

## **START a MEETING**

This excerpt, from *Adults Abused As Children*, is a guideline for starting your own meeting.

### **Suggested Meeting Format for Adults Abused As Children Anonymous Program**

#### **Meeting opening statement**

Read Aloud at Meeting

“We welcome you to the ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS Meeting, and hope you will find in this fellowship the help and friendship we have been privileged to enjoy. We, who have lived with the problem of childhood abuse in our pasts, understand as perhaps few others can. We, too, were lonely and frustrated, but in ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS we discover that no situation is really hopeless and that it is possible for us to find contentment, and even happiness.”

We urge you to try our program. It has helped many of us find solutions that lead to serenity. So much depends on our own attitudes, and as we learn to place our problem in its true perspective, we find it loses its power to dominate our thoughts and our lives. Our situation is bound to improve as we apply these 12 Step ideas. Without such spiritual help, living with our past abuse issues is too much for most of us. Our thinking becomes distorted by trying to force solutions, and we become irritable and unreasonable without knowing it.

THE ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN program is based on our suggested 12 Steps, which we try, little by little, one day at a time, to apply to our lives. The loving interchange of help among members makes us ready to receive the priceless gift of serenity. Ours is an anonymous fellowship, everything that is said here, in the group meeting and member-to-member, must be held in confidence. Only in this way can we feel free to say what is on our minds and in our hearts, for this is how we help one another in ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS.”

#### **Meeting guidelines**

Read Aloud at Meeting

“These 12 Steps were not meant to be worked through by ourselves. Remember, we are not alone. It is not our job to heal ourselves. This is why it is suggested that we go to Adults Abused As Children Anonymous meetings and connect with others who have had similar pasts as our own. Everyone who walks into the meeting is considered a member if they wish to be.

In the meetings, we are invited to share when we are ready. Many of us have faced difficult, life-long issues related to mistrust, betrayal, isolation, suppression and poor boundary setting, to name a few. We are supported within the safety of this setting to tell our secrets. As a result we begin to experience the healing that accompanies working the 12 Steps. Through our shared experiences, we help each other feel hopeful and accepted as we are, and our lives change for the better.”

### **Meeting agreements**

Read Aloud at Meeting

“As a group, we agree to the following during all meetings:

- All sharing within the group will remain strictly confidential.
- No one is to give advice. We are here to listen to each other.
- No opinions are to be offered relating to what another has shared.
- No asking questions of another member relating to what they have shared.
- We share only from our own experience.”

### **The 12 Steps of Adults Abused As Children Anonymous**

Read the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions aloud.

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over the past abuse — that our lives had become unmanageable.

Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.

Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Step 5: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Step 6: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Step 7: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

Step 8: Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Step 9: Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Step 10: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Step 11: 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.

Step 12: 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.

## **12 Traditions of Adults Abused As Children Anonymous**

Read the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions aloud.

Tradition 1: Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS unity.

Tradition 2: For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

Tradition 3: Adults abused as children, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation. The only requirement for ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS membership is a desire to heal from the past abuse.

Tradition 4: Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting another group or ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS as a whole.

Tradition 5: Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the adults abused as children who still suffer. We do this by practicing the 12 Steps of ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS ourselves.

Tradition 6: An ADULT ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS group ought never endorse, finance, or lend our name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

Tradition 7: Every ADULT ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

Tradition 8: ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

Tradition 9: ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS groups, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

Tradition 10: ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS has no opinion on outside issues; hence our name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

Tradition 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.

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

## **Introductions and Announcements**

INTRODUCTIONS BY FIRST NAME only: Go around the room and each person who cares to can say their first name.

ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS Announcements: Ask if anyone has announcements related to our program or meeting.

Now you are ready to hold the meeting.

## **Suggested meeting formats**

1. **Speaker/Discussion Meeting** — a member shares without interruption for 10-20 minutes about their past abuse and/or their present life followed by others sharing about what came up for them from the speaker's share. There is no evaluating or discussing the speaker's life; each person speaks from their own experience.

2. **Read from Program literature** — pass around the ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS book and read aloud a passage, a Step or a section and each member shares what it brings up for them.
3. **Discuss specific theme** — members are asked what issue/theme they would like to hear discussed with one theme chosen by majority vote. Examples: surrender, fear, or forgiveness. Members take turns sharing on this topic.
4. **Write for five minutes** — each member writes for five minutes on whatever they choose, followed by sharing about what came up for them from the writing. They may choose to read aloud some or all of what they wrote.

Each group can rotate its format as often as desired or choose to follow only one week after week. The length of the meeting is often between one and one and a half hours. A healthy meeting intends to begin and end on time. Some meetings have tea or coffee and cookies available, if allowed where the meeting is held.

### **Sharing during the meeting**

We remember to speak only about our own lives, past or present. We do not comment on anyone else's share or their life experiences. We do not ask questions, give our opinions, advice or suggestions to anyone during the meeting. We listen and do not interrupt.

If one member continually monopolizes the bulk of the time for the meeting in their sharing, the Secretary (or anyone present) may speak to this person either during or after the meeting and request that this person remember to self-monitor the length of their share so others may have a chance to speak. If someone is "out of order" during the meeting (giving advice, etc.) the Secretary (or anyone present) may gently remind that member to please share from their own life experience instead. If someone requests emotional help during a meeting, someone can volunteer to escort that member outside of the room and be with them. Many challenges may arise which will require us to seek solutions in respectful and principled ways. We work our Program at the group level.

### **Service positions**

The Secretary, Treasurer and Literature persons commit to serving the group in the ways that the group has defined as their roles. The Secretary runs the meeting and maintains order during it. The Treasurer volunteers to handle paying rent for the room, to collect the money offered in the basket each week from the members, to maintain financial records and to report the financial information back to the group on a regular basis. Some groups may elect to have a bank account in its name. The Literature volunteer orders a supply of books that the group has decided it wants available. Ultimately, however, it is each group's responsibility to create and maintain a safe, effective and orderly space for members to attend. Monthly (or quarterly) business meetings, which can be held after the regular meeting, can address specific challenges that may arise in the regular meeting. Everyone in the fellowship is invited to attend the

business meetings. The 12 Traditions are also helpful to groups as guidelines to follow in making decisions for the unity of the group.

**After the meeting — closing statement:**

Read Aloud at Meeting

“In closing, we would like to say that the opinions expressed here are strictly those of the person who gave them. Take what you liked and leave the rest. The things you heard here were spoken in confidence. Keep them within the walls of this room and the confines of your mind. A few special words to those of you who haven’t been with us long: whatever your problems, there are those among us who have had them too, and if you try to keep an open mind, you will find help. You will come to realize that there is no situation too difficult to be handled and no unhappiness too great to be lessened. We aren’t perfect. The welcome we give you may not show the warmth we have in our hearts for you, but after a while, you’ll discover that though you may not like all of us, you’ll love us in a very special way, the same way we already love you. Talk to each other, reason things out with another human being, 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.”

**Optional: closing prayer**

If someone would like to share with the group, this is the time for a closing prayer.