



STARTING S-ANON GROUPS

WHO MAY START A MEETING?

Anyone impacted by the sexual behavior of another person qualifies for S-Anon membership. S-Anon is for people of all sexual orientations, genders, denominations, and races, those in a relationship or not, parents, children, relatives, friends, and others whose lives have been affected by another person's sexual behavior. Two or more members, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an S-Anon Family Group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation (Tradition 3)*. Members decide for themselves whether they qualify for S-Anon membership; there is no screening process.

S-Anon members may be in various professions, occupations, and religions, or be working other Twelve Step Programs. However, when we come together as an S-Anon group, we leave our other identities outside (Tradition 8, Tradition 10).

WHERE TO MEET?

S-Anon groups often meet in person in churches, libraries, health clinics, or other public buildings. Although groups have started in restaurants, lobbies, parks, or even cars, experience shows that finding a neutral place as a permanent location helps members to stay focused on the meeting and not be distracted by other things. For in-person meetings, it may be helpful to seek out places that are familiar with Twelve Step programs and already host meetings of other fellowships. Some groups choose to meet virtually via phone or video conference or hold hybrid virtual and in-person meetings.

In accordance with our Seventh Tradition of being self-supporting, periodic rent is often paid to facilities or for virtual platforms. Other factors to consider in deciding where and how to meet might include whether a facility requires liability insurance, a personal signature, physical key or building passcode for entry, etc.

When selecting a group name, experience has shown it is best to not use the name of the building or organization where the group meets, or the name of the conference service for virtual groups, as this can cause confusion by implying that the group may be affiliated with the church, facility, or organization (Tradition 3, Tradition 6).

* *The S-Anon Twelve Traditions are the spiritual guidelines for S-Anon groups, and they are referenced in this guideline to show how they can apply to groups. More literature on the Traditions can be found on www.sanon.org.*

WHERE TO MEET?

Consider a weekly day and time that is convenient for the most people. If you are the only one involved, pick a day and a time that is good for you. It can always be adjusted when other members join. Some meetings last an hour and others 90 minutes. When there are fewer members, the meetings can be shorter or time can be used for more reading or sharing.

HOW TO BEGIN?

S-Anon groups are the life of the S-Anon fellowship. Starting and building an S-Anon group is a spiritual endeavor. It is a commitment that requires some time and patience. No one needs to do it alone. The World Service Office (WSO) can provide referrals to experienced members of S-Anon who are available to offer guidance and support. And we can call on the Higher Power of our understanding to guide us. Tradition One states, "Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity." The unity of S-Anon depends on members and groups adhering to the S-Anon Twelve Traditions and the principles of the program. Each group is autonomous, except in matters affecting another group, S-Anon, or SA as a whole (Tradition 4), and may decide how to attract new members, its location, name, time, and topics.

MEETING FORMAT

The suggested meeting format is Conference Approved and available on the S-Anon Website, www.sanon.org, in *Working the S-Anon Program*, and in the *S-Anon/S-Ateen Service Manual*, which can be downloaded from the Member Site. The Service Manual can answer questions about S-Anon groups and the S-Anon fellowship. Reading it before starting the group can be helpful. Groups may choose to study the S-Anon Twelve Steps, discuss recovery topics or tools, or invite S-Anon members as speakers to share their experience, strength, and hope.

UNDERSTANDING AND VALUING ANONYMITY

Anonymity is an important spiritual principle to consider when starting an S-Anon group. Tradition Twelve reminds us that anonymity and spirituality are linked. We protect each other by not repeating information or names of members outside the group. Each person chooses how much personal information to reveal, but those who hear the sharing carefully guard that information. Only in this

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way can we feel free to share what is in our minds and hearts (Tradition 11, Tradition 12). At meetings, members use first names only. Whom you see and what you hear at group meetings, including conversations between members, are kept in confidence (Tradition 12). Another aspect of anonymity is that no one S-Anon member or group speaks for the entire S-Anon fellowship.

GUIDELINES FOR SHARING

Upholding the meeting guidelines, including “no crosstalk,” even with only two or three members present, helps us focus on recovery and be prepared when new members arrive. The “no crosstalk” guideline introduced in the meeting format helps people feel safe to share without interruption or comments from others. S-Anon members may be in various professions, occupations, and religions, or be working other Twelve Step Programs. However, when we come together as an S-Anon group, we leave our other identities out of our sharing (Tradition 8, Tradition 10). After the formal meeting is over, there can be time for fellowship and conversation. Some have found it helpful to bring a personal journal for writing during the meeting. This is especially useful if you are the only one at the meeting, which can happen from time to time.

OBSERVING TRADITION SEVEN

S-Anon Tradition Seven states, “Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.” Many new meetings will not have funds. A Seventh Tradition collection is taken at each meeting or remotely to accumulate and maintain group operating funds. S-Anon does not accept outside support in the form of funding, goods, or services. Group funds are used to pay rent or provide a donation to the facility where meetings are held, even if it is only a small amount. Funds may also be used to purchase supplies, literature, and public information and outreach materials for the group, make contributions to the WSO to help S-Anon world services meet expenses, and help with traveling expenses of the Area Delegate to the World Service Conference.

LITERATURE

Having S-Anon Conference Approved Literature (CAL) available for purchase at the meeting may be helpful once the meeting is established and basic expenses are met. Groups often eventually use a bag or a box to hold supplies.

REGISTERING THE GROUP

We are encouraged to register the group with the WSO when the group has a set time and location. Registration

forms are found on the S-Anon website. When registering a group, we request certain personal contact information so that the WSO can send information and updates. This contact information is used for official WSO business only and will not be shared. We also request group contact information for inquirers so that new members can find the group. Many groups set up a separate email address for this purpose to maintain anonymity and so that the contact roles can be periodically rotated between members without having to update the contact information. The WSO will share the specific group meeting location or virtual access information only if the group has given prior permission to do so. Otherwise, the WSO simply refers inquirers to a group contact person. As mentioned above, the group registration information is considered confidential and is used for WSO official business only. Each group may choose to allow the WSO to give out certain information to the Area Delegate for its state or province, the Intergroup (representatives from local groups), and/or the Regional Trustee so that group members can stay informed of local events and issues that may affect your group. These S-Anon members may also be able to offer support and encouragement as your group grows.

In order to maintain accurate records and provide inquirers and newcomers with the most up-to-date meeting information, the WSO requests that all groups complete a Group Registration Form annually or when meeting details or contact information changes.

SPREADING THE WORD

S-Anon’s primary spiritual aim is stated in Tradition Five: “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 families of sexaholics.” Attracting members to an S-Anon group can take time. The WSO will provide your group inquirer contact information to inquirers. Some groups utilize suggestions found in the publication *A Guide to Public Information & Outreach* for giving information to their own doctors and others in health care, religious communities, or support services. You may provide your group inquirer contact information or general S-Anon contact information so that inquirers can get a contact number to find out more about your meeting. Occasionally, S-Anon groups may hold an open meeting and welcome non-members, such as professionals and students. These open meetings are often speaker meetings that help others learn about S-Anon. The S-Anon Member Site and *A Guide to Public Information & Outreach* have additional resources for attracting new members.

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SERVICE WORK IN AN S-ANON GROUP

Members of an S-Anon group may offer service to help the group function. As the group grows, positions may include leaders for each meeting, treasurer, person to hold the key and open the building, group contact person(s), or literature person (makes literature orders). Groups often schedule periodic business meetings to discuss the business of the group. The group service positions may take time to be filled while the group is getting established. Since we have no self-appointed leaders, experience has

shown that periodically rotating service positions among members helps to maintain harmony within the group (Tradition 2, Tradition 9) and offers more members opportunities to grow in recovery through service.

Starting an S-Anon group may be challenging, but it is worth the effort. S-Anon groups are supportive places where we can share with others who truly understand the effects of being exposed to sex addiction. They are where we can learn how to work the S-Anon program with honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness.



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