

“A New Life” Toronto F2F Meeting
Media Addicts Anonymous
Thursday 7:00 pm-8:00 pm ET
611 St. Clair Avenue West, Toronto, ON

Note: Please arrive at least 10 minutes before the meeting starts. Ensure you know which page of the Big Book we will begin reading from.

Welcome to our *A New Life* meeting of Media Addicts Anonymous! My name is *(name)*, and I am a recovering member of MAA. I will be your moderator for today.

Will those who wish to, please join me in the "We Version" of the Serenity Prayer:

God, grant US the serenity to accept the things WE cannot change, the courage to change the things WE can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Can I get a volunteer to read the preamble? *(Hand over page; volunteer reads)*

We extend a special welcome to newcomers. If any newcomers are here today, please state your name so we can welcome you. *(Pause and wait for newcomers to respond.)* We are glad you are here! We suggest you attend at least six meetings so that you have time to identify with the speakers and learn more about the program. We will have fellowship time after the close of the meeting when we can chat informally. Everyone is invited!

Can I get a volunteer to read the *Twelve Steps of Media Addicts Anonymous*? *(Hand over page; volunteer reads).*

Thank you. I will now read the Tradition of the Month and the 12th Tradition:

The Twelve Traditions of Media Addicts Anonymous

- 1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon MAA unity.***
- 2. For our group purpose, there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as is expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.***
- 3. The only requirement for MAA membership is a desire to stop compulsively using media.***

4. ***Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or MAA as a whole.***
5. ***Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the media addict who still suffers.***
6. ***An MAA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the MAA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.***
7. ***Every MAA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.***
8. ***Media Addicts Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centres may employ special workers.***
9. ***MAA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.***
10. ***Media Addicts Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the MAA 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.***

Next, can I get a volunteer to please read *Media Addiction as a Disease of Mind and Body*? (*Hand over page; volunteer reads*)

Thank you. Can I get a final volunteer to please read this week's *Symptoms of Media Addiction* and corresponding *Tools of Recovery*? Please read from (*number*) to (*number*).

Note: We read three symptoms and three tools every week.

(Hand over pages; volunteer reads)

Thank you everyone for reading. You can find the 12 *Symptoms of Media Addiction* and 12 *Tools of Action* on the website at mediaaddictsanonymous.org.

We now will have until 7:30 pm to read from the Big Book. Last week, we left off on page *(number)*. Please read one or two paragraphs each, then pass the book along to the next person. Who would like to start us off?

(Read until 7:30 pm)

Thank you all for reading. We will now move into the open-sharing part of the meeting. We find it helpful to focus our shares on what we have read, and the solution. If we are struggling, we make sure to mention how we'll use the steps and tools to move towards recovery and face the challenges of life. We do not engage in crosstalk, which we define as interrupting, directly addressing another speaker, commenting on someone else's share, giving advice, or making suggestions. Who will be our timekeeper for today? *(Wait for volunteer.)* Thank you!

Shares are *(number)* minutes long. Timekeeper, please let the person sharing know when one minute is left, and again at time. Who would like to begin sharing?

Note: Share length is at the moderator's discretion. 4 minutes are recommended for the meeting of 5.

(Share until 7:55 pm or so)

That's all the time we have for sharing today. If you did not have a chance to share at this portion of the meeting, you can share during our fellowship time or at our next meeting. Please keep coming back!

I'd like to thank *(names)* for their service today, and everyone for being here. Thank you for letting me serve today as your moderator.

It is now time for the 7th Tradition. Our group has no dues or fees, but we do have expenses; our monthly rent is \$50. We are fully self-supporting through our own contributions. Please give what you can, and if you can give nothing at this time, keep coming back because you are more important than your money. We will pass the basket around.

Media Addicts Anonymous is a growing program; we now have Zoom and phone meetings every day of the week. Head to our MAA website for more information on meetings, literature, and fellowship. We need your help to reach the still-suffering addict!

Does anyone have any other announcements? *(Wait before continuing)*

Who would be willing to read the Promises? *(Hand over page; volunteer reads)*

Thank you for reading. In closing, the opinions expressed here today are strictly those of the individuals who gave them. The things we have heard here are spoken in confidence and should be treated as confidential. We do not take outside the meeting whom we hear at the meeting. If we try to absorb what we have heard, we are bound to gain a better understanding of the way to handle our problems and begin to change our lives. Let us talk to each other, reason things out with someone else, and let there be no gossip or criticism of one another, but only love, understanding, and fellowship.

Please join me in saying the WE version of the Serenity Prayer:

God, grant US the serenity to accept the things WE cannot change, the courage to change the things WE can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Thank you everyone for a great meeting! Fellowship time begins now :)

The Preamble

Media Addicts Anonymous is an international fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience, strength, and hope, come together to find relief and recovery from media addiction. We welcome everyone who wants to stop using media compulsively. There are no dues or fees for membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions, neither soliciting nor accepting outside donations. MAA as a whole is not affiliated with any public or private organization. We have no opinions on outside issues, especially those concerning media. We neither endorse nor oppose any causes, political views, ideology, or religious doctrine.

We support all forms of media sobriety, including abstinence from electronic media, films, radio, newspapers, magazines, books, and music. We use AA's 12 Steps and 12 Traditions as adapted for Media Addicts Anonymous as our program of recovery and utilize the tools of MAA to clarify compulsive, obsessive, or destructive media-related behaviors and to develop strategies to improve our general quality of life. Our primary purpose is to abstain from personal addictive media one day at a time and to carry the message of recovery to other media addicts who still suffer.

The 12 Steps of MAA

1. We admitted we were powerless over media—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other media addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Media Addiction as a Disease of Mind and Body

We, of Media Addicts Anonymous, see media addiction as an illness similar to alcoholism. Like drug and alcohol addiction, media addiction is both a physical and mental disease. The over-use of media destabilizes the prefrontal area of our brains. This is the area responsible for remembering details, planning, and prioritizing tasks. When we compulsively use media, our frontal lobes go "off-line," weakening our ability to stop using media when we need to move on or go to bed.

Media also affects the pleasure centre of the brain, triggering a release of dopamine. Like drug addiction, more and more media is needed to induce the same pleasurable dopamine hit, eventually creating a dependency. Because of these two mental and physical responses, media addicts have little or no defense against the first click. Therefore, we see media as a mind-altering and mood-altering drug. Media becomes our dopamine high or our dope.

We have found that when we compulsively binged on media for relief, reward, relaxation, recreation, and as a replacement for relationships, we ended up feeling remorse and regret. We call these the *"Seven Rs of Media Insanity."* We are here today to counter this insanity with another "R": the R of Recovery. We will soon read some Symptoms of Media Addiction. See where you can identify.

Symptoms of Media Addiction

1. ***Dissatisfaction with everyday life*** – We depend on media as a way to avoid emotional discomfort, boredom, pain, and problems. Media has become our main source of relief, reward, relaxation, recreation, and relationships.
2. ***Mental obsession*** – We have a fear of missing out so we want our media with us at all times. We are preoccupied with what's trending in the news and social media. We lose ourselves in gossip, too much information, and the absorption of negative media, all of which result in constant unrest and agitation.
3. ***Depression, shame, and hopelessness*** – We feel depressed, shameful, and guilty about the amount or type of media we are consuming. We want to stop, but we don't believe we can live without our media dependency. This hopelessness has caused some of us to have suicidal thoughts or prolonged periods of depression and anxiety.
4. ***Compare and despair*** – We compare ourselves with what we see in magazines, films, TV, and social media. We try to create a persona that other people will admire but end up feeling despair when we can't live up to those ideals. We are compelled to follow seemingly perfect people on social media even though we know it repeatedly makes us feel inferior.
5. ***Isolation*** – We prefer to be alone with our media rather than socialize. When we are with other people, we often become distracted by our devices. Isolation causes us to avoid those activities in life which used to bring us joy and connection.
6. ***Fantasizing*** – Rather than having meaningful relationships with real people, we turn to media to satisfy our need for romance, intimacy, and sexual fantasy. We end up feeling a deeper loss of intimacy with others which leads to more deprivation and loneliness than before.
7. ***Risky behavior*** – We will endanger our health, life, or someone else's life to get our media fix. We may drive while sending text messages, overeat while bingeing on TV, or deprive ourselves of sleep while using all forms of media.
8. ***Time irreverence*** – Time is the only commodity we can never get back. When grazing or bingeing on media, we lose track of time and forget what is truly important in our lives. Media takes priority over everyone and everything.
9. ***Avoiding our life's purpose*** – We abandon creative endeavors, intellectual pursuits, and prioritization of our goals because we focus on passive media consumption instead. We jeopardize our income,

education, careers, and overall success by procrastinating and repeatedly using media during study and work hours. We lose faith in ourselves and hope for the future.

10. ***Disconnection from our bodies and nature*** – We become detached from our body and do not fully enjoy all of our senses. We fail to meet our body's basic needs for rest, sleep, exercise, and good nutrition. We hide indoors with media while avoiding the nourishment and beauty of the natural world.
11. ***Physical ailments*** – With prolonged media usage we experience backaches, neck pain, headaches, disturbances in sleep, digestive issues, carpal tunnel syndrome, and vision problems.
12. ***Withdrawal Symptoms*** – When we stop using our addictive media, we experience withdrawal and detoxification symptoms. Any time we give in to our compulsion to use our addictive media, we reignite the “craving” and find it increasingly more difficult to stop again.

Tools of Action for Media Addicts

If you identify with the symptoms of media addiction, you may be a media addict. You're in the right place. You are not alone, and you matter. Besides working the Twelve Steps as outlined in the *Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous*, we apply the 12 Tools to help create and maintain a strong media recovery program, including:

1. **Go to meetings** – We attend MAA meetings to learn about media addiction, stop isolating, gain support, and identify with other recovering media addicts. Meetings are the platform we use to build a robust personal support network and a real sense of belonging. We encourage newcomers to attend 90 meetings in 90 days to jump-start their recovery.
2. **Give service** – Giving service right away is THE MASTER PLAN for finding success in getting and staying media sober. Service gives us immediate purpose and connection within our fellowship. We suggest that every newcomer and old-timer choose a home group and take on a service position. Any form of service, such as moderator, timekeeper, action partner or dashboard operator adds to the quality of our own recovery and helps us stay sober. Sponsoring and carrying the message to the media addict who still suffers is the cornerstone of our own personal recovery.
3. **Work with a sponsor** – A sponsor is a media-sober member of MAA who is working MAA's Steps and Tools to the best of their ability. We ask a sponsor to guide us through the Twelve Steps and assist us in staying media-sober. We work closely with our sponsor to discover what behaviors, emotions, situations, and circumstances trigger the phenomenon of craving, and the things that may contribute to being out of control and compulsively using media.
4. **Fast from unnecessary media** – Fasting is an essential tool if someone sincerely desires relief from media addiction. It is the tourniquet we use to stop the bleeding. We strongly advocate fasting from unnecessary media long enough to break the compulsive cycle. By fasting from all media except what is necessary for work, school, or family, we see our media addiction with greater clarity, detoxify our minds and bodies from the overuse of media, and begin to connect to ourselves and others in deeper and healthier ways.
5. **Design a media replacement plan** – *Because media has become our main source of relief, relaxation, reward, recreation, and relationships, we need to find other activities we enjoy. A media replacement plan is an important system to create as soon as possible so we will have enjoyable and healthy activities to replace media.*
6. **Create a media withdrawal plan** – *When we stop using media, we find there is often a period of withdrawal and detoxification. A media withdrawal plan provides us with a strategy to get the help and support we need during early abstinence. A sponsor and/or an action partner help provide tools and guidance in creating this personal plan.*

7. **Get an action partner and make outreach calls** – We find it helpful to pair up with an action partner to help us stay accountable with our media usage on a regular basis. Media addiction isolated us from real people. We recover from loneliness and gain support by making frequent outreach calls to other media addicts. We use our support network to bookend our media use.
8. **Prioritize sleep and body care** – Our ability to get sober and stay sober from media includes getting proper rest and a good night's sleep. Therefore, we suggest setting a media curfew for ourselves along with a regular bedtime. We keep electronic media out of the bedroom. During the day, we stay connected to our bodies by eating nourishing food and getting proper exercise and fresh air.
9. **Meditate** – We regularly take time to meditate in order to feed our spirits in ways that media never could. Meditation helps us connect to a Power greater than ourselves which then trains our mind to turn to this Power rather than seek relief through media.
10. **Read recovery literature** – We regularly read and study MAA literature as well as the literature of Alcoholics Anonymous to deepen our understanding of addiction and the pathway to freedom and recovery.
11. **Clarify through writing** – When we write our thoughts down, it allows us to see our disease more clearly. Writing is an indispensable tool for working through our emotions. When we put our difficulties down on paper, it becomes easier to understand a situation and discern any necessary action.
12. **Develop a media sobriety plan** – After we have fasted and become media sober (abstinent from all unnecessary media) and taken all Twelve Steps with a sponsor, we work with our sponsor to create a media sobriety plan. This plan outlines our personal intentions for media usage. It is our unique guide to making media decisions, as it defines what, when, how, where, and why we use our devices. For many of us, our sobriety plan becomes a continuation of our media fast, that is, refraining from any unnecessary media. Ultimately, our media sobriety plan excludes any media that is our alcoholic (bottom line) media. We continue to re-evaluate our plan with our sponsor to stay media accountable and to prevent relapsing.

The Promises

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway 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.