

NEW GROUP STARTER KIT FOR DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS©

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The Depressed Anonymous starter kit was first developed in 1997 by the Shelton, Washington Depressed Anonymous Group to fill a need-- getting a new 12-step Depressed Anonymous group started and running. Depressed Anonymous is unique in that it uses a modified 12-step program that encourages discussion. The 'Starter Kit' helped our group to provide consistency from meeting to meeting and it passes on the same information to other members. The primary purpose of the manual is to help those who are starting 12 step Depressed Anonymous Groups. However, some of the material may be valuable to starting a Depressed Anonymous Group. As other 12 step Groups became aware of its existence, they asked for copies and additional information to make it a general use kit. Our local group has been encouraged to continue refining this "Starter Kit" and make it available to other groups. The "Kit" will provide you with information, ideas, and helps --not demands. Just as you will do, each group has adapted this "Starter Kit" to meet their individual needs.

In the spirit of DA--Hope-service-fellowship --we continue to refine this "Kit" and make it available to others. Some groups find the "Kit" very helpful, others find parts of it useful, and some do not find it useful at all. It is an individual decision for your own group. Each local group has its own special needs and situations. We ask that you look it over to see if there is anything that is useful. We hope that this "Starter Kit" will help your group get started smoothly and serve you well.

We suggest a backup copy of this "Starter Kit" be made, but you may make as many copies as you wish. If your group is sponsoring a new group, please give them a copy. Forward the new groups contact information to the Central Office (Louisville, KY) and as we can have updates sent you are free to copy any of these pages that may benefit you.

WHAT IS DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS?

n Depressed Anonymous, modeled after the 12 steps (principles) of Alcoholics Anonymous, was started in Evansville Indiana in May of 1985. It uses a group approach where members mutually support each other.

nWhat is depression? Does anyone know? By nature depression is a part of everyone's life sooner or later. We use it as a way to overcome our anger, anxiety, fatigue, loneliness, or trauma in childhood. In DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS the depressed person admits he/she is powerless over his or her

depression. The depressed person admits that the various areas of his/her life are controlled by depression, and that he/she needs help from one's inner resources, combined with a faith in a Higher Power to help work through one's time of hopelessness and helplessness. We all need to experience the belief that there is someone, something that is bigger than ourselves and this will lead us to sanity.

nAt DA meetings, we do not pry into people's personal lives. We also do not give advice at meetings but instead tell our own story and how the 12 steps are releasing us from the tight grip of depression. Meetings are upbeat and the focus is positive!

nEach of us set small concrete and positive goals for ourselves and begin to learn how to gain some mastery over our lives and feelings. Each of us has time at meetings to share our experiences with other members of the group. When you as a new member are ready to make some commitment to quit sadding oneself, that's when results begin to happen. This 12-step recovery program is a great healer of personal wounds and provides the depressed with a new start in life. It also provides you with people like yourself who have been where you are. There is hope where once there was only darkness and despair!

nYou may choose someone to help you stick to this plan. This person is called a sponsor and should be someone who has experienced depression themselves. You can also exchange phone numbers with other members of the DA group. As life gets better for you and the emotional pain gets less and you are no longer experiencing isolation and pain then you can use your past experiences in helping the new members of the DA group see that there is a way out of their prison of depression. The way out of the prison of depression is by connecting with the fellowship and experiencing a "vital spiritual experience."

THE AIMS OF DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS:

- 1) To let the depressed person know that she or he is not alone in his or her struggle with depression. We also help others learn to do pleasant activities again.
- 2) To provide a group where members can help one another and learn new skills in taking mastery over their lives and begin to live again with hope and joy.
- 3) To help each member feel better about themselves -- today. One day at a time!
- 4) To educate the depressed person and his or her family about the nature and causes of depression and remove the SHAME of their feeling depressed. It's OK to admit that we are feeling overwhelmed.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE

eMail us at: depanon@netpenny.net

WEBSITE: <http://www.depressedanon.com>

THE PROMISES OF DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS

"If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how

to handle situations, which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us -- sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them."

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THE TWELVE STEPS OF DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS©

1. We admitted we were powerless over depression ---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. We're entirely ready to have God remove all our character defects.
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 his 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 others, and to practice these principles in all of our affairs.

YOUR FIRST DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS MEETING

Each journey we take in life has to begin with that first step; today you have taken a big step toward your own personal growth and serenity.

Depression is an experience that we don't or can't just "snap out of it." It is an experience that we need to work on and give that work the proper amount of time. We at DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS believe that it takes a number of meetings attended regularly before you can begin to feel and see a change in yourself -- sorry, but that is the way it is. We have found out that if we want to change and start to feel better then we have to take charge of our lives and begin changing the way we think, act and feel. We are not the people with the magic cures and simple answers.

If you give yourself a chance, and keep coming to the meetings on a regular basis, you can have the comfort that you are starting to take control, that is, having mastery of your life and not just sitting back and letting depression and its isolating feeling take control of you. Now, if you want you can have the loving support of the group. We have been there. DA WORKS IF YOU WORK IT!

Depressed Anonymous also believes that anyone who comes to the group and wants to change can do so whenever they so choose. Coming to a self-help group is like putting on a new pair of shoes -- at first they are a little stiff --- but if you don't give up on them and keep wearing them for a while then they will feel like your old pair. Depressed Anonymous is like that -- keep coming to the meetings and you'll begin to like it. Depressed Anonymous with its hope grows on you! Find out today how it works!

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Box 17414, LOUISVILLE, and KY 40217 PHONE: 502-569-1989.

INTRODUCTION TO DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS

Life is unpredictable! Every living organism operates with a certain amount of unpredictability and uncertainty. The uncertainty of life creates in us a desire for predictability. If we did not believe in the possibility of change, we would all be hopelessly lost and forever bored. Hope would be lost. Potential for a better life would never exist. When there is hope, change is possible. The experience of depression is much the same. Depression is so predictable and unchanging that we lose hope for the pain of our isolation ever coming to an end.

WHAT IT WAS LIKE

More than ten years ago, I began to notice that something was very wrong with the way I was feeling. I can tell you exactly the place and the time when a terrible sadness began to swallow me up.

I felt myself, without warning, sliding down and into the dark pit from which I was not able to climb out for a year of painful months. Feelings of inner pain and numbness descended upon me and began to rule my life.

At the time, I thought this descent into hell came from "out of the blue" but, like all feelings we experience, I knew that because of situations in my personal past, my emotional reservoir was overdrawn. My reactions to these situations had allowed thoughts and feelings to accumulate a wealth of debt whose note had come due.

I gradually found it more difficult to get out of bed in the morning. I began to experience a feeling of hollowness of spirit gnawing at me from the inside -- much like an out of control cancer. This black mood was eating away all that once interested me and I began to feel helpless and out of control. I felt that I was no longer able to retain mastery over my own life.

This painful sadness which began to grow gradually from a small-unnoticed seed was unconsciously nurtured to full and frightening heights by my own life choices. It overwhelmed my mind and spirit. My life had become unmanageable. Finally, I had to admit that I was powerless over that something which began to have a life of its own. Looking back over my life and experiences I discovered that my thoughts produced the feelings, the feelings produced moods and the moods produced my behaviors. The mind-body connection is never as much in evidence as it is in this human experience that we label depression.

My depression, with its concomitant restlessness and despair, had been developing gradually over a period of a few months as one loss after another began to accumulate: the loss of a relationship with a woman friend; the fact that my dad was dying; leaving a career of twenty years; having to say good-bye to hundreds of friends; struggling inwardly with having to move back in with my parents at middle age and depending on them for help. At the time I moved back home my dad was recuperating from a massive heart attack and his health was failing fast. This was a great personal loss to me.

Within a month of returning home I entered a local university and started work on a Master's degree in counseling psychology. The studies did not come easy. A few months after I started my degree I found employment in an entry-level position, assisting minority persons who were unemployed. Because of political infighting this position came to be burdensome. I earned my

degree, left my job and moved into private practice. Shortly after that I began to feel like I was walking into a fog. My mind was blank and my feelings were continually on edge. I felt as if a large hole with jagged edges was located between my gut and my throat. The pain that this produced became a daily reminder that something was not right. The anxiety and jitteriness was enhanced when I began having trouble getting out of bed in the morning. I also had this strong desire to go to bed as soon as I got off work. I could hardly wait to sleep off whatever had me by the throat. I had lost interest in everything and everybody and just wanted to medicate myself with sleep.

The fact that I quit smoking a few months after my dad died was also a large contributing factor in depressing myself. Over the years the cigarette had become a great friend. This friend was there when I was happy, or when I was nervous, or when I had just finished a meal or had a cup of coffee. It was like an alcoholic who craves just one more drink.

Whatever we humans do must have meaning. I lost my dad; my relationship with my woman friend was over; my role and identity as Christian minister with a ministry of 20 years. Friends of many years were out of my life and, most important of all, I felt that I had lost myself. I felt alone and worthless. If I saw someone laughing or having a good time it irritated me. How dare anyone smile while I felt so miserable? The feeling made me think that my brain was made of cotton. I couldn't shove another thought into my head. It was as if the cells of my brain had died.

There was nothing I could do to shake these horrible and painful feelings. My mind was unable to focus on or to concentrate on anything. My memory was affected and it was impossible to retain anything I tried to read. With each new day I felt my strength ebbing away. I was physically and emotionally drained. I knew that something was wrong -- but what was it?

WHAT HAPPENED?

The answer to this question seemed to lie within all the losses that I had accumulated over the past months. I had slipped down into the slippery and dark world known only to someone who has been depressed. I had to do something besides talking to break out of depression. I had to change the way that I lived my life. First I had to admit that my life was out of control. I was powerless to overcome my symptoms of depression by will power alone. I needed to believe in a power greater than myself. I had to have a spiritual experience. Having been in ministry for many years, I thought I had had a deep spiritual experience but I seemed to have lost it along the way.

I began to walk five miles a day inside a mall near my home to shake this awful feeling of emptiness that had taken over my very life. I set myself this goal to force myself to walk 'til I started

to feel better. This was about a year following that day in August when I felt myself slipping into the abyss. After doing this exercise of walking day after day for a week I began to feel a little better. But then the old message came back and said, "yes, but this good feeling won't last." Of course it didn't last. Then I knew that since I had good days before the depression, I could have a good day again. I kept on walking and within time; I walked through the fog that had imprisoned me.

But I had to do the work! Did my symptoms have me imprisoned or did the meaning that I had created in my mind about my life have me imprisoned? I believe it was the meaning that I had given to those losses in my life that gradually threw me to the ground; hog tied me, and wouldn't let me go. I had to believe that somehow my walking gave meaning to the belief that I wasn't going to let these feelings of helplessness beat me down. I just believed that I was going to beat this thing! I learned a great lesson here in that "motivation follows action."

Previous to my own depression I had worked one on one with a client named Jane. Jane was depressed and confined to her home following quadruple by-pass surgery just weeks before I met with her in her home. I was learning hands-on counseling and my supervisor gave permission for me to practice my counseling skills with Jane. After seeing Jane for ten weeks I saw that she was beginning to improve and began to regain interest in cartooning and poetry writing, things that had given her pleasure before her heart attack. I started thinking -- if Jane could connect with others who were depressed and participate in a 12-step group she might get better. She might find the same help that other hurting folks who utilize the suggested spiritual principles of a 12-step program of recovery have found.

In May of 1985 I started a 12-step group known as Depressed Anonymous. I had the conviction that a person depressed could find the same strength and serenity, as did those who, sick and tired of being sick and tired, had found when they stumbled into their first Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. It began as a pilot project at the university where depressed people gathered as a mutual aid group. I discovered that people of all ages, beliefs, and occupations could gradually get out of the prison of depression if they were part of a supportive group, especially if the group followed the suggested 12 steps of the group now known as Depressed Anonymous. I saw that a 12-step program centered specifically on the subject of depression could help people escape isolation and the painful sense of hopelessness. They would no longer feel alone.

WHAT IT'S LIKE TODAY:

All members of the pilot group got better after a number of months of meeting together and

applying the 12 steps to their lives. Others started to come, and this was the beginning of a group that is now slowly spreading from place to place and from community to community.

Those of us who have lived with depression on a daily basis know despair. For those who have depended principally on drugs and therapy and have found no relief --then this program is a good place for you. For those who have the courage to stay and are willing to go to any lengths to have what we have found, then this personal faith and persistence of yours will begin to pay off. That's a promise from us to you!

Once I finally admitted I was powerless and began to act out of a belief that I wasn't God it was quite a relief to surrender my trust to a Higher Power! (Steps 1, 2, 3.)

Many of us have suffered for so long that we want a quick fix now. It doesn't work that way. You will hear the success stories of those who have returned week after week and 'worked' the 12 steps to recovery. You can read personal stories of hope and renewal in this book.

We now have a solution to offer those who want to reach out and grasp onto this new way of life. A life that is now focused on recovery and a feeling of hope. With this offer and solution daily before our eyes we are beginning to see that the depressed have to depend on that spiritual experience in order to really be free from that debilitating scourge of depression. It is this spiritual experience, coupled with the power of the fellowship of those like ourselves where we neither need to explain or excuse ourselves or apologize for being depressed, that is the basis for our recovery.

You must want to begin this journey seriously enough to actually take those beginning steps. Someday I hope to know you as a kindred spirit in recovery.

Source: (c) DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS. Harmony House Publishers, 1998.

LOCAL GROUP STRUCTURE

The DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS Manual was first published in the United States in 1990 under the same title DEPRESSED? HERE IS A WAY OUT! and was published in 1991 by Fount Paperbacks, a division of HarperCollins Publishing Group, Ltd., located in London, England. This edition became out of print in 1995 and it became necessary to find another publisher.

Five years from the founding of Depressed Anonymous in 1985, the few groups that were operating at that time felt a need for our fellowship to have their own handbook with material

directly related to the discussion of depression. This handbook outlined a personal and group recovery plan utilizing the suggested Twelve-Step principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. We believe that those persons who are looking for a way out of their depression will most surely find our way one that work's if adhered to one day at a time.

Now, with hundreds in the fellowship and more joining as each week goes by, we felt a need to revise the earlier editions by adding more personal stories as well as changing the title to DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS. We felt that the new title would give us a more immediate recognition by those who were already involved in a Twelve-Step recovery program.

Our program is very simple. There are no fees or dues. All we ask of the newcomer is that they have a desire to leave the prison of their own depression.

Likewise, it has been our experience over these past twelve years that those persons depressed and who keep coming back to our fellowship, week after week, always get better. We find that our good days are more frequent and our bad days begin to diminish. That's our promise.

In 1986 there were only two Depressed Anonymous groups. Now at this time there are at least fifty groups worldwide. It appears that more persons depressed are finding our way helpful.

This book is written by those of us who have been depressed and who have now recovered. In fact we want to share our story about our journey the way it was when we were depressed and the way our way is today. Being part of a circle of a hope-filled fellowship is what keeps us centered on our own recovery while at the same time reaching out to others. We believe that to remain undepressed we will continue to be open, honest and willing to follow the suggested principles of our Twelve Step program. Depressed Anonymous has given us a choice as to either choose to stay isolated or to begin to risk abiding in the warmth of a caring fellowship.

If any of you who are reading about our program of recovery and want to learn more about who we are and what we do please feel free to write, call or email us. We look forward to hearing from any of you in the medical or mental health fields and/or those of you who have a special interest in the area of spirituality or religion.

DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS

HOW TO START A DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS GROUP

Some general considerations and strategies:

1. Don't reinvent the wheel. Attend a few local 12 step groups that are operating in the region.

By attending some self-help groups in your local area these will assist you in the "how to" start a group in your own area. Also request a starter packet from Depression Self-Help Services, Inc., (Box 17471, Louisville, Ky 40217) the central office of Depressed Anonymous and other mutual-aid programs that focus on depression.

2. Think "Mutual-Help" from the start. Find a few others who share your interest in starting (not simply joining) a self-help group. To do this, first distribute some flyers or letters that specifically cite your interest in hearing from those who would be interested in "joining with others to help start" such a group. Consider including your first name and phone number. Xerox copies and post them at places you feel most appropriate, e.g., people whom you think would know others like yourself. You can also have a notice published in your local newspaper or church bulletin. When, hopefully, you receive a response, discuss with the caller what their interests are, share your vision of what you would like to see the group do, and finally ask if they would be willing to share the work with you for a specific period of time (e.g., a few months or so) to try to get the group off the ground....Once a couple of people have said yes, you have a "core group" or "steering committee" - and you won't have to do it alone. It is much easier to start a group if the work is shared....If you don't involve others in leadership and work from the very beginning you won't get them later. As one self-help group leader put it, "if you serve people breakfast in bed, they'll never learn to cook for themselves." Lastly, consider obtaining the help of any professionals who may be sensitive to your needs and willing to assist you in your efforts. They may be helpful in various ways, from providing needed referrals and information to locating resources and providing suggestions. Remember: Everyone in the group is a leader!

3. Find a suitable meeting place and time. Try to obtain free meeting space at a local church, synagogue, library, community center, hospital, or social service agency... Would evening or day meetings be best for your membership? Most prefer weeknights. Make the meeting the same time and night of the week every week if meeting weekly!

4. Publicize and run your first public meeting. Post flyers in post offices, community centers, hospitals, libraries and any other place where you feel an interested person might see the announcement. Free announcements in a community calendar or newspaper might be appropriate. The first meeting should be arranged so that there will be ample time for you to decide your interest and work, while allowing others the opportunity to share their feelings and concerns.

5. Identify and Respond to the felt needs of your members.

Regularly ask the membership, especially the new ones about their needs. Ask them how the group

Depressed Anonymous can best meet their needs. The welcoming of new people into the group is a process that continues well beyond welcoming them at the door.

6. Future meetings.

A. Define the purpose of the group. Are they clear? Some groups also include any guidelines that they have for their meetings right on their flyers or brochures.

B. Membership. Are the meetings open to all or to just the depressed?

C. Meeting Format. A good discussion group consists of about 7 to 15 members. As your meetings get larger consider breaking up into smaller groups. What guidelines are going to use that will best facilitate the purpose of Depressed Anonymous among your membership?

D. Phone Network. Self-Help groups should provide an atmosphere of caring, sharing and support for their members. Many groups encourage the exchange of telephone numbers or a telephone list to provide members with help over the phone when it is needed between meetings

E. Projects. Begin with small projects, e.g., developing a flyer, obtaining newspaper coverage by calling editors, issuing a newsletter. Rejoice and pat yourself on the back when these projects are successful.

F. Sharing responsibilities and nurturing new leaders. Remember give all the members the same responsibility to help. By sharing responsibilities you can help create opportunities for others to become key members and leaders in the group.

G. Expect your group to experience regular "ups and downs" in terms of attendance and enthusiasm. It's natural and to be expected. You may want to consider joining or forming a coalition or an association of leaders from the same or similar types of self-help groups for **your** own periodic mutual support and for sharing programs ideas and successes.

H. A structured format for all meetings makes it easier for the leader and the group members. If every meeting follows the same format then everyone knows what to expect and the meetings run a more smooth course.

The above material was adapted and taken directly from Ed Madera's article Ideas and considerations for starting a self-help mutual aid group. The Self-Help Sourcebook. Pages 173-174. American Self-Help Clearinghouse, St. Clares. Riverside Medical center, Denville, NJ 07834

If there is a DA group operating near where you live you could go to one of their meetings, but if yours will be the first in the area you might find it helpful to attend one or two other self-help groups

just to see how they operate. Most self-help groups, as well as DA, have literature about their work which you would find helpful.

Once you have three or four people who, like you, are struggling with depression and who want to set up a DA group which will follow the twelve-step program, you can form a core group to work out how to contact other people, where you will meet and when, and how you will all share the work and the responsibility of the group.

Sometimes a professional person - a doctor, psychologist, social worker, psychiatric nurse, or a minister of religion --is keen to get such a group started, or would be most sympathetic if you asked for help to get one going. You must make it clear from the start that this is a self-help group. If the professional person wants to attend the group it should be as an equal member of it and not as its leader, or as an observer. However, in establishing the group the professional may be able to help in providing a place for it to meet and advising about organizing the group's finances.

Again, when you contact your local Mental Health Centers to let them know you are setting up a group, make it clear that this is a self-help group and, while you would like their support, you do not want them to take over it over.

To contact other likely members, draw up a notice which states the aims of the group, who the group is for, the time, day and place of meeting, and the name and phone number of the group member (or members) who can give more information about the group and who will arrange to meet and welcome new members. When you are depressed it is often very difficult to go into a room full of strangers, so having someone meet you beforehand can be a great help.

Send copies of this notice to

Local Mental Health Agencies

Social Services

Local ministers of religion

Local newspapers, including free ones

Post offices

barber shops

Local Physicians

Pastoral Care departments of Church

Local radio stations

Local library

Beauty salons

Other self-help groups

Many people believe they are the only ones going through this painful experience that we call depression. When they discover that there is a group of people who feel as they do this in itself can provide hope. In time and with regular attendance at Depressed Anonymous meetings they will no longer feel like victims but will reach out and be healers.

If surrender of our wills to the "care of God" is of the essence of the spiritual life, for anyone who truly desires to free him self/herself from a chronic and compulsive behavior such as depression then the twelve steps be your stepping stones to the path of a hope-filled life.

THE POWER OF DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS©

By Ray C.

"What is the power of Depressed Anonymous? Well, first let me say that when I started attending D.A. meetings I went for a couple of months and then I stopped. Why did I stop you ask? I stopped going because my depression was so bad I didn't want to leave my apartment. I just didn't want to be around or talk to anyone. I didn't want to do anything except crawl in a hole somewhere and isolate myself from everything. Then after about six weeks of isolating, I called the residential treatment facility where I had been a client to see if I had received any mail there and one of the members of the D.A. group where I attended answered the phone. I spent a few minutes talking to her and there was something in her voice that told me I had to go back to the meetings. For some reason it was important for me to be there. I attended the next D.A. meeting and after the meeting was over I suddenly realized the importance of Depressed Anonymous and the power of D.A.

So what is the power of D.A.? Well for me, it's just like attending that first meeting. I was a little scared and apprehensive at first. But then I found the D.A. meetings was a place to go where there were other depressed just like me and they could relate to and understand what I was going through. They didn't judge me or think of me as crazy. I was accepted.

Another power of D. A. is the miracle of the group and what each person brings to the group. I have seen our fellowship get stronger and grow. I have developed many friendships that I can depend on for support and understanding. Some of the newcomers that have kept coming back, I have watched them grow and seen improvement even something as simple as a smile when there was none before. The miracle of the group empowers and energizes me.

The most important power of D.A. is hope. We have a new found hope that we will not be locked in the prison of depression forever and that there is a way out for each one of us. A hope that our higher power will work the miracle through us and that we will find our own happiness. Hope that our hearts

and mind will know love and peace like we have never known or felt before. The power of D.A. works for me. I have hope and I pray it works for you. Keep coming back!"

- Write today to find out if there is a meeting near you. Also, we can send you information about how to start a group by mailing us a SASE to:
Coordinator, Box 17414, Louisville, Key, 40217.

THE GROUP FORMAT

THE SUGGESTED CHAIRPERSON'S GUIDE FOR LEADING A DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS MEETING.

n Leader:

(Each group member is encouraged to take a turn in being a leader.)

"Good evening, my name is(first name only) and I want to welcome you all to Depressed Anonymous, a twelve-step program of recovery. We are a self-help group where people with similar needs can generate new positive energies ...form networks of friendship and support...give each other the strength to live each new day with hope. We are a self-help group and as such we are not professionally led and we aim to be self-supporting."

n Leader: "I want to welcome all new persons tonight. We all hope that you find the experience here a most helpful one. Also, no one is required to speak at our meetings unless they choose to do so. When your turn comes around you may say "pass" and we all understand.

n Leader explains how his/her life was before Depressed Anonymous and how it is now since he/she has been coming to meetings and working the twelve steps.

n Leader begins with the Serenity Prayer and all join with leader and pray in unison.

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change...The courage to change the things I can...And the wisdom to know the difference."

n Leader reads the **Depressed Anonymous Statements of Concern:**

1. Depressed Anonymous is not a replacement for an individual's relationship with his/her therapist.

2. Depressed Anonymous believes that, if you are taking some medication, you should continue to do so until you and your doctor agree that this medication is no longer necessary. You must exercise your right to know from your doctor about all potential side-effects of this medication and any literature from the manufacturer that would be helpful to you the consumer. It's your health!

3. Since many experiences of depression are due to a real or perceived loss, divorce, death of spouse, loss of a job, health, cherished possession, or loss of a love, it helps to believe that as an active member of Depressed Anonymous you can live through this period of depression and become the serene person you want to be.

4. Anonymity is not just a question of our name. It's an essential element in recovery. It is helpful for the depressed to feel that they can come forward without revealing their identity. Perhaps even more importantly, anonymity stresses the unity of Depressed Anonymous --which depends on the acceptance that we are all equal in the fellowship. Anonymity reminds us to place principle above personality.

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

n Leader passes the Twelve steps around the group and each person is invited to read a step. Then the Twelve Traditions are passed around the group. Each person reads a Tradition.

THE TWELVE STEPS OF DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS

- (1) We admitted that we were powerless over depression --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 a 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 it out.
- (12) Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry the message to other depressed persons and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS

- (1) Our common welfare should come first; personal progress depends upon Depressed Anonymous unity.
- (2) For our group purposes there is but one ultimate authority -- a loving God who may express itself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
- (3) The only requirement for Depressed Anonymous fellowship is a desire to stop saddening ourselves.

- (4) Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other Depressed Anonymous groups as a whole.
- (5) Each group has but one primary purpose -- to carry its message to the depressed person who is still miserable.
- (6) A Depressed Anonymous group should never endorse, finance or lend the Depressed Anonymous name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
- (7) Every Depressed Anonymous group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
- (8) Depressed Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
- (9) Depressed Anonymous as such ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

- (10) Depressed Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the Depressed Anonymous name ought never to be drawn into public controversy.
- (11) Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always to maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.
- (12) Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

n The Leader invites a volunteer to read **How Depressed Anonymous Works:**

You are about to witness the miracle of the group. You are joining a group of people who are on a journey of hope and who mutually care for each other. You will hear how hope, light and energy have been regained by those who were hopeless and in a black hole and tired of living.

By our involvement in the group we are feeling that there is hope - there is a chance for me too -- I can get better. But we are not the people with the magic pills and the easy formulas for success. We believe that to get out of the prison of depression takes time and work.

We have all been wounded in different degrees by the experience of depression. We also know that there is a method to regain control over our lives that is practical and workable. It is successful for all those who want to change their lives. We once believed that there was no hope and that suicide was the only way out.

In this natural world one of the first laws is that all growth is gradual --that belief is the bottom line for all of us who are depressed, and who want to get better. The more we attend meetings the more we will learn and see the various ways to escape from depression. We also learn how important it is not to give up on ourselves.

n Leader; "I invite each member in turn to share his/her last week's experiences with depression, and each person's sharing should be no longer than a few minutes in length. The Leader will make sure that in this round robin that each speaker limit their remarks and save their more extensive thoughts for the discussion period. ***[NOTE: The Leader will also have the right to interrupt a speaker in this period who exceeds the short time period allotted. The Leader will caution all speakers that this is not a therapy group and there is no need to go beyond the past week unless special circumstances dictate. It's the Leader's choice at this time.]***

n Leader then opens the meeting to the whole group. (If the meeting is the first one of the month then one of the Twelve steps is discussed. This is what is called the step meeting.)

n Leader chooses the topic for this meeting, either from one of the Twelve steps, the Twelve Traditions or a topic appropriate for the meeting.

n Leader, after an hour or so of meeting (duration of meeting time is group decision) the Leader give each member a chance to say what she/he hopes to do positively for themselves by the next meeting. Each person states his/her activity goal for the coming week. Each member of the group also comments briefly on one hopeful/positive statement that struck him/her in particular at this meeting.

n Leader. Meeting basket is passed around to support needs and expenses of the group.
(Tradition Seven of DA)

n Leader makes announcements and one person volunteers to be Leader for the next week's meeting.

n Leader has members rise and hold hands as they close the meeting with the The Lord's Prayer, or any other prayer, poem, or statement which the group feels affirms their belief.

n

THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS.

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol -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 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 him, praying only knowledge of His 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 alcoholics, and practice these principles in all our affairs.

(The Twelve Steps reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.)

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS.

- 1 Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.
- 2 For our 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.
3. The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose -- to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An AA group ought never to endorse, finance, or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
- 7 Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
- 8 Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. AA as such ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA 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 and films.

12 Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.
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GUIDING THE NEWCOMER

(First Contact)

The first contact is important. The best introduction to DA is one to one. However, this is usually not an option. Ideally, if someone phones for information about DA - ask to meet them in a neutral place such as a coffee shop. When Newcomers are in the meeting, the leader will invite them to stay for a few minutes orientation after the meeting.

1. Give them your Groups Newcomer Packet if they have not already received it.
(If you use one)
2. Ask if it is all right for members to call.
3. Explain the meeting format.
4. Describe our Modified 12 step program.
 1. Explain that there are Twelve Steps to recovery and you begin with Step 1. There are no short cuts to recovery. It has already been tried.
 2. The program is based on spiritual principles not religious. There is a major difference between spiritual and religious. DA is not a religion. The Modified 12-step program can meet the needs of persons of every known religious persuasion. It is very important that the Newcomer understands this difference.
5. If they have not heard it at the meeting, tell your story. What it was like; what happened, and what it is like today.
6. Introduce "DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS," if a copy is available, and other material such as the "DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS WORKBOOK."
7. Ask if Newcomer has questions.

8. Ask for a member to sponsor the Newcomer or sponsor them yourself.