

# SUPPORTING PEOPLE INTO RECOVERY

A 12 Step facilitation work book

# **S P R**

Supporting people into recovery is a workbook which has been written with the aim of helping facilitate people's route into 12 step programmes such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Cocaine Anonymous and so on. The workbook helps people to make the transition into the culture of 12 step fellowships by addressing some of the myths that exist which often serve as a barrier before the person has even been to a meeting! It aims to reduce the resistance that a newcomer may have so that they don't decide it isn't for them before they have given it a chance. Any such decision is usually based upon ignorance or misinformation.

This is not a summary of 12 step concepts nor is it an intervention which requires an evidence base and a validated process of delivery.

This workbook has been specifically written to be delivered by people who are themselves in 12 step recovery. It outlines four sessions to provide an introduction to 12 step groups such as AA or NA or CA in order to facilitate people's attendance at meetings.

## **RECOVERY**

**Recovery is the term developed by people in 12 Step Abstinence Recovery to describe the process by which they maintain abstinence and effect profound positive changes in their lives such that they think and behave as though they were different people.**

### **IT IS CHARACTERISED BY**

- **JOY IN LIVING**
- **A LIFE LONG PRACTICE OF CHANGING THINKING AND BEHAVIOUR**
- **COMMITMENT TO A PROGRAMME OF SELF EXAMINATION AND SHARING BASED AROUND SPIRITUAL { SEE DEFINATION BELOW] PRINCIPLES**
- **SPONSORSHIP**
- **THE VALUES OF 12 STEP FELLOWSHIPS (NO BOSSES, ANONYMITY, APPROPRIATELY NON JUDGEMENTAL, SELF HELP, SUPPORTING OTHERS)**
- **LAUGHTER**

**The term "Recovery" has recently become vogue and its definition widened to encapsulate anything which makes people with drug and alcohol problems marginally better. Throughout this document we use Recovery in its original 12 step meaning.**

## Objectives

The aim of Supporting People into Recovery (SPR) is to facilitate participation in 12-step programmes such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and Cocaine Anonymous. It regards such active involvement as important for sustained contented and healthy abstinence. The intervention prepares clients for a transition into the culture of 12 step meetings.

The primary objective of SPR is to equip clients to deal with some of the experiences they are likely to encounter in a 12 step meeting, so that they will not immediately reject this as a potential source of support.

SPR is not intended as a summary of 12 step concepts nor as an intervention that teaches a programme of recovery - those tasks are left to the fellowship meetings themselves.

SPR is meant to soften newcomers' resistance to 12 step programmes so that they do not quit before they have had a chance to see how the fellowship and the programme can help them.

SPR does this by:

- addressing some of the myths about AA/NA/CA
- explaining the concepts in simple, understandable language
- creating a safe environment for clients to honestly share their previous experiences and opinions of 12-step programmes (both positive and negative).

SPR is delivered in a group rather than an individual setting because the group dynamic helps the individual prepare for the group process of Fellowship meetings.

SPR can be run on 4 consecutive days in one week or it can be one session per week for 4 weeks.

After session 1, links to Fellowship meetings can be encouraged by:

- accompanying people to meetings
- bringing a meeting to the group

## Session Structure

Total of 1½hr per session with an introduction of 25 minutes prior to every session. After attendance at one of the introductions, this is optional but there is benefit in people attending each introduction in that it reinforces basic information and provides an opportunity to welcome new members.

- Introduction - 25 mins
- Break for reflection - 5 mins
- Check-in -15 mins
- Core content - 60 minutes
- Summary and Wind-down 15 mins

## Session Content

In addition to the Introduction, there are four core curriculum areas to SPR. These particular curriculums were chosen to provide tangible help to the newcomer--such as how to pick which meeting to go to, how to ask someone to be your sponsor, and how to understand some of the language and culture of 12 step fellowships that they will inevitably encounter at meetings. These curriculums were also selected to address known reasons for resistance to AA/NA/CA – such as its spirituality component and the diversity of personalities and opinions.

*The **INTRODUCTION** session focuses on the benefits of attending 12 step meetings, how meetings run, etiquette, how to choose meetings, etc.*

*The **SPIRITUALITY** session provides clients with a wide range of definitions of spirituality that do not all require a religious orientation or God belief system, but that are consistent with the 12 step emphasis on spirituality. 12 Step programmes are spiritual but not religious.*

*The **PRINCIPLES, NOT PERSONALITIES** session deals head-on with myths about AA/NA/CA, different types of meetings, and etiquette and ritual.*

*The **SPONSORSHIP** session explains the function of a 12 step sponsor, offers guidelines for picking an appropriate person, and includes role-playing to practice asking for a temporary sponsor, overcoming a rejection, etc.*

*In the **LIVING SOBER** session, tools for staying sober are tackled: triggers to relapse, service, and avoiding slippery people, places and things.*

## INTRODUCTION

Only new people need to attend the introduction - however they can attend again subsequent introductions if they wish.

### Key Learning Points

#### ***Meeting Format***

- Fellowship meetings are 1-1½hrs in length
- Various hours of day and night and every location
- The substance or behaviour is only mentioned in the first part of Step 1 - after that the steps are pretty much the same
- Open vs closed meetings
- Meetings targeted at specific groups eg gender, sexuality, profession,
- Step meetings
- Topic/discussion meetings

#### ***Rules of the Road***

- First names
- Keep what you hear at meetings and who you see at the meeting to yourself [ This is based upon the principle of anonymity ]
- Be respectful of the meeting you are in and the language used, ie AA meetings people introduce themselves as alcoholics, in NA it is addicts or chemically dependent.
- No need to speak in meetings but if you do there is a protocol - no cross talk, expected to speak only once; don't monopolise the floor: usually meetings ask for people to keep their share to 5 minutes or so.
- There is a way to donate at meetings but you don't have to do so: this money goes towards paying for the rent of the meeting room, buying tea and biscuits and any surplus goes to supporting local, regional and national structures of the particular fellowship which includes the production of literature.
- There is some ritual - eg the serenity prayer, non of which are compulsory and people can choose to join in or not.
- It is about sharing - you only speak about yourself and not about others
- It is not therapy, advice or counselling and individual views are not imposed on others.
- Listening is an important element - we all need to learn to listen better: we were born with one mouth and two ears which suggest that it might be a good idea to listen twice as much as we talk.
- You can come and go but always be respectful.

- It is not aligned with any organisation is non-discriminatory and inclusive.
- you become a member of a 12 step when you say you are.

### ***Why go to a 12 step meeting?***

#### **A. Research studies repeatedly find higher rates of abstinence among people who go to 12 step meetings during treatment.**

- Higher AA attendance during treatment predicts more days of abstinence six months later.
- Frequency of meeting attendance after treatment predicts abstinence a year later
- When drinking or using does occur, those who go to meetings have less serious relapses
- 73% of the people who go to AA regularly--meaning weekly--remain chemically free, compared with only 33% of the non-attenders.

#### **B. Studies find 12 step involvement leads to new relationships with people who don't drink or use drugs**

- Going to more 12 step meetings leads to less depression and higher quality relationships with friends and spouse or partner.
- The most important types of 12 step involvement are: reaching out to other members of fellowships for help, and using a sponsor
- Relapsers lack the ability to use their sponsors appropriately or reach out to other members in their programme

#### **C. 12 Step Meetings will serve to inoculate you from the influence of those who do drink or use drugs**

- 3 years after treatment, people with networks highly supportive of drinking who were highly involved in AA were sober 91% of the last 90 days.

#### **D. 12 step programmes works for both genders, for all ages & races, & for both alcohol and drug problems and other behavioural problems too**

#### **E. Research has found that 12 Step programmes works for atheists and agnostics**

- Irrespective of their religious background, people experience significantly better substance abuse outcomes when they participate in 12-step groups.
- Experiential evidence indicates that if you incorporate the 12 step programme into daily living that it will lead to an ever increasing healthier and more balanced emotional, mental life.

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#### **F. It's a Safe Place - Anonymity protects everyone's identity**

## 1. SPIRITUALITY

**Check- in** [ 15 mins]

**Core Contents** [ 60 mins]

### Introduction

You've probably heard that AA or NA is a religious programme. One of the reasons is that at the end of meetings we say some words which are known as the serenity prayer.

*" God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference"*

These words help us to clarify the things which we can change and the things we can't change.

AA and NA are not religious at all and it is not important whether or not you believe in God.

*"Religion is for those who are afraid of hell, the programme is for people who have already been there".*

12 Step Programmes are not religious but they are spiritual and there is a big difference between the two things.

**Exercise:** What is your understanding of spirituality? (flip chart)

### Definition of Spirituality :

*Spirituality is about the deepest values and meanings by which people live. As such it is concerned with qualities of the human spirit such as love, compassion ,patience ,tolerance ,forgiveness ,contentment, appropriate sense of responsibility , a desire not to harm anyone [ including ourselves] but rather to promote their wellbeing, a sense of harmony which brings happiness to both self and others.*

This definition does not include elements associated with religion eg :

A] Acceptance of some form of metaphysical or supernatural reality

B] A belief in the idea of a heaven/nirvana.

C] Religious teachings or dogma.

However, a 12 step programme does suggest that you come to believe in a power greater than yourself.

**Exercise:** What things have you tried to rely upon and what have been the benefits/disadvantages in doing so? (flip chart)

Examples could include:

God, Allah, Buddha, drink, drugs, family, friends, partner, football team, money, work, doctors, drug workers, counsellors, etc.

Given your current circumstances it appears that none of the above have resulted in you being able to stop destroying yourself with drink/drugs. The 12 step programme asks you to first and foremost believe that if you work the steps then you can recover from your drink/drug addiction. Put another way it asks you to believe in the programme as a 'power greater than yourself'.

The simple programme outlined in the 12 steps can transform you into a person who does not need/want to escape into drink and drugs but it can also give you a much more rewarding, fulfilling and meaningful life than the one you lead now and the only things you need is:

Honesty, open mindedness and willingness [all of which will be explored on the next session].

**Summary and wind-down.**

## 2. PRINCIPLES NOT PERSONALITIES

**Check- in** [ 15 mins]

**Core Contents** [ 60 mins]

### **Introduction**

It's said that within the first minute of being with other people we have usually made a judgment about them and whether we like or dislike them. This can have a massive influence upon whether we are willing to get involved with groups or share things with other people.

**Exercise:** Does your experience chime with this? (brief discussion)

**Key Learning Point:** This session is about the principles of AA and NA - the steps of the programme, rather than the people you may meet on it.

The goal of this session is to help you to take from the meetings the things that are useful and not to get caught up with the things or people that you don't like.

We call this the principle of **OPEN-MINDEDNESS**

### **How Meetings Function and the Fellowship Works**

*"There are no leaders just trusted servants."*

Everyone is elected to roles and all roles are on a rotational basis , so no one stays in that role for more then a year or two. Facilities need to have copy of the guidelines regarding NA/AA to give examples]

Holding a position is not about having power, status or prestige but rather is about the opportunity to serve as **Service** is a primary principle of the recovery programme.

Service includes:

Setting the room up before the meeting, serving tea/coffee before or after the meeting, washing up and stacking chairs after the meeting.

Birthday secretary of a meeting.

Literature secretary of a meeting.

Secretary of a meeting.

Chairing a meeting.

12 steeping new comers.

Telephone Duty.

Treasurer of a meeting.

Intergroup representative / officer.

Regional representative or officer.

National representative or officer.

None of these roles are more important than any of the others - the key thing is the opportunity to serve in order to aid and maintain our own recovery.

However, in order to protect individuals and the fellowship there are guidelines regarding how much sobriety you must have in order to take on particular roles and your sponsor [ see below ] will guide you in order to decide if you are yet ready to take on a particular role. However, from the very start you can get involved in service by helping to set out the room , help to make tea/ coffee etc.

{ facilitators to have guidelines regarding AA/NA available to give examples} .

Also what position/status a person has outside the fellowship, be it Doctor or Docker, Priest or Prostitute, has no significance with regards their membership of the fellowship as we are all equal in that we are all alcoholics/ addicts who need each other and the programme in order to successfully recover. This is the principle of **UNITY**.

***"You alone can do it but you cannot do it alone"***.

### 3. SPONSORSHIP

**Check in** [ 15 mins]

**Core contents** [ 60 mins]

**Activity:** What is your understanding of the word sponsorship ? [ Flip chart answers].

What is Sponsorship in the fellowships?

A sponsor in the fellowship is a person you choose to support you in understanding what the fellowship is about and how to understand and work the 12 step programme. The sponsor is a confident and someone you can share ' talk to ' about your past, present including your doubts, fears ,difficulties, strengths and successes and how the programme can be applied to manage these experiences. Thus the primary focus of sponsor/sponsee relationship is sharing your experience strength and hope with each other and this process helps the sponsor to stay sober/clean as much as it does for the sponsee.

The Sponsor is not there to:

Lend you Money.

Get you a job.

Sorting out your benefits'/finances.

Giving you lifts to meetings!

The Sponsors role is **not** about giving you advice or making decisions on your behalf. Just because a person is sober it does **not** make them experts in anything other than their own recover. For example, it does **not** qualify them to give advice on medical, marriage , legal or financial matters etc. With regards the above matters a sponsor should only share with you their experience and possible point you in the direction of professionals who can give you appropriate advice eg Doctor, Solicitor, etc. A Sponsor should **not** give you advice on whether you should stop or continue prescribed medication.

One of the main reasons why a Sponsor is not there to give advice is because the aim of the fellowship is to increasingly empower yourself to make decisions and thus become a person who is not unhealthy dependant upon other to make all their decisions for them *[NB Remember what was discussed in the spiritual session about Higher Powers]*

Interview with someone in the Fellowship.

1. X will introduce him/herself
2. Can you tell us how you first found yourself a sponsor?
3. What sort of things do you find helpful to talk to your sponsor about?
4. What is it like for you being a sponsor?
5. What sort of things would you want a Sponsee to talk to you about and what would you not talk about?

### **How to choose a Sponsor:**

It is suggested that males should sponsor males and women sponsor women.

Initially you may want to ask someone to be your temporary sponsor which gives you a chance to make a more informed decision about who you want as a long term sponsor once you have getting a better understanding of things and people after you have been in a while.

When looking for a sponsor it is important that you look for someone who is sharing about recovery and the importance of the 12 steps in their life. However, just as importance is that they are actually living the way they are sharing 'walking the walk' not just 'talking the talk'.

**Exercise:** What would you expect to see in someone who is living a sober life based upon the 12 steps and what would you expect to see in someone who was not? (Flip chart , 2 columns)

**Summary and wind-down.**

## 4. LIVING SOBER

**Check in** [ 15 mins]

**Core contents** [ 60 mins]

### **Introduction**

This session is about how involvement in AA/NA can show you how to live a truly happy and fulfilling life without drink or drugs.

1. Has anyone heard the term ' HALT' in any AA/NA meetings they have attended ?

HALT STAND FOR : H = Hungry.

A = Angry.

L = Lonely.

T = Tired.

If you get into these physical [ hungry, tired] or emotional [ angry , lonely] states then they could , if gone unaddressed lead to relapse.

Does this connect with anyone's experience in the past ?

**Exercise:** When you get into any of these HALT states what can you do about it ?  
[10 minutes]

2. In 12 step fellowships you may hear the saying ' stay away from 'slippery people, places and things ' . What do you think is meant by this ? [ group discussion 5 minutes].

**Exercise:** In pairs discuss what you identify as ' slippery people places and things' and how would you avoid these ?

This is followed by feedback to main group: each pair gives 2 examples of how to deal with these situations. [ 5 minutes]

### **Conclusion**

We are coming to the end of this course. As a final exercise, write down THREE things that you intend to do about your drinking and /or drug use.