of ourselves. Many of us tried to use sex to manipulate the sexaholic, thinking that being part of the acting

out would give us a little bit more control over our lives. Most of us felt that we must have done something to deserve this kind of treatment and that happiness was for others, not for us. Some of us misused drugs, alcohol, or food to numb the pain; others used activities, such as shopping, exercising, or working to keep from feeling our emotions. We often neglected our health, our jobs, and our children. No matter how we tried to struggle against it, deny it, or minimize its effects, the failure of our efforts to cope with sexaholism brought us to the point of despair. This is what we mean when we say in the First Step, “our lives had become unmanageable.”

## KEYS TO S-ANON RECOVERY (Short Version)

Over time, S-Anon members learn to accept a number of new ideas:

1. Sexaholism is a disease very similar to alcoholism. At first many of us could not accept this idea. For S-Anon members, it means that we see sexaholics as sick people, not bad people. They are powerless over lust.
2. The actions of the sexaholic are not a result of something we did or did not do, and we do not have the power to control their behavior.
3. Our *attempts* to control or ignore sexual addiction led to a decline in our emotional health and may have enabled the sexaholic to continue to practice his or her disease.
4. When we first come to S-Anon, we, too, are spiritually and emotionally ill. As we work toward full acceptance of these ideas, we begin to see our

problems in a new light, and the awareness dawns that we do have choices concerning our own actions. This is the beginning of our recovery.

We remind ourselves that we are powerless over the behavior caused by sexaholism. We ask a Higher Power to help us to stop blaming and trying to control the sexaholic; the sobriety of the sexaholic is not our responsibility. We realize we cannot find serenity for ourselves if we continue to focus on someone else’s recovery, so we commit ourselves to our *own* recovery. With the loving help of other S-Anon members and the God of our understanding, we take positive action to make our lives more serene and fulfilling. We attend as many meetings as we can, get a sponsor, if possible, and begin to apply the principles of the Twelve Steps to our lives. We use the telephone, the S-Anon literature and the S-Anon slogans. Eventually we reach out to help others and try to carry the message of our own recovery. We do these things in our own way, one day at a time—striving for progress, not perfection. This is what is meant by “working the program.”

## KEYS TO S-ANON RECOVERY (Long Version)

We accept sexaholism as a disease very similar to alcoholism. This means that we see sexaholics as sick people, not bad people. They are powerless over lust. At first many of us could not accept this idea. We thought it meant that sexaholics were somehow not responsible for their behavior, or that we were not entitled to our feelings of anger and hurt. But it does not mean either of those things. For S-Anons, it means that the actions of the sexaholic are not a result of something we did or did not do. We did not cause the sexaholic behavior by being stupid, weak, or unattractive, and we do not have the power to control it. However, as we tried to control or ignore the sexaholism in our lives, we often unknowingly acted in ways that led to a further decline in our emotional health and enabled the sexaholic to continue to practice his or her disease. Over a period of time, many of us took on the shame, guilt, and fear that characterize the disease of sexaholism, even though we may not have acted out sexually. We, too, became spiritually and emotionally ill. Once we begin to see our problems in this light, we can also see that we do have choices concerning our own behavior. This is the beginning of our recovery.

We remind ourselves as often as necessary that we are powerless over the behavior caused by sexaholism and all actions and reactions of other adults. We know we must stop blaming and trying to control the sexaholic and the acting out behavior. Just as we did not cause the sexaholic’s acting out, we cannot ‘cure’ it. The sexual sobriety of the sexaholic is not our responsibility. While our encouragement and cooperation can be helpful to the sexaholic seeking recovery, real peace of mind for us depends upon changing our attitudes and eliminating our self-defeating behaviors. As the recovering alcoholics put it, “Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas, but the results were nil until we let go absolutely.”

We commit ourselves to our own recovery, taking full responsibility for our actions and reactions. With the loving help of other S-Anon members and the God of our understanding, we focus on taking positive action to make our lives more serene and fulfilling, regardless of whether or not the sexaholic chooses sobriety. We attend as many meetings as we can, get a sponsor, if possible, and begin to apply the principles of the Twelve Steps to our lives. We use the telephone, the S-Anon literature and the S-Anon slogans. Eventually we reach out to help others and try to carry the message of our own recovery. We do these things in our own way, one day at a time—but we do them, striving for progress, not perfection. This is what is meant by “working the program.”

## OBSTACLES TO RECOVERY

To insure the success of our meetings in solving our common problems, we must recognize and overcome three obstacles to recovery that can destroy the group. The first is the discussion of any religious denomination. Compulsive lusting respects no particular religion; therefore, our program is designed to help us regardless of our various beliefs. Let us not defeat our purpose by discussing any particular denomination.

The second is gossip. We are here to help ourselves and other group members. A belittling discussion of others, including the sexaholic, or a discussion of personal affairs other than those concerning ourselves, will eventually eliminate the group.

The third is dictatorship. We have no dominating authorities or self- appointed leaders. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern. We do not give advice; we suggest by telling how we solved similar problems through our experiences. The very essence of S-Anon is that the whole program is “suggested.”

We have no creed, charges, obligations or anything that would tend to hinder you. Your progress can be made in your own time and in your own way. We merely invite your attendance in a common cause.

(Reprinted and adapted from “Alcoholism the Family Disease,” page 35, Al- Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., Virginia Beach, VA.)

## GIFTS OF THE S-ANON PROGRAM

When we approach the process of recovery with honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to apply the principles of the Twelve Steps to our lives, we will soon begin to see the rewards. We will become able to surrender our self- defeating behavior. We will find that we have the strength and insight to make good choices for ourselves. Our ability to act positively on behalf of our health, jobs, families, and bank accounts will amaze us. We will find that others are doing things for themselves, which we thought we had to do *for* them. Our ability to give and receive love will expand tremendously, and we will become increasingly available for loving relationships with others. We will recover the feeling of joy. We will become more honest with ourselves and experience a new comfort in our intimate relationships. We will feel the security that arises from true fellowship with others in the program, knowing that we are loved and accepted just as we are. Feelings of failure and inadequacy will be replaced by self-confidence and independence of spirit. We will no longer depend on other people to provide us with an identity or a sense of self-worth. We will find the courage to be true to ourselves. We will know peace of mind and feel a stronger connection with the Higher Power of our understanding, and our Hope will turn to faith that God is really working in our lives, as we explore the wonders of serenity, dignity, and emotional growth.

# SUGGESTED FORMAT AND READINGS FOR S-ATEEN MEETINGS

## SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR S-ATEEN MEETINGS

**Explanatory Notes**: Meetings should open and close on time, but there is no rigid formula for an S-Ateen meeting. The meeting format is included as a convenient general outline for a new group, and can be particularly helpful if no one in the group has attended any Twelve Step meetings. Because S-Ateen groups are autonomous, not every group will choose to plan its meeting in this way. However, this is the S-Anon/S-Ateen International Family Groups Conference Approved format, which means that it reflects the experience of a wide variety of S-Ateen individuals and groups.

We suggest that you start with the format and adapt or vary it to suit the needs of your group. All included readings are Conference Approved. Keep in mind that “adaptation” of the meeting format does not mean substituting readings that have not been Conference Approved (Tradition One) or changing or altering any words in the S-Ateen Conference Approved readings. **(Literature published by S-Anon, S- Ateen, SA, Al-Anon, Alateen and AA is considered Conference Approved for use in an S-Ateen meeting.)**

S-Ateen meetings are conducted separately from those of S-Anon and are guided by adult S-Anon members serving as S-Ateen sponsors. S-Ateen sponsors take their turn during the meeting to share on the topic, Step or Tradition along with the teens. The sponsors share from their ‘teen years’ and what they may remember growing up. It is suggested that sponsors have one year in S-Anon, have completed or are working the Twelve Steps, and attend S-Anon meetings regularly. It’s also suggested that a sponsor not be the parent of a potential S-Ateen member. Even if the parent insists there are no family secrets, it can result in a teen not feeling free to share in the meeting. Most S-Ateen groups start with two S-Ateen sponsors. Some groups have four or more sponsors, and find a rotating schedule that provides for at least two sponsors in attendance at each meeting works well. This also gives the teens the opportunity to hear other members’ stories.

It is important to remember that the S-Ateen meeting belongs to the teens. It is for them, run by them, and the S-Ateen Sponsors act as ‘guides’ to help make sure the Meeting Guidelines and Traditions are followed.

Further suggestions for successful meetings can be found in *S-Ateen—Information about Sponsorship and Meetings* and in the section of the *S-Anon/S-Ateen Service Manual* entitled “Suggested Readings for S-Anon/S-Ateen Meetings”. *(The S-Anon/ S-Ateen Service Manual* replaces the *S-Anon Group Handbook.)*

## SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR S-ATEEN MEETINGS

[Note: ***Bold italic*** type in the meeting format below shows items to be read aloud.]

#### In keeping with Tradition One, our common welfare comes first. We ask members to turn off all pagers and cell phones or place them in silent mode during the meeting. If you must answer a call during the meeting, please step out of the room to do so.

1. ***Will all those who care to, join me in a moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer*.**

1. ***Hi, I’m , your leader for this meeting.***
2. ***Will someone please read The S-Ateen Welcome?***
3. ***The Preamble to the Twelve Steps of S-Ateen describes the purpose of our group.***

[*Preamble to the Twelve Steps of S-Ateen* may be read by the leader or another member.]

#### Here are the Twelve Steps we follow which are suggested for our recovery:

[*The Twelve Steps of S-Ateen* are read. A group may choose to pass a copy of the Steps around the room so that each member has a chance to read one or more of the Steps, or one member may read all the Steps.]

#### Our group experience suggests that the unity of the S-Ateen Groups depends upon our adherence to the following Traditions:

[*The Twelve Traditions of S-Ateen* are read. The group may choose to pass a copy of the Traditions around the room so that each member has a chance to read one or more of the Traditions, or one member may read all the Traditions.]

1. **Newcomer Welcome**

[At this point in the meeting, the group leader asks if newcomers are present and, if so, extends a welcome as decided by the group, assuring them that they are free to share or remain silent, as they wish. If a Newcomer Meeting is available, that information can be given at this point.]

### Introduction by First Name

[Group members may introduce themselves by first name only. The group may instead wait until later in the meeting for members to introduce themselves and join in saying the Serenity Prayer, so that those arriving late can be included.]

###### OPTIONAL READINGS

[At this point the leader may read, or ask a member to read, one or more of the following:]

1. ***We are seeking recovery from our own progressive illness.***

[*The S-Ateen Problem* may be read at this time.]

#### Our recovery depends upon our willingness to adopt new ways of thinking about ourselves and our problems.

[*Keys to S-Ateen Recovery* may be read at this time]

#### There are three Obstacles to Recovery in S-Ateen.

[*Obstacles to Recovery* may be read at this time.]

### Meeting Guidelines

#### Because our common welfare comes first, here are the guidelines for sharing during our meeting:

***We have been brought together by one common problem; let us concentrate on that. We leave our other identities outside the discussion, other Twelve Step issues, philosophies, religions, therapies, and occupations.***

***We resist the temptation to gossip and discourage it in others. Anything that is hurtful to one member takes away from the strength of the group.***

***There are no bosses or self-appointed leaders in S-Ateen; all members are equal.***

***We are patient with those who are slow to grasp the principles of the S-Ateen program. Each person must progress in his or her own way and time. We help each other by telling our experiences and how we have handled or solved similar problems.***

***We focus on the Twelve Steps during the meeting. Applying the***

***Twelve Steps to our problems helps make our lives more peaceful and fulfilling. Let us not defeat our meeting’s purpose by wasting time socializing or complaining. We are here to share about the solution rather than the problem.***

***Each individual member has his or her own time to share without being interrupted. We share with the group as a whole rather than addressing comments or questions to individual members. We do not mention specific titles and authors of publications other than S-Anon Conference Approved Literature (SA, S-Anon, S-Ateen, Al-Anon, Alateen, and AA Literature).***

***This is a place where our feelings are honored. One way we do that is to keep our hands to ourselves during the meeting. After the meeting we can ask for a hug or handshake. We can also politely say no to a hug if it doesn’t feel right.***

***Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our program. This means we keep in confidence everything that is said at meetings as well as whom we see in meetings. When members are assured that their attendance and sharing at S-Ateen will not be revealed outside the group, trust is built and they feel encouraged to speak freely. Knowing that “you can tell anything” to fellow S-Ateens has rich rewards for all, so we are careful to observe the principle of anonymity.***

##### **Note to adult S-Ateen sponsors:** Please read the following at any S-Ateen meeting where newcomers are present. It may be helpful to discuss this point in more detail**.**

***S-Ateen is a safe place to share, but we want to inform all members that if any ongoing, unresolved sexual abuse of children that has not been dealt with previously is shared in the S-Ateen meeting, it is the legal responsibility of the Sponsor to report this to the proper authorities.***

1. **Leader Qualifies (optional)**

[The leader may take about five minutes to “qualify” (talk about his/her membership in S-Ateen). This is particularly helpful if a special Newcomer Meeting is not available. The leader tells, from a recovery point of view, what he or she was like before S-Ateen, how his or her life has changed, and how he or she in general has come to terms with the family disease of sexaholism. For a newly founded group, this might be done by an S-Ateen sponsor for the first month or two before handing the responsibility to the teen members. The S-Ateen sponsors will remain in the room throughout the meeting to

provide support and guidance.]

### Meeting Opened for Sharing.

[Leader announces the topic of the meeting (for example, a Step, Tradition, slogan, or other topic from Conference Approved literature). When a newcomer is present, the group may choose to stay together for a First Step Meeting, or one or two members might meet separately with the newcomer for a special Newcomer Meeting.]

#### 15. Our Seventh Tradition states that every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

[Pass a basket or envelope for collection of Seventh Tradition contributions. For the benefit of newcomers, the groups may say something like, “If this is your first meeting, we would like you to be our guest and not contribute.” Some groups choose to take two collections, one to cover group expenses and one to support S-Ateen Twelfth Step work such as a local S-Anon/S-Ateen Intergroup, a local contact phone line, or services provided by our World Service Office.]

### Announcements and Reports

[Leader asks if there are any S-Ateen-related announcements, which might include a group Secretary or Treasurer’s report.]

### Closing Reminder

[The leader reads the *Closing Reminder.]*

#### This is an anonymous program. We ask all members to respect our anonymity. The stories you hear are told in confidence and should not be repeated outside. The opinions expressed here were strictly those of the person who gave them. Take what you like and leave the rest. The stories are told so that we might better understand this program and ourselves, and to give encouragement and help to the newcomer, so we may keep what we have been given. Talk to each other, reason things out with someone else, but let there be no gossip or criticism of one another. Instead, let the understanding, love and peace of the program grow in you one day at a time.

1. ***Will those who care to do so, join us in the closing prayer.***

[Leader asks someone to lead the group in saying the Serenity Prayer or other prayer from Conference Approved literature that is acceptable to the group.]

# SUGGESTED READINGS FOR S-ATEEN MEETINGS

## THE S-ATEEN WELCOME

We welcome you to the S-Ateen Group and hope that in this fellowship you will find the help and friendship that we have been privileged to enjoy. We would like you to feel that we understand as perhaps few can. We too were lonely and frustrated; but here we have found that there is no situation too difficult to be bettered and no unhappiness too great to be lessened. In S-Ateen we discover that it is possible for us to find contentment, and even happiness, whether or not the sexaholic or other family members are in recovery.

S-Ateen Groups consist of teenage relatives and friends of sexaholics who realize that by banding together they can better solve their common problems. We urge you to try our program. Without spiritual help, living with, or having lived with, a sexaholic is too much for most of us. So much depends on our own attitudes. As we learn to place our problem in its true perspective, we find it loses its power to rule our thoughts and our lives. It has helped many of us find solutions that lead to peace in our lives. Rarely have we seen a young person who was not greatly benefited by working the S-Ateen program.

The Twelve Steps of S-Ateen, which we try to follow, are not easy. At first we may think that some of them are unnecessary, but when we try, one day at a time, to apply them to our lives along with the tools of the S-Ateen program, the benefits can be limitless. We will come to know God’s gift of serenity.

## S-ATEEN PREAMBLE TO THE TWELVE STEPS

S-Ateen is a fellowship of young people who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other so that they may solve their common problems and help others to recover. The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of sexaholism in a relative or friend.

There are no dues or fees for S-Ateen membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. We do not discuss religion in our meetings or become involved as a group with any outside organization. Our primary purpose is to recover from the effects upon us of another person’s sexaholism and to help families and friends of sexaholics.

We believe sexaholism is a family disease because it affects all the members emotionally, spiritually, and sometimes physically. We cannot change or control our parents, family members, or friends. We can detach from their problems while continuing to love them and ourselves. By applying the Twelve Steps to ourselves, we begin to grow mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

## THE TWELVE STEPS OF S-ATEEN

1. We admitted we were powerless over sexaholism—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 Him.*

1. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
2. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
3. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
4. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
5. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
6. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
7. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
8. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him,* praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
9. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:

1. We admitted we were powerless of alcohol - 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 Him*. 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 Him 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 whenever 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 mediation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and power to carry that out. 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Step, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

(The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions are reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions does not mean that AA has approved the contents of this work, not that AA agrees with the views expressed herein. AA is a program of recovery from alcoholism only. Use of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in connection with programs which are patterned after AA but which address other problems does not imply otherwise.)

## THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF S-ATEEN

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity.
2. For our group purpose, there is but one 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 teenage relatives of sexaholics, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an S-Ateen Group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation. The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of sexaholism in a relative or friend.
4. Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting S-Ateen groups or S-Anon or SA as a whole.
5. Each S-Ateen group has but one purpose: to help other young people who have been affected by the sexaholism of a family member or friend. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps of S-Ateen, by encouraging and understanding the members of our family, and by welcoming and giving comfort to the families and friends of sexaholics.
6. S-Ateens, being part of S-Anon Family Groups, ought never endorse, finance, or lend our name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual aim. Although a separate entity, we should always cooperate with Sexaholics Anonymous.
7. Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. S-Ateen Twelfth 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. The S-Ateen 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, films and other public media. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all S-Ateen, S-Anon, and SA members.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles above personalities.

## THE S-ATEEN PROBLEM

S-Ateen members have much in common with the friends and relatives of other addicted people. Most of us lived with or are living in families with secrets and we have believed that it was our responsibility to keep those secrets, no matter how destructive. We were not taught to think about our own needs and take positive action to meet them. We chose friends who could not or would not love and support us in a healthy way. We lived life from the standpoint of victims and perceived any personal criticism as a threat. For most of us, anger, fear, loneliness, and depression were nearly constant. We acquired some unhealthy beliefs about ourselves very early in our lives—that we were not worthwhile and lovable, that we were able to control other people’s behavior, and that sex was the most important sign of love, affection and self-worth.

We may have also felt the shame of thinking we were responsible for the sexaholic behavior of a parent, family member, or friend. Many of us felt responsible for the happiness and safety of our parents or our siblings as well. Our self-esteem dropped to low levels, and we doubted our worth, our emotions, and at times even our sanity. We have felt betrayed by those we loved the most. Some of us were sexually abused or knew that other family members were being abused. Others witnessed sexual behavior or participated in sexual behavior that made us ashamed of ourselves. Sometimes we were placed in physical danger. In some cases a parent or other family member shared inappropriate information with us in ways that made us feel uncomfortable. Many of us were ashamed of what was happening in the family, but we often did not ask for help, did not know where to find help, or were not believed if we did share about the problem.

Some of us, knowing we could not leave the situation, minimized the importance of the sexaholic behavior or denied it until we felt emotionally numb. Others kept the family secrets because we feared retaliation, hurting other family members, or causing a crisis by talking about the problem. Many of us focused on the behavior of the sexaholic or other family members to the point of obsession and tried every known method to control or escape from their behavior. Some of us misused drugs, alcohol, or food, and others kept so busy that we did not have time to feel our emotions. We often neglected our health, jobs, schoolwork, and our friendships. No matter how we tried to struggle against it, deny it, or minimize its effects, the failure of our efforts to cope with sexaholism brought us to the point of despair. This is what we mean when we say in the First Step, “our lives had become unmanageable.”

## KEYS TO S-ATEEN RECOVERY

Over time, S-Ateen members learn to accept a number of new ideas:

* + Sexaholism is a disease very similar to alcoholism. At first, many of us could not accept this idea. For S-Ateen members, it means we see sexaholics as sick people, not bad people. They are powerless over lust.
* The actions of the sexaholic are not a result of something we did or did not do, and we do not have the power to control their behavior.
* The attempts of the non-sexaholic parent to control or ignore sexual addiction led to a decline in their emotional health and may have enabled the sexaholic to continue to practice his or her disease. The actions and attitudes of each parent concerning the sexaholism in the home affected every family member, including us.
* Our attempts to control sexual addiction and keep the family secrets led to a decline in our emotional health.
* When we first come to S-Ateen, we, too, may be spiritually and emotionally ill.
* Growing up in a sexaholic home will influence many of our life choices, including our choice of a partner, unless we identify and address our own unhealthy beliefs and behaviors that we have learned through living with the family disease of sexaholism.

As we work toward full acceptance of these ideas, we begin to see our problems in a new light, and the awareness dawns that we do have choices concerning our own actions. This is the beginning of our recovery.

We remind ourselves that we are powerless over the behavior caused by sexaholism. We ask a Higher Power to help us to stop blaming and trying to control the sexaholic and other family members. The sobriety of the sexaholic and the welfare of other family members are not our responsibility. We realize we cannot find serenity for ourselves if we continue to focus on someone else’s recovery, so we commit ourselves to our own recovery. With the loving help of other S-Ateen members, our S-Ateen sponsors, and the God of our understanding, we take positive action to make our lives more serene and fulfilling. We attend as many meetings as we can, get support from other S-Ateens, and begin to apply the Twelve Steps to our lives. We use the telephone, S-Ateen Conference Approved Literature, and the S-Ateen slogans. Eventually we reach out to help others and try to carry the message of our own recovery. We do these things in our own way, one day at a time— striving for progress, not perfection. This is what is meant by “working the program.”

## OBSTACLES TO RECOVERY

To insure the success of our meetings in solving our common problems, we must recognize and overcome three obstacles to recovery that can destroy the group.

The first is the discussion of any religious denomination. Compulsive lusting respects no particular religion; therefore, our program is designed to help us regardless of our various beliefs. Let us not defeat our purpose by discussing any particular denomination.

The second is gossip. We are here to help ourselves and other group members. A belittling discussion of others, including the sexaholic, or a discussion of personal affairs other than those concerning ourselves, will eventually eliminate the group.

The third is dictatorship. We have no dominating authorities or self- appointed leaders. Our S-Ateen sponsors are but trusted servants, they do not govern our meetings. They are not here as professional counselors or parent substitutes. They are here as special people who offer us loving guidance and support as we learn to support each other. As S-Ateen members, we do not give advice; we suggest by telling how we solved similar problems through our experiences. The very essence of S-Ateen is that the whole program is “suggested.”

We have no creed, charges, obligations or anything that would tend to hinder you. Your progress can be made in your own time and in your own way. We merely invite your attendance in a common cause.