SUGGESTED MEETING FORMAT

WITH

BASIC READINGS

Families Anonymous

#5003

Rev.9/2016

FAMILIES ANONYMOUS

SUGGESTED MEETING FORMAT

We welcome you to the regular *[day]* _____ meeting of the *[city or group name]* _____ group of Families Anonymous. My name is _____, and I will be your leader for this meeting. If you have a cell phone, please turn it off now and leave it off for the duration of the meeting. This will avoid interruptions and help all of us focus on the member who is sharing.

Are there any visitors or newcomers present? **WELCOME!** Are there any second- or third-timers? **WELCOME BACK!** Let's introduce ourselves by first names only, starting with *[name]* _____.

Announcements: Are there any announcements by the secretary?
Will the treasurer please report?
Are there any other reports or announcements?
Thank you.

Families Anonymous is primarily for those who have known a feeling of desperation concerning the destructive behavior of someone very near to them, whether caused by drugs, alcohol, or related behavioral problems. When you come into this room you are no longer alone, but among friends who have experienced similar problems. We will respect your confidence and anonymity, as we know you will respect ours:

WHOM YOU SEE HERE, WHAT YOU HEAR HERE,
WHEN YOU LEAVE HERE, LET IT STAY HERE.

Usually the longer we continue to struggle alone, the more our thinking becomes confused. We have found that working our Twelve Steps enables us to live comfortably—in spite of unsolved problems—and often removes obstacles to the recovery of those who brought us to this program.

Here we begin to understand that to be of real help to others, we must first be willing to be helped ourselves. We ask only for the wisdom to see ourselves as we really are; for the courage to do something about our own lives, with the help of a Power greater than ourselves as we understand this concept; and for the grace to release with love those we are concerned about and cease trying to change them.

We believe we are dealing with a family illness that can be treated by a change of attitudes. We try to study our literature with an open mind, attend as many meetings as possible, and exchange phone numbers with other members for help between meetings.

Families Anonymous has basic readings that form the foundation of our Twelve Step program. They are read by different members at every meeting to remind us of the message they carry. Will each person who has one of the following titles please read it aloud when I announce it?

1. **INTRODUCTION (Optional)**
2. **ABOUT DRUG ABUSE**
3. **FOUR DESTRUCTIVE FORCES**
4. **THE TWELVE STEPS**
5. **THE TWELVE TRADITIONS**
6. **HELPING**

The telephone list being passed around is for sharing our phone numbers between meetings. It is helpful to call someone during a crisis, or when you just need to hear the friendly voice of someone who cares and understands you. Feel free to sign our roster with your first name, last initial, and phone number.

We'll take our break now and resume in ____ minutes. This is a good time to browse through our selection of excellent FA literature. Many of us have our favorites and will be happy to assist you in selecting a few pieces that will help you understand the program and start you on your road to recovery. Our group *[describe how your group prices literature and whom to pay]*.

~~ BREAK ~~

~~ RESUME THE MEETING ~~ PRACTICING THE PROGRAM ~~

Has the telephone roster been all the way around the room? If not, please pass it on.

Any piece of FA literature, such as a bookmark, a Step or Tradition, or a reading from *Today A Better Way* (TABW), makes an excellent topic for discussion. Different members lead our meetings; we encourage everyone to take a turn. It is empowering to lead a meeting no matter how long you have been attending FA.

Anything you hear at this meeting is strictly the speaker's own opinion. If a member says something that you cannot accept, remember that he or she is merely speaking from personal experience—and not for Families Anonymous. There will be time at the end of the meeting for anyone who has not yet shared.

BEFORE WE BEGIN, we encourage everyone to feel free to enter into the discussions and ask questions about the program. So that everyone will have a chance to contribute, we avoid Crosstalk, which is defined as:

- Speaking without being recognized by the leader
- Carrying on a separate, one-on-one, side discussion during the meeting
- Questioning or counseling another member

[For Meeting Without Walls meetings] To be recognized by the leader, please click on the "COMMENT" tab on the right side of the Ventrilo screen. Type an exclamation point at the bottom of the new window and hit Return. After you have been recognized, you can clear your explanation point by opening up the comment window and hitting a return in the same place.

TO THE NEWCOMER: You have shown courage by taking the 1st step and attending your first meeting. We encourage you to attend at least <u>six meetings</u> before deciding if FA is the program for you. *[If newcomers are present, read* To the Newcomer *(#6001) or the January 1 reading in* TABW.*]*

[Optional] Let us pause for a moment of silent prayer or meditation.

~~ THE LEADER CONDUCTS THE MEETING ~~

[Optional] The leader may start with a short personal story about his or her experience in FA and how the program has changed him or her. For instance, "What I was like before FA, what happened, and what I'm like now."

~~ GRATITUDE: PASSING THE BASKET ~~

Newcomers, do you have any questions or wish to share? Is there anyone else who has not spoken or who would like to share now?

The principles of Families Anonymous are found in our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Our Seventh Tradition states that each group should be fully self-supporting. While no dues or fees are required for membership, our voluntary contributions are used to pay for rent, refreshments, and literature. They also allow us to help carry the message of our program to others through our continued support of FA's World Service Office. Your generosity is encouraged and greatly appreciated.

~~ CLOSING ~~

The very essence of our program is that everything is merely suggested. Our progress can be made in our own time and in our own way. As this is an anonymous program, we ask all members and visitors to respect our anonymity. The stories you hear are told in confidence and should not be repeated outside the meeting. They are told so that we might better understand this program and ourselves, and to give encouragement to new members. Thank you all for participating. It is our sharing that makes this program meaningful and helpful.

When you leave here, take with you those thoughts that will be most helpful to you and leave behind those that you cannot accept. And now, for those who care to join us, *[name]* _____ will lead us in 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.

[End with (optional)]

KEEP COMING BACK.
IT WORKS IF YOU WORK IT, IT WON'T IF YOU DON'T.
SO WORK IT, YOU'RE WORTH IT!

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INTRODUCTION

(Optional Reading)

FAMILIES ANONYMOUS is a fellowship of people whose lives have been affected by the use of mind-altering substances or related behavioral problems of a relative or friend. Any concerned person is encouraged to attend our meetings—even if there is only a suspicion of a problem.

Many recovery programs are available for our addicted loved ones, when they are ready to seek help and recovery. However, FAMILIES ANONYMOUS is for us: the parent, spouse, brother, sister, or other emotionally involved relative or friend.

In the beginning we seem to be most helped by listening to those who have shared similar experiences and found some answers. By attending meetings, studying the literature, talking to other members, and working the Twelve Steps of this program, suddenly or gradually our situation begins to look different to us and our reactions to it begin to change. What is happening? We are learning to face reality with comfort**,** and our emotional growth is being encouraged. These changes in ourselves can create an atmosphere in the family that promotes recovery.

Our authority in FAMILIES ANONYMOUS is a Power greater than ourselves, as we understand this concept. Our groups are self-directed; leadership is rotated among our members, who assume various responsibilities that keep the group functioning. No dues or fees are required for membership. We use first names only in order to uphold FA's tradition of anonymity that helps protect the privacy of everyone concerned.

Our program is open to all, regardless of our various beliefs—or lack of belief. A member's acceptance of a "Power greater than ourselves" is strictly a personal, private choice. We are not affiliated with any religion, sect, political entity, or institution. Our primary purpose is to practice the principles of FAMILIES ANONYMOUS so we may help ourselves by helping others with similar problems.

We have found that working on ourselves is the most important single thing we can do to help those we care about. In this process, **many find that they learn a better way to live.** There are no rules or "musts" in our program, except perhaps one: "Keep coming back!"

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ABOUT DRUG ABUSE

Not everyone who comes into this program is concerned about the use of drugs. However, in today's world, all of us need to confront this issue. Also, those with an emotional problem often turn to drugs in search of a solution to their difficulties.

We have learned that drug abuse, drug dependence, or addiction is a matter of **illness**, not a moral issue. For the purposes of this program, the label is not important**.**

Dependence on drugs can be psychological or physical—or both. The compulsive use of drugs or alcohol does not indicate a lack of affection for the family. Even when they **know** what will happen when they take that first pill, drink, or fix, drug-dependent persons may still do so. This is the "insanity" we speak of in regard to this illness.

Using drugs as a means of escaping reality is a symptom of emotional problems. However, little emotional growth is likely to take place until the individual stops using chemicals to try to solve his or her problems of living. Switching from one mind-altering substance to any other, including alcohol, is only likely to prolong the illness, not arrest the problem.

There is nothing that we as individuals can do to prevent another person's abuse of drugs, but we have learned that there is much we can do to avoid **standing in the way** of his or her recovery. We have found that the most constructive approach is to deal with our own reactions and to learn new ways of coping with **our** problems. When we accept drug dependence as an illness and understand that there **is** something we can do to help both ourselves and the situation, we become ready to learn a better way to live.

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FOUR DESTRUCTIVE FORCES

To enable our meetings to be truly constructive, it is necessary to recognize and repress four destructive forces that can cause dissension and eventually destroy the group.

The first destructive force is the discussion of any religion. Our program is open to all, regardless of our various beliefs, or lack of belief. Each member's understanding of a Higher Power is strictly a personal, private choice.

The second destructive force is gossip. We are here to share **our** feelings, attitudes, and reactions to our situation—to help us in applying the principles of Families Anonymous to our **own** lives. Careless discussion of other people's personal difficulties is contrary to the principles of our program. What we say here—stays here!

The third destructive force is dominance. FA is based on suggestion, interchange of experience, and rotation of leaders. No member should direct, assume authority, or give advice. Our leaders are chosen, not to govern, but to serve.

The fourth destructive force is dwelling on the past. Harboring painful thoughts and speaking endlessly about hurtful times with our loved ones block our recovery. Besides being detrimental to our personal progress, continuous behavior of this type within the meeting, week after week, is destructive to the group's progress and unity. Such behavior can lead us back to the Third Destructive Force, which is dominance.

Instead, we let go of the past by listening to other members, reading our FA literature, and learning new ways to change our actions and attitudes, thereby improving our lives.

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FAMILIES ANONYMOUS TWELVE STEPS

We have found that our success in this program is determined by how well we accept and apply the following suggested Steps:

1. We admitted we were powerless over drugs and other people's lives—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 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.

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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FAMILIES ANONYMOUS TWELVE TRADITIONS

We keep what we have only with vigilance. Our group experience suggests that the unity of Families Anonymous depends upon our adherence to these Traditions:

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends on unity.

2. For our group purposes 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. Individuals concerned with another's abuse of drugs or related problems of living, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves a Families Anonymous group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation. The only requirement for membership is a concern about the use of mind-altering substances or related behavioral problems of a relative or friend.

4. Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or FA as a whole.

5. Each group has but one primary purpose: to help those concerned with someone who may have a problem of drug abuse or dependence. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps of this program, by encouraging and understanding those affected by this illness, and by welcoming and giving comfort to the families and friends of individuals with a current, suspected, or former drug problem.

6. Our 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 purpose.

7. Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

8. Families Anonymous Twelfth Step work should remain forever nonprofessional, 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 the groups they serve.

10. Families Anonymous has 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, films, and TV. We need guard with special care the anonymity of our members as well as those of other recovery programs.

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

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HELPING

My role as helper is not to **do** things for the people I am trying to help, but to **be** things; not to try to control and change their actions, but through understanding and awareness, to change my reactions. I will change my negatives to positives; fear to faith; contempt for what they do to respect for the potential within them; hostility to understanding; and manipulation or overprotectiveness to release with love, not trying to make them fit a standard or image, but giving them an opportunity to pursue their own destiny, regardless of what their choice may be.

I will change my dominance to encouragement; panic to serenity; the inertia of despair to the energy of my own personal growth; and self-justification to self-understanding.

Self-pity blocks effective action. The more I indulge in it, the more I feel that the answer to my problems is a change in others and in society, not in myself. Thus, I become a hopeless case.

Exhaustion is the result when I use my energy in mulling over the past with regret or in trying to figure ways to escape a future that has yet to arrive. Projecting an image of the future—and anxiously hovering over it for fear that it will or it won't come true—uses all my energy and leaves me unable to live today. Yet living **today** is the only way to have a life.

I will have no thought for the future actions of others, neither expecting them to be better or worse as time goes on, for in such expectations I am really trying to create or control. I will love and let be.

All people are always changing. If I try to judge them, I do so only on what I **think** I know of them, failing to realize that there is much I do not know. I will give others credit for attempts at progress and for having had many victories that are unknown.

I, too, am always changing, and I can make that change a constructive one, if I am willing. I CAN CHANGE MYSELF. Others I can only love.

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