

# Friday Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance Format

## Telephone Meeting Script and Readings

Time: 9:00 AM Pacific Time / 10:00 AM Mountain / 11:00 AM Central / 12:00 PM Eastern

Makeup: Mixed / this meeting is for people of all genders

Access: Open only to those who have a desire to stop their compulsive sexual behavior

Call-in Number: **712-770-4160, passcode 599840#**

Website Info: **www.saataalk.info**

For "Trusted Servant Tips" and other service information, click [here](#).

**Note:** Readings from a former Meeting Format can be found at the end of this format. The Trusted Servant has the option to include those readings if desired.

### Invitation

Do we have someone who would like to lead today's meeting (if no leader has been chosen)?

Do we have someone to run the dashboard today (if no one has been chosen)?

### Introduction

Welcome to the Friday Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance or Sexual Anorexia Telemeeting of Sex Addicts Anonymous. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a \_\_\_\_\_ [identify yourself as sex addict and/or intimacy avoidant] from \_\_\_\_\_ [location], and I'll be your Trusted Servant for this meeting. The focus of this meeting is cultivating authentic closeness and connection with ourselves, our Higher Power, and others. The only requirement to join the meeting is a desire to stop avoiding intimacy in our lives by "acting in" or "acting out."

May we have a moment of silence for those who are suffering, followed by the 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 meeting format script is what the Trusted Servant uses to guide the meeting. Within the script are several participation readings. Accessing the script before the meeting begins, or as you first call in, allows all to participate in their recovery, and keeps a balance of service during each meeting. The meeting format script can be found at: [saataalk.info](http://saataalk.info). Is there anyone who would like instructions on how to find the meeting format at this time?

In this meeting, we either hear an excerpt from a book or listen to a Speaker Share or First Step Presentation, and then participants can share on the topic(s) brought up by the reading or speaker. If you would like to share about your recovery from intimacy avoidance or give a First Step Presentation on intimacy avoidance or sexual avoidance (anorexia), an opportunity will be presented at the end of this meeting.

To keep the virtual room quiet, we give a gentle reminder to please mute all phones when not reading or sharing. Muting happens by tapping the mute function on your phone, or by pressing \*6.

Who will read "What is Intimacy?"

## **What is Intimacy?**

Many people use the words "sex" and "intimacy" interchangeably. However, they are not the same thing. Intimacy means a close, familiar, and usually affectionate personal relationship with self, others, or a Higher Power. A person can have friendships or relationships that are intimate but not sexual, and many sex addicts have learned that a person can have sex without being intimate. Using sex as a drug to medicate uncomfortable emotions does not promote connection. Anonymous sex is non-intimate, but even sex within a committed partnership can be non-intimate for someone who is relying on fantasy or other stimulation to accomplish a goal without becoming emotionally vulnerable. (*First Step to Intimacy - A Guide for Working the First Step on Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance or Sexual Anorexia*)

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Who will read "Intimacy Avoidance"?

## **Intimacy Avoidance**

"Sex addiction 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 addictive sexual behavior 'acting out.'" (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 3)

Over time, many of us also begin recognizing ways we avoid authentic closeness or intimacy in our lives through "behavior that serves to avoid or block sexual, emotional, or spiritual intimacy with others, ourselves, or our Higher Power." (*Recovery from Compulsive Sexual Avoidance - A Return to Intimacy*)

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Who will read "Symptoms of Intimacy Avoidance"?

## **Symptoms of Intimacy Avoidance**

Symptoms of intimacy avoidance some of us have experienced include, but are not limited to:

1. Practicing avoidance of sexual thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
2. Obsessive sexual thoughts (about having sex and/or avoiding it).

3. A feeling that our sexuality is inherently bad and something we should feel ashamed of and guilty about.
4. Pretending that flirtation and sexual advances aren't really happening to us and acting uninterested purely based on fear of taking risks.
5. A pattern of sex and relationships with active sex addicts and/or other unavailable people.
6. A pattern of addictive sexual behavior (acting out), followed by a pattern of compulsive sexual avoidance (acting in).
7. Extreme fear of combining emotional intimacy with sexuality.
8. Finding fault or starting fights with a spouse or partner to avoid sexual relations.
9. Being emotionally unavailable – in sexual and non-sexual relationships.
10. Only socializing in groups to avoid one-on-one relationships.
11. Avoiding social situations altogether due to extreme discomfort.
12. Only being sexual in non-intimate situations.
13. An inability to accept nurturing and care from ourselves, our Higher Power and others.
14. An inability to trust and rely on others, believing that people will always let us down and it is safer if we just do things on our own.
15. The compulsive use of masturbation, with fantasy and/or pornography, as a way to avoid intimacy with others, and prevent sexual abandonment.
16. Mistaking compulsive sexual avoidance for recovery and/or healthy sexuality.
17. Preferring fantasy over interacting with the people in our lives; so much that fantasy creates a wall between ourselves and the real world.
18. Hiding the joys and pains of our life from people we know and trust, due to self-pity, false-pride and/or fear.

(“[Intimacy Avoidance – Another Aspect of Sex Addiction](#)”). This list is not meant to be diagnostic. Each person must determine their own pattern of avoidant behavior, with the help of a sponsor or others in the program. Working the Twelve Steps of SAA will lead to an awakening that allows us to live a new way of life according to spiritual principles. (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 20)

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Who will read The Twelve Steps of Sex Addicts Anonymous,  
from page 20 of the SAA green book?

## **The Twelve Steps of SAA**

1. We admitted we were powerless over addictive sexual behavior—that our lives had become unmanageable.
  2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
  3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
  4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
  5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
  6. 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 tried to carry this message to other sex addicts and to practice these principles in our lives.
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Who will read the Tradition of the month, and the Twelfth Tradition, from the SAA Green Book pg. 77?

## **The Twelve Traditions of SAA**

*(Read the Tradition for the current month: 1 for January, 2 for February, etc. and then the 12th Tradition)*

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 stop addictive sexual behavior.
  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 sex 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. SAA 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. SAA 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 films.
  12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.
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## **Introductions**

Now let's go around for introductions. Since sex addiction is a disease of the mind, body, and spirit, you are invited to share your first name, where you're from, and how you're feeling physically, emotionally, and spiritually in a few words. You're also invited to share your length of sobriety if you wish, and if you're new to this meeting, let us know so we may appropriately welcome you. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ and I feel physically \_\_\_\_\_, emotionally \_\_\_\_\_, and spiritually \_\_\_\_\_. (Optional: I have \_\_\_days/weeks/months/years free from inner circle behaviors.) Who would like to be next?

Welcome everyone! We would like to extend an invitation for new members joining us today to stay on the line after the Closing Prayer for Fellowship, where you can ask questions, exchange phone numbers and/or engage in further discussion with others.

## **Reading and Topic or Speaker**

It is now time for a reading or presentation, followed by a discussion.

*(Note to Trusted Servant: If a Speaker Share or a First Step Presentation is scheduled, introduction instructions are at the end of this format. If no Speaker or First Step, continue to the following:)*

Will the volunteer for this week's reading please announce yourself and begin the reading share?

(After the reading) Thank you, \_\_\_\_\_. Would you like to suggest a topic or two from the reading that we can share about today?

## **Boundaries for Discussion**

Here are some guidelines to keep our meeting safe for all participants.

1. We share **our own** experience, strength, and hope, using words like "I," "me," or "my," instead of "you" or "we."
2. During this meeting we **focus on the Solution** found within the 12 Steps of SAA and the principles of recovery. Talking about recent acting out is best done with a sponsor or program support person.
3. We refer to addictive sexual behavior as "acting out," and we avoid using explicit descriptions or offensive language.
4. We direct our comments **to the group** as a whole, rather than speaking to a specific person or commenting on another person's share. If we would like to ask for support or feedback concerning a specific issue, we can ask after the meeting during fellowship, or during outreach calls with individuals.
5. To avoid giving the impression that we're promoting something, we refrain from mentioning specific book titles or religious references, etc. during the meeting.

After the meeting during fellowship, it is acceptable to speak more freely about things like non-SAA-approved literature or to offer feedback to another participant, if desired.

## **Sharing**

Now it's time for sharing. Let's allow 3 minutes for each share. Who will volunteer to be the Spiritual Timekeeper for the meeting?

Thanks, \_\_\_\_\_. Please let us know when 2 minutes have passed, and then signal when 3 minutes are up. If you're sharing, please acknowledge that you heard the Spiritual Timekeeper's notice.

(Sharing times can be adjusted according to number of participants on the call.)

The floor is now open for sharing. I will help moderate...who would like to begin?

(Sharing continues until 5 minutes to the hour)

## **Closing – Five minutes to the hour**

That's all the time we have for discussion. Everyone is invited to stay on the line after the meeting where we will have a period of continued fellowship. Newcomers may also feel free to ask any questions at that time.

Our business meeting is held on the last Friday of the month after the regular meeting.

*(If that is today, announce that business meeting will start immediately after the meeting.)*

## **Announcements**

Are there any SAA-related [announcements](#)? (← click on the word "announcements" for a link to the announcements page.)

## **Service Opportunities**

“Doing some service—even a tiny bit— can break the ice and make us feel more at home. ... Service deepens our program at every stage of recovery.” (*Tools of Recovery*, pages 40-41).

If you would like to be a speaker, or give a First Step presentation focusing on your intimacy avoidance, please talk with the trusted servant after our closing prayer.

Here is a list of ways you can participate in next week's meeting. If any of these positions interest you, please speak up now as they are listed.

If you are interested yet need further explanation of how to be of that specific service (for instance, how to obtain appropriate literature for a reading)... please express your willingness now, and one of us will help you with the “how” after the closing of this meeting.

**Greeter:** The Greeter simply arrives a few minutes early and says “Hello”, welcomes participants as they arrive on the call. Who would like to volunteer to be the greeter for next week? (Pause)

**Trusted Servant:** The Trusted Servant leads the meeting by reading the current script. The current script is accessible on [saatalk.info](http://saatalk.info), under “Find A Telemeeting”. From there click on our meeting day & time, & the script can then be found next to: “download document”. In addition, there is a link for Trusted Servant tips, at the beginning of this script. Who will be next week's Trusted Servant?

**Bringing a Reading:** The reading gives us something to contemplate and share about during the meeting. A volunteer may read from SAA-approved literature, or may bring a reading from books such as *Hope and Recovery*, *Answers in the Heart*, the AA Big Book or the "12 and 12," or from *Sexual Anorexia* by Patrick Carnes.) As a gentle reminder, literature from other 12-Step fellowships, religious material, or therapy-related literature is not appropriate for this meeting. Who will bring a reading next week?

## **The 7th Tradition**

“Every SAA group ought to be fully self supporting, declining outside contributions.” 12-step meetings around the world normally pass a basket at this time to receive donations that are used to support recovery. Because this activity is not possible in our telemeeting, we encourage you to make donations to our Intergroup to support the telemeetings and the ISO. This can be done by visiting [saatalk.info](http://saatalk.info) or calling 1-800-477-8191.

### **Closing Reading – Green Book, page 61 – OR the Ottawa Promises**

Who will read the last two paragraphs from the section on Step Twelve in our green book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous, page 61*, or the meeting format?

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 the world is a much safer place than we had ever known before, because we are always in the care of a loving God.

### **OR**

Who would like to read the Ottawa Promises today?

Through a renewed relationship with our Higher Power, the healing force of recovery will take hold in our hearts. By giving ourselves over to our Higher Power and working our program, our lives will become manageable and we will be restored to sanity. We will receive the inner strength and support needed to face our anxieties and fears, and to deal with the painful feelings that feed our addiction.

Relations with others will improve as we learn to respect our boundaries and allow others freedom to be themselves. Reaching out in trust and connecting with others will come easier, dispelling our sense of isolation and loneliness. Degrading fantasies and obsessive sexual thinking will diminish.

In relating to ourselves, self-absorption will give way to self-discovery; secrecy to honesty; feelings of unworthiness to dignity; and shame to grace. A restored integrity will guide our behavior. We will feel more alive and regain a sense of happiness. We will hear ourselves laugh again and rediscover play. We will embrace change and will grow.

A spiritual awakening will free us from the tyranny of our addiction. An awareness of being guided by a Higher Power and supported by caring friends will sustain us. Regret for the past and worry for the

future will give way to living for today. We will open ourselves to the amazing possibilities of a life worth living...our life.

Are these extravagant promises? (everyone: ) **"We think not!"** We have seen them fulfilled. They are ours, if we want them and work for them.

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## **Closing Prayer**

In closing, please join me Serenity Prayer or the Unity Prayer. (For words to Unity Prayer, click [here](#).)

*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.*

Keep Coming Back—It Works!

## **Exchanging Phone Numbers**

If you would like to be added to the SAA Telemeeting Intergroup contact list, you can create an account by going to [saatalk.info](http://saatalk.info) and click on "Members." You may also exchange phone numbers at this time.

## **Continued Fellowship**

The phone line is now open for Fellowship. If there are any newcomers on the line, you're welcome to ask questions at this time. (Pause; If no newcomers, announce that the line is open for general fellowship.)

## **Readings from Script A:**

### **Sex Addiction: Acting Out; Anorexia: Acting in**

"Sex addiction 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 addictive sexual behavior 'acting out.'" (Sex Addicts Anonymous, page 3)

"Most of us came to our first SAA meeting when we could no longer deny that we had a problem. [Acting out behaviors] seemed like the part of an iceberg that we could see above the waterline, and they deserved our immediate attention. Over time, though, other more subtle forms of sex addiction known as "acting in" behaviors, that may have been lurking below, come to the surface. "Acting in" is any compulsive sexual behavior that serves to avoid or block sexual, emotional, or spiritual intimacy with others, ourselves, or our Higher Power."

(Adapted from the SAA pamphlet Recovery from Compulsive Sexual Avoidance: A Return to Intimacy)

## **Abstinence and Recovery**

Our goal when entering the SAA program is abstinence from one or more specific sexual behaviors. But since different addicts suffer from different behaviors, and since our sexuality is experienced in so many different ways, it is necessary that SAA members define for themselves, with the help of their sponsors or others in recovery, which of their sexual behaviors they consider to be "acting out." (Excerpted from Sex Addicts Anonymous, pages 14-15) Therefore, SAA does not have a universal definition of abstinence.

In addition to abstaining from acting-out behaviors, recovery for many of us includes recognizing and abstaining from "acting-in." At first, this seemed to "highlight more of what was absent in our lives than what was present." But we "gradually became aware of a range of subtle but overt behaviors that enabled us to avoid authentic closeness or intimacy." (Adapted from Recovery from Compulsive Sexual Avoidance: A Return to Intimacy)

One of the most dangerous aspects of intimacy avoidance is our inability to see it for what it is. This difficulty recognizing what we are doing, how risky and serious it is, and how much harm it may cause, we call denial. Working the Twelve Steps of SAA will lead to an awakening that allows us to live a new way of life according to spiritual principles.

## **BUSINESS MEETING AGENDA [the last Friday of the month]**

Welcome to the Friday Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance business meeting. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_, and I am a \_\_\_\_\_ (sex addict, intimacy avoidant) and I'll be the trusted servant for this meeting.

Who will read The Twelve Traditions from the SAA Green Book pg. 77?

### **Old Business**

In keeping with our traditions, do we have any old business to discuss?

### **Reports**

Now is the time for reports. Will all trusted servants, starting with the Intergroup Rep. give their reports now?

### **New Business**

Do we have any new business to discuss?

### **Closing Prayer**

Please help me close this meeting with the 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.*

**Continued Fellowship** The phone line is now open for Fellowship. Please state your name before your share.

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## **Information regarding Speaker or First Step guidelines:**

### **If there is a Speaker:**

May we have a volunteer to keep time?

I would like thank \_\_\_\_\_ for volunteering to be our Speaker today. I will now turn the meeting over to them.

The speaker can share for approximately 10 Minutes on his or her recovery from Compulsive Sexual Avoidance or Anorexia.

### **(After Speaker Presentation)**

We would like to thank \_\_\_\_\_ for sharing his/her experience, strength, and hope with us today. We will now open the meeting for discussion. Participants are invited to share what you identified with or liked about the presentation, or feelings it brought up for you. Who would like to begin the sharing?

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### **If there is a First Step:**

Persons giving 1<sup>st</sup> Step presentations will have 20 Minutes to speak, but will need to review their 1<sup>st</sup> Step with the trusted servant or meeting representative to help focus their 1<sup>st</sup> step on their intimacy avoidance and/or sexual avoidance rather than their history of acting out.

To allow all the meeting attendees to have their needs met, the group conscience has agreed to allow the meeting to extend beyond the 1 Hour scheduled meeting time, if necessary.

## **Introduction to First Step Presentation**

(Read by Trusted Servant or Sponsor of person giving First Step)

\_\_\_\_\_, you are about to share with us your First Step. We acknowledge and affirm your courage in taking this step. We acknowledge and affirm your courage in taking this step. We want to clarify some things about this experience for each of us.

The primary purpose for you giving this formal First Step presentation is to aid you in your program of recovery. It need not be done to please the group, or to gain status. There is no right or wrong way to give a First Step. Any effort you make is legitimate.

Here are some suggestions which others who have gone before have found helpful. We encourage you to be specific about your behaviors and to speak from your heart in order to be in touch with the pain and reality of your addiction. Try not to bury yourself in shame. Let us hear you, not your addict, speaking.

The group has a responsibility to be loving, caring, and accepting of you. The members will avoid judging you, giving advice to you, or taking care of you.

If you wish, you may request that no one interrupt you during your presentation. However, several members have affirmed that guidance from their sponsor during their First Step made the experience more meaningful. \_\_\_\_\_, do you prefer to have the room muted while you're sharing?

Remember, we are here for you. May God grant you serenity.

### **(After Speaker or First Step Presentation)**

We would like to thank \_\_\_\_\_ for sharing his/her First Step with us today. \_\_\_\_\_, are you open to receiving feedback? (If yes): We will now open the meeting for feedback for \_\_\_\_\_ (person who gave First Step). Examples of feedback include sharing what you identified with or liked about the presentation, or feelings it brought up for you. If you wish to get current or share about an issue you are dealing with, there will be time for check-ins after feedback or during fellowship. Who would like to begin the feedback for \_\_\_\_\_?

As feedback is winding down, ask the person who gave their First Step how they're feeling and if there's anything they'd like to share about their experience today.

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### **Record of Edits and Group Conscience:**

Edited 02/09/14 by Michelle S.

March, 2014: changes to ... wording for anorexia emphasis

August, 2014: Trusted Servant changes

January 2015 added link to announcements, edited out text boxes, edited topic/reading section, replaced info re: Speaker

or First Step at end of format

March 2015: Call-in number changed

April 2015: First Step Intro added to end of format

June 2015: 7th Tradition reworded, added link to TS tips page

Nov 2016: edited Unity prayer reference

May 2017: edited boundaries for discussion

Feb 2021: added question about dashboard operator at beginning