

MAA BACK TO BASICS CLOSED, COMMITTED STEP STUDY

COMMITMENT MEETING FORMAT

[2-Person Version]

Note to Group Sponsors: All notes in red are additional directions for your group and decisions for you to make during the meeting. Please go through the script beforehand to help the meeting run smoothly. Claim Zoom Host to mute or remove any disruptive participants. Be sure all participants have their cameras on before starting this Commitment Meeting. Begin Screen Share of this document at the meeting start time. Have a Group Sponsor prepared to keep time, and to put member names in the Zoom chat.

A

Welcome To Another Round of B2B

Welcome everyone to the Commitment Meeting for MAA Back to Basics, "A Design for Living." We are a closed one-month committed step study sobriety group. My name is **A** and I am **B**. We are recovered not cured media addicts of the hopeless variety, and we are your Group Sponsors for this month. **This will be a 90-minute meeting.**

Please put down all non-essential electronic media while participating in this session. You will need to focus on this meeting without distractions so you will be able to determine if Back to Basics is right for you.

Please join us in the "We" version of the Serenity Prayer:

God, please 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 all for deciding to be here today. We are excited to see new faces at this meeting, and we welcome back all our returning members.

B

What is Back to Basics?

Back to Basics is a committed Big Book step study and sobriety group designed to help you fast from all unnecessary media and find recovery by taking the 12 Steps of MAA as quickly as possible. We are going to use the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous as our text because this book has the best track record for helping people recover from addiction. You have the benefit of doing this with the assistance of this group and a personal sponsor, who has also taken the 12 Steps.

A

Why a Committed Media Fast Group?

Someone once said, "There are some games that you only get to play if you are *all in*." Recovery from addiction seems to be one of these endeavors. Our history with media addiction has shown us that, "Half-measures availed us nothing."

B

If someone is an alcoholic or drug addict, they often face dire consequences when they use their substances, such as going to jail for drunk driving or being placed in a mental institution. As media addicts, we seldom experience such consequences for our media behavior. Why? Because we can hide in the delusion that we are not hurting anyone—just because “everyone else is doing it.” But deep inside, we know we are doing something destructive to our lives, and to our souls.

A

Media Addiction: A Serious Threat to Our Lives

Although most of the symptoms of media addiction appear to be less severe than those of alcohol and drug addiction, consider how many deaths from car accidents are caused by people who are using media while driving. Or ask yourself what the long-term effects of staring at a blue screen may be doing to your eyes, mind, and body. Obesity-related illness, suicidal thoughts, and other mental and physical health issues are among the countless risks of chronic, addictive media consumption.

B

While we may not be dying today, much like death from a thousand cuts, we could be slowly harming our physical and mental health, which may lead to premature aging and death. Like all addicts, we believe that one day we will stop bingeing, that one day we will be able to control our media use, or that one day we will get our life back together. But when will that day come? Here is the bottom line: like all addicts, we can't stop using media compulsively unless we find a way to be held accountable for our addictive behaviors.

A

Fasting is the Easier Way

This is why, in these committed, closed Back-to-Basics Step Study groups, we have (lovingly) placed consequences for breaking our media fast. This we have found to be the "easier, softer way." To participate as a member of this group, you are asked to fast from all unnecessary media. There is power when everyone in a group has a single intention and is willing to step up to and live that intention. We are facing this addiction head-on and together.

B

Three Reasons We Fast

Notice we didn't say all media—just any media that is not necessary for work, school, family, household care, recovery, and so on. Why do we fast from all unnecessary media and not just the media that is triggering or troublesome? For three reasons:

- 1) We have found that media is very seductive, and it's easy to rationalize its use.
- 2) While one form of media may not be troublesome, once we stop using our "alcoholic" media, we often tend to transfer our compulsion to another form of media.
- 3) To work on MAA's 12 Steps, we need to have a clear mind so we can be honest with ourselves and our sponsors. We cannot do this if we are still secretly “getting drunk on media.”

A

Therefore, we fast from anything unnecessary so we may be sober as we work the 12 Steps. We are here to hold each other to this commitment. We ask all of you to fast from ALL unnecessary media, and if you can't, we lovingly ask that you bow out of the group. While this may seem unkind,

we who have been through relapse after relapse, know that if we don't allow ourselves to fully experience the consequences of our behavior, we enable our disease to continue to delude us. Every media addict must reach a bottom, for if we don't reach a bottom, we will never have the motivation to go through what it takes to fully recover.

B

Compliance Vs Surrender

Most of us began this process by complying—just doing what we were asked—because we just wanted the pain to stop. Compliance, however, is not Surrender. Please be aware that we are working towards absolutely surrendering our media and our lives to a power greater than ourselves. This is a process and we don't expect you to be surrendered today. But until we were able to surrender, we were still hoping against hope that we were not real media addicts and that we would someday be able to use media again with impunity.

A

In the beginning, most of us were not ready to admit how deeply media had affected our lives. We use media for relief, relaxation, recreation, reward, and often as a substitute for real relationships. As we work the 12 Steps together, we are going to find other ways to get relief instead of resorting to addictive behaviors. We are going to find ways to relax and reward ourselves *without* using media. We are going to find fulfilling recreation that connects us to real, live people. We are going to start living on this side of the screen!

B

This process is a Hero's Journey

This process of recovery is a hero's journey, a call to adventure. Who are you without your media? What would it be like to live, and who would you be without hiding in media—without using media as a substitute for real relationships? What other possibilities are open to you? You may think you are not ready for this kind of adventure but don't worry. Most of us were not ready either in the beginning. We just showed up—one day at a time—and kept our commitments to the group and ourselves. Eventually, we got very good at fasting from unnecessary media. But more than that, we also found a new way of living and being that brought more joy and fulfillment than media ever could.

A

One Month at a Time to Commit to this Process

We start this journey with a one-month commitment to fast from all unnecessary media, attend ALL our daily group meetings, complete our writing assignments, and take the 12 Steps with a sponsor to the best of our ability. The full Back-to-Basics program is a 90-day program, where we go through all Twelve Steps three times, back-to-back. Each time we uncover another layer of our resistance and our suffering. Each month we explore different parts of our personality—those coping mechanisms that helped cause our media addiction.

B

Every member commits to one month at a time and one day at a time. This is so we don't become overwhelmed with the process and can stay focused on the present, rather than the future. After each monthly session, we take a one-week break from group meetings, but we don't stop our media fast. During the one-week break, we complete unfinished assignments and Step work and attend open MAA meetings to share our experience, strength, and hope. This is to refresh

ourselves for the next round. We also continue talking to our sponsors, engage in daily outreach with other members, and work our daily disciplines like quiet time and 2-way prayer. This is an important opportunity to see that we can stay sober even when B2B is not in session.

A

If this process of recovery is something you feel called to, today we will give you the opportunity to commit to being “*all in*” with us. If you choose to be *all in*, miracles will unfold in your life that you never could have imagined. We who have thoroughly followed this method have enjoyed deep transformations that we would not have found any other way.

B

What We Will Cover Today

Here is how today’s meeting will unfold:

1. We will teach you about the addiction model as outlined in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous.
2. Then we, your Group Sponsors, will introduce ourselves and briefly share our media addiction stories. (2 mins each)
3. Members who have gone through the first or second month will each share their experience going through Back to Basics, what they’ve learned, and why they are back for another round of B2B. (1-2 mins each)
4. We then ask all newcomers to talk about their symptoms of media addiction and why they’ve decided to join us. (2-3 mins each)
5. Next, we will read through the Back-to-Basics Commitments.
6. We will then answer any questions you may have about taking this month-long commitment.
7. Those who have decided they want what we have will be asked to commit to abide by this closed group’s requirements. Committing to the group’s requirement constitutes a group conscience.
8. After we end this meeting, the Group Sponsors will meet to pair each new member with their own personal B2B Step sponsor. You will receive an email with these details this weekend.

A

Two Models for Media Addiction

There are two models used for understanding people with media addiction: 1) the Cognitive Behavioral Model and 2) the Addiction Model. The Cognitive Behavioral model focuses on changing behaviors only. Here the solution is to find ways to modify your habits. If you are a moderate media user, this model may work for you. Even if you are a heavy user, behavior modification can still be applied to balance your media usage.

The Moderate User

The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous says (and we will replace *alcohol* with *media* while reading): (Ask 2nd and 3rd-month members to read the bulleted paragraphs. [Put names in the chat.](#))

- "Moderate users have little trouble in giving up [media] entirely if they have a good reason for it. They can take it or leave it alone. Then we have a certain type of [compulsive media user]."

[They] may have the habit badly enough to gradually impair [themselves] physically and mentally If a sufficiently strong reason—ill health, falling in love, change of environment, or the warning of a doctor—becomes operative, this [individual] can also stop or moderate, although [they] may find it difficult and troublesome"

B

The Real Media Addict

The Cognitive Behavioral model can sometimes work for this type of moderate user, but there is another type of user for whom behavior modification has little to no effect. This is **the media addict of the hopeless variety**. The Big Book authors write:

- "But what about the real [media addict]? [They] may start off as a moderate [user]; [they] may or may not become a continuous [compulsive user]; but at some stage [in their] [media usage] career, [they] begin to lose all control of [their media] consumption, once [they] start to [binge on it]."
- "Here is [the person] who has been puzzling you, especially in [their] lack of control. [They are] seldom mildly [drunk with media]. [They are] always more or less insanely drunk. [Their] disposition while using [media] resembles [their] normal nature but little. [They] may be one of the finest people in the world. Yet let [them binge watch] for a day, and [they] frequently become disgustingly, and even dangerously anti-social. [They] have a positive genius for getting [drunk on media] at exactly the wrong moment, particularly when some important decision must be made or engagement kept."
- "[They are] often perfectly sensible and well-balanced concerning everything except [media], but in that respect [they are] incredibly dishonest and selfish. [They] often possess special abilities, skills, and aptitudes, and have a promising career ahead of [them]. [They] use [their] gifts to build up a bright outlook for [their] family and [themselves], and then pull the structure down on [their] heads by a senseless series of sprees. [They are individuals] who go to bed so intoxicated on [media] that [they] ought to sleep the clock around. Yet early next morning [they] search madly for [their smartphones that they] misplaced the night before."

This type of media addict certainly had us baffled. Christina Gregory, Ph.D., a researcher of media addiction disorders, writes:

- "Some evidence suggests that if you are suffering from [media addiction], your brain makeup is similar to those [who] suffer from a chemical dependency, such as drugs or alcohol. Interestingly, some studies link [media addiction] to physically changing the brain structure—specifically affecting the amount of gray and white matter in regions of the prefrontal brain. This area of the brain is associated with remembering details, attention, planning, and prioritizing tasks. ... One of the causes of [media addiction] is structural changes to the prefrontal region of the brain ... rendering you unable to prioritize your life. [That is], the Internet [and/or media] takes precedence to necessary life tasks."

A

Media Addiction Affects the Brain and Body Like Drugs and Alcohol

What we understand from this passage by Dr. Gregory is that media addiction is a physical disease much like alcohol and drug addiction, for as we will see in the rest of the passage, media is a mind-altering and mood-altering drug. She goes on to say:

- "[Media addiction], in addition to other dependency disorders, seems to affect the pleasure center of the brain. The addictive behavior triggers a release of dopamine to promote the pleasurable experience activating the release of this chemical. Over time, more and more of the activity is needed to induce the same pleasurable response, creating a dependency. [For instance,] if you find online gaming or online shopping a pleasurable activity and you suffer from an addiction to the Internet, you will need to engage in more and more of the behavior to institute the same pleasurable feeling prior to your dependency."

B

The Obsession of the Mind

What Dr. Gregory is describing is the obsession of the mind—the need to use more and more media to maintain our dopamine (pleasure) and adrenaline levels and to anesthetize our emotional pain. Studies have found that a hospital patient with a television in their room needs less pain medication than a person without a TV because media numbs the pain. Another researcher commented that a young child playing a video game has the same amount of dopamine released in their system as a cocaine addict.

A

Media Addiction is an Illness of the Mind and Body

In 1935, Bill Wilson, co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous and author of the "Big Book," was told by his doctor who had treated hundreds of alcoholics, Dr. Silkworth, that he was dealing with two problems: an illness of the **body** and an illness of the **mind**. This was revolutionary information at that time.

Here is how two Big Book scholars, Joe McQ and Charlie P, describe Dr. Silkworth's conversation with Bill (and again we are going to change *alcohol* to *media* so we can hear it from this perspective).

- "The doctor told him: Bill, I do not believe that [media addiction] is a matter of willpower; I do not believe it is a matter of moral character.... I believe people like you are suffering from an illness, and it seems to be a very peculiar illness. It is two-fold: it's an illness of the body AND an illness of the mind. I think what has happened to people like you is you become absolutely physically allergic to [media]."
- "It seems to me anytime you put any [alcoholic media] whatsoever into your system, it develops an actual **physical craving** which makes it virtually impossible for you to stop [using] after you have once started. Because of that allergy, which produces physical cravings, you will never be able to safely [use alcoholic media] again."
- "You have developed what we refer to as an **obsession of the mind**. An obsession of the mind is an idea that overcomes all other ideas to the contrary. It doesn't make any difference how badly you want to stop [media bingeing], from time to time your obsession of the mind to [use your alcoholic media] will be so strong that it will overcome any ideas not to [binge], and your mind will actually lead you to believe [that] it's okay to [use your alcoholic media]."
- "You [get on media], and then you **trigger** that allergy and are unable to stop. You can't safely [use media] because of your body, you can't stay sober because of your mind; therefore, you've become absolutely powerless over [your alcoholic media]."

B

Why We Can't Stay Stopped

An addict of this type is not able to safely use their alcoholic substances, be it food, drugs, gambling, credit cards, or media. They have lost the power of self-will to stop once they have started. "*Frothy emotional appeal seldom suffices.*" The allergy of the mind and body kicks in for the media addict, and they want more. We have found that it's not that hard to stop using media for some time. Most of us have been able to do this successfully. The problem is, we can't say stopped.

A

Periods of abstinence give us only a semblance of confidence that we have licked this thing. We try to be moderate users, managing our alcoholic media with timers and a plethora of action partners. But eventually, we binge again, sometimes even worse than before—as by now we may have a new season of our favorite TV show to binge-watch.

B

Tactics We Tried to Stay Off Media

After each failed attempt to get sober from our alcoholic media and stay sober, we felt even more hopeless than before. Yet still, we tried to manage our media. Here are some things we did (reader please read them all):

- We got rid of cable television subscriptions
- We got rid of our TVs
- Unsubscribed from streaming services, music, and other Apps
- Took YouTube off our phones and computers
- We turned our phones to black-and-white settings
- Set on and off timers on our phones
- We only watched on weekends
- We only watched it with someone else
- Closed our social media accounts
- Timed our alcoholic media and bookended our use
- Only read the titles on YouTube or Newsfeeds, and so forth.

A

Many of these actions were effective and, for a media user of the moderate variety, these tactics do work. But for those of us who were **real media addicts**, these actions were not enough to stave off our inevitable slip and eventual binge. They didn't address the real problem. When we believed we might be able to use alcoholic media again, the mental obsession kicked in. We were only complying. We were still hoping we could be normal users. **We never surrendered.**

B

We Could Not Stop and Our Lives Were Unmanageable

Our experience has shown us that if you are a media addict of the hopeless variety, no matter what you do to try to manage your media, you will eventually get drunk again. Here is what the Big Book concludes for us:

- "... Our personal adventures, before and after, make clear three pertinent ideas: a) that we were [media addicts] and could not manage our own lives, b) that probably no human power could have relieved our [media addiction], and c) that God could and would [relieve our addiction] if [God] were sought."

A

The purpose of this group is to help members escape media insanity and rediscover their life's purpose for recovery. Each Back to Basics meeting is facilitated by two or more Group Sponsors, who are recovered members of the MAA fellowship, ensuring that meetings run smoothly and group integrity is upheld. As your Group Sponsors, we encourage you to be supportive and mindful in helping us maintain a strong, purposeful environment as we navigate this journey together.

B

GROUP SPONSOR QUALIFICATIONS

As your Group Sponsors, we will now qualify for two minutes each on our experience in going through the Back-to-Basics program.

(Group Sponsors now qualify for 2 minutes each.)

RETURNING MEMBER QUALIFICATIONS

A

We will now ask returning members to share their experience for 1 to 2 minutes on going through Back-to-Basics, what they've learned, and why they are back for another session. (Returning members share for 1 min each. Time to be determined by the GS.)

B

Thank you all for sharing your experience, strength, and hope.

NEW MEMBER QUALIFICATIONS

We will now ask each new member to share. How do you relate to the symptoms of media addiction and why have you decided to join Back-to-Basics? (New members share for 2 minutes each.)

A

Thank you all for sharing. We are delighted you are joining us. We need you as much as you need us. In a moment we will read the Back-to-Basics Commitments. These commitments are a part of our group conscience, and by agreeing to them you are agreeing that you wish to be a part of this kind of group. As a tool of MAA, the closed Back to Basics Step Study follows the Traditions to the extent that it can. A few Traditions are not followed completely because of the nature of this group. However, we do follow the spirit of MAA's Traditions as much as possible.

B

MAA Tradition Nine states, "MAA, as such, ought never to be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve." The creation of Back-to-Basics falls under this Tradition. As your Group Sponsors, we are organized as administrators to serve this group.

A

MAA Tradition Three, states, "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop compulsively using media." MAA "open" meetings do not require that any member fast or stay media sober to attend. However, "closed" Back to Basics Step Study groups do have requirements to be a part of this group. These closed groups are designed to help media addicts:

- **Fast from all unnecessary media**
- **Go through withdrawal together**
- **Deeply understand media addiction**
- **Develop personal sobriety, withdrawal, and media replacement plans**
- **Complete all Twelve Steps with the help of a sponsor**

These closed groups are a tool of MAA and the requirements and commitments have worked well for many of us. However, if using this method to get sober and work the 12 Steps quickly goes against your beliefs, you are free to find another way for yourself.

B

Safety Statement for Back to Basics Step Study Groups

We take the safety of each member seriously. We are not therapists, nor do we have expertise in mental health issues. These closed Back to Basic Step Study groups require you to be in a mentally and emotionally stable place. Once you join Back to Basics, please make sure you have the needed outside support if any issues should come up for you during the one-month session.

A

By making this commitment today, you are declaring that you are mentally and physically capable of joining this committed sobriety group. You are responsible for your well-being by taking care of yourself when needed. If you have a severe emotional or mental illness, or if you physically cannot sustain the required rigor of going through the Twelve Steps in the manner outlined in this program, we recommend you please wait until you are in a healthier place or find other avenues of recovery. We are here to work the Twelve Steps of Media Addicts Anonymous and to keep our focus on recovery from media addiction. Would someone volunteer to read our safety statement?

[Member reads]

- MAA Tradition One states: "Our common welfare should come first. Personal recovery depends on MAA unity." In the spirit of this tradition, please understand that this Back to Basics Step Study group is not a place to meet dating or hook-up partners. For the welfare and safety of this group, any communication or behaviors of a flirtatious, romantic, sexual, stalking, or aggressive nature directed toward any members are inappropriate and will not be tolerated. If you cannot abide by these rules, this group is not for you and you will need to find recovery elsewhere. Also, we do not allow any discrimination concerning sex, gender identity, race, creed, religion, or sexual orientation. If you observe or experience any inappropriate behavior, we ask that you immediately contact the Group Sponsors or a trusted member. Again, any inappropriate behaviors will not be tolerated and you will be asked to leave the group.

B

Some Suggestions for Success

While participating in the Back to Basics (B2B) program, we have some suggestions to help you achieve long-term abstinence and recovery: **(Insert the names of ALL participants in the Zoom chat. Each reader reads one)**

- **Relationship Reverence**

If you're currently single, we recommend waiting until you've completed all three months of B2B before starting to date. You may be tempted to use a relationship to distract you from fully immersing yourself in this system of recovery. Forgoing any new relationship at this time allows you to focus entirely on your recovery without the distractions of a new relationship.

- **Addressing Multiple Addictions**

After a month of media fasting, you may become aware of other addictions or co-dependency issues. We suggest tackling one addiction at a time, starting with media addiction. Staying in Back to Basics and getting a solid foundation in recovery from media addiction will better equip you to address other issues later.

- **Commitment to the Program**

It's important to understand that:

- 30 days of fasting is just the beginning
- You're still considered a newcomer even after a year of sobriety
- Studies indicate that 2 years of continuous abstinence is needed for long-term sobriety

A

Many people feel they've "got a handle" on their addiction after a short period and are tempted to switch to another program. We strongly advise against this. Please commit to MAA for at least a year before considering any other programs. This commitment will give you the best chance at lasting recovery. Remember, these are suggestions based on our experience, not strict requirements. However, following them can significantly improve your chances of success in the B2B program and in achieving long-term recovery from media addiction.

B

B2B is NOT a Replacement for MAA and Meetings

We wish to remind you that this group is not here to replace the Media Addict Anonymous program. B2B is a tool to strengthen your MAA program so that you can also help strengthen and build MAA. In Back to Basics, we support you in working with all of the tools of Media Addict Anonymous. Would everyone please read one?

Tools of Action for Media Addicts

These actions support media sobriety

- **Go to meetings—We attend MAA meetings to learn about media addiction, stop isolating, gain support, and identify with other recovering media addicts.**
- **Give service—Giving service right away gives us immediate purpose and connection within our fellowship and helps keep us sober.**
- **Work with a sponsor—A sponsor is a media-sober member of MAA who is working on 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.**
- **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.**
- **Design a media replacement plan— 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.**
- **Create a media withdrawal plan— A media withdrawal plan provides us with a strategy to get the help and support we need during the early period of withdrawal and detoxification.**
- **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.**
- **Prioritize sleep and body care—We set media curfews for ourselves along with a regular bedtime. We keep electronic media out of the bedroom. We stay connected to our bodies by eating nourishing food and getting proper exercise and fresh air.**
- **Meditate— 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.**
- **Read recovery literature—We 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.**
- **Clarify through writing—We work through our emotions by writing our difficulties down on paper. This makes it easier to understand a situation and discern any necessary action.**
- **Develop a media sobriety plan—After we have fasted and become media sober (i.e., abstinent from all unnecessary media) and taken all Twelve Steps with a sponsor, we work with our sponsor to create a media sobriety plan.**

A

Taking the Commitments for this Closed Back to Basics Step Study

It is time now to read the commitment for closed Back to Basics. When you make these commitments, you are making them first to yourself, second to the group, and third to the Group Sponsors. Here are the commitments for working together this month. We are going to ask each person to read one:

ONE-MONTH COMMITMENTS FOR THIS GROUP—THIS IS WHAT WE ARE AGREEING TO:

1. **FAST FROM ALL UNNECESSARY MEDIA.** This means that you agree to use only media necessary for work, school, family, recovery, and home needs. We will be fasting for the full month. We will go into more detail on what we mean by media fasting in a moment.
2. **COMPLETE ALL ASSIGNMENTS:** Try to have all the pre-commitment assignments completed before the first conversation with your sponsor. These assignments are available on the website on the information page about Back-to-Basics Step Study groups at www.mediaaddictsanonymous.org/intergroups . You are committing to complete all the assignments and read them to your sponsor (and where appropriate, to other members of the group). You are doing this work to the best of your ability.
3. **WORK WITH A SPONSOR:** You get to work one-on-one with an assigned sponsor. This is the person who will help you hold you to your Commitments, listen to your daily assignments, and mentor you in working your 12 Steps. You are responsible for calling your sponsor on time. Please expect to spend 15 minutes speaking with your sponsor at least four days each week, and at least one hour on the weekends. It is strongly recommended that you meet with your sponsor on Zoom. Trust that your sponsor has something important to give you.
4. **MEETING COMMITMENT GUIDELINES:** We commit to attending all Back-to-Basics meetings and participating in the readings. Meetings occur every weekday at the same time for four weeks, where we rapidly cover the 12 Steps. Missing a meeting means potentially missing an entire step, and falling asleep will result in missing important information.
5. **ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS:** All members must be awake and present during meetings, which last approximately 50 minutes from Monday to Thursday and about 80 minutes on Friday. This schedule includes 15 minutes of optional fellowship time before the main meeting, allowing members to connect, support one another, and strengthen group cohesiveness.
6. **EMERGENCIES AND COMMUNICATION:** If emergencies arise (e.g., births or deaths) and you need to be excused, please discuss it with both your personal sponsor and the Group Sponsors. **Please don't text the group**; instead, use the "sponsor channels" for any emergencies. Missing meetings without prior approval from the Group Sponsors will be considered a slip.
7. **BE SEEN:** All meetings are held on Zoom. Part of our recovery is to be seen and be a part of a group. As media addicts, we have hidden behind screens and isolated. Therefore, part of the commitment you are taking today is to agree to turn on your camera and be seen **at all times** when on Zoom.
8. **BE ON TIME:** Arrive for every meeting at least 10 minutes early so the meeting can start on time. If you are more than 10 minutes late, this will be considered an absence and will need to be made up. Daily meetings start promptly **5 minutes** before the group meeting time. For example, if you are in the 1 pm ET group, the meeting begins at 12:55 pm ET, and you must arrive no later than 12:50 pm ET with your camera on.
9. **OPTIONAL PRE-MEETING FELLOWSHIP:** The Zoom room will open 15 minutes before each meeting for open group sharing. All members are encouraged to join this pre-meeting time. For example, if your meeting starts at 1 PM ET, please log in by 12:40 PM ET. A moderator will facilitate 2-minute check-ins for each participant. While attendance is not mandatory, this fellowship time is a fantastic opportunity to connect with others and receive additional support. Many members find that sharing helps foster close relationships within the group.
10. **MAA HOME-GROUP MEETING:** Choose at least one MAA meeting to attend each week. Make this your home group for the month. During MAA meetings, give out your number for outreach calls and get at least one other number you can call. If you have fasted a week or

more, volunteer to qualify and share at these meetings so you become known. Do service by reading, keeping time, etc. MAA meetings will familiarize you with the MAA Tools and make you part of the fellowship. This is VERY important so that you have the necessary support and connection when Back-to-Basics is completed.

11. **IF YOU SLIP:** If you have a slip, meaning you have a momentary lapse in your media middle or bottom lines, you immediately talk to your sponsor and fill out a Breakdown Worksheet. If you are having multiple slips, one after another, then you may not be ready to work in this kind of intensive program. For the sobriety and overall health of the group, if you continue to slip, we ask that you bow out of the group. As stated earlier, missing or not showing up for meetings is also considered a slip.
12. **IF YOU DO RELAPSE:** If you haven't noticed we are here to take our sobriety seriously. You are committing to fast from all UNNECESSARY media. If you relapse, meaning you use your addictive bottom-line media, triggering the obsession, and end up in a media binge blackout, you may not be ready to work this intensive program. We have a disease; it is not a moral issue, and we don't judge anyone for relapsing. This is the main reason we come together: to hold the space of sobriety and recovery for each other. So, for the sobriety and health of the group (we are a closed group for this reason), if you are not able to stay on your media fast, we ask that you bow out of the group until you are ready to make this kind of commitment. We encourage you to attend open MAA meetings and when you are ready, join another Back-to-Basics group.
13. **SHARE ONLY WITH SPONSORS:** Slips or relapses are to be discussed with your sponsor only. Please don't share them with the rest of the group. We are all fragile in our early recovery, and we need to keep a positive sobriety message as we carry each other through the beginnings of withdrawal and the loneliness that can come from not having media to turn to for Relief, Reward, Recreation, Relaxation, and fantasy Relationships. Together we can avoid the two other Rs: Regret and Remorse.
14. **SOBRIETY IN ALL OTHER PROGRAMS:** Maintain comprehensive sobriety by staying abstinent in all other programs and addiction areas during this media fast. If new addictive behaviors emerge, discuss them with your sponsor promptly. Sobriety in all areas is crucial for honest and effective Step work. Total abstinence facilitates quicker progress through the 12 Steps. Remember, honesty is fundamental to recovery.
15. **OUTREACH CALLS:** Make 2 outreach calls a day. One can be to your sponsor; the other to someone in the group or someone you heard at an MAA meeting. Reaching out to newcomers is important. Please share your experience, strength, and hope as often as you can.
16. **BOOKEND:** Use the WhatsApp group to bookend hard-to-handle media usage that you must do for work or other personal reasons. We recommend that you bookend all middle-line media use with the group via WhatsApp or in a phone call.
17. **KEEP GROUP CONNECTIONS CLEAN AND SAFE:** As previously stated, we will have a WhatsApp group for daily support. Because any type of media will be triggering for some members, we limit the correspondence in these groups to include: requests for outreach, bookending any media usage, and giving timely information members need from the group sponsors. **Please DO NOT post websites or internet links, photos, book titles, or share generic "words of wisdom."** In group meetings please don't mention "outside issues" by name. Instead, use outreach calls to share what is personally meaningful.
18. **ATTEND OR LISTEN TO SATURDAY 2 PM ET MEETINGS:** Please attend or listen to the Saturday 2:00 PM ET Qualification Meeting each week. It is important to hear about solid media recovery. These meetings will do a lot to inspire and help you with your fast. If you are not able to attend, please listen to the recordings. Check out our website to find these

recordings at www.mediaaddictsanonymous.org. After one month in Back-to-Basics, you may be asked to qualify at one of these meetings. Please consider saying “yes” to this opportunity to share what you are learning and experiencing in Back to Basics.

19. **SLEEP REVERENCE:** Set a time to go to bed and a time to wake up every day. By doing so, you will have more emotional energy to get media sober and stay sober this month. Let your sponsor know these times so you can stay accountable.
 20. **SET ON AND OFF TIME FOR DEVICES:** Set a time to turn off all media at the end of the day and a time to start media at the beginning of the day. Discuss this strategy with your sponsor.
 21. **BE IN NATURE WITHOUT MEDIA:** Take at least a 15-minute walk in nature without your phone every day.
 22. **DONATION:** Our B2B Zoom account and website are funded by MAA. To show how much you value having these groups, and to participate in the 7th Tradition of MAA (we are self-supporting) we ask ALL group members to make a donation to MAA as part of their commitment to this group. This donation could be \$20-\$30 or more, it's up to you. Donate whatever you can afford. No one will be turned away from this group if they can't afford to make even a small donation. Please make your donation today if possible. Here is the link: www.mediaaddictsanonymous.org/donate. (Group Sponsors: Please put the link above into the chat)
- **FASTING REMINDERS AND TIPS:** Make 2 little signs and keep them close to your phone and computer: **IS THIS REALLY NECESSARY? AND WHEN IN DOUBT, LEAVE IT OUT.** REMEMBER HALT: Don't allow yourself to get too Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired. If you feel an overwhelming desire to use media:
 - CALL YOUR SPONSOR OR GROUP MEMBER BEFORE USING
 - Complete the Urge Surfing worksheet
 - Do something on your Media Replacement Plan
 - Get on your knees and pray
 - Recite the Serenity Prayer
 - Trust in your Higher Power
 - Remember: You have the strength to overcome this
 - Stay connected. Stay accountable. Stay strong.

B

More Details About Media Fasting-What it Really Means

We strongly suggest that you let people who are close to you know that you will be fasting for this next month and you would like their support. A few extra words about fasting. Because this sometimes confuses us, we want to be clear about what constitutes a media fast. Newcomers may have a tough time wrapping their heads around what true media fasting entails. There is a distinction between *abstaining from our addictive media* and *fasting*.

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Abstaining from our addictive media only is where we hope to end up, but this is not something we can expect in early recovery from media addiction. The lines are too blurry for us to make those kinds of decisions. We have found we need to start with fasting from all unnecessary media and continue to fast for enough time to allow our bodies and minds to detox from the effects of addictive media use. This sets the stage for taking on a new vibrant way of living.

- The FASTING required in closed Back to Basics Groups means **NO USE OF ANY MEDIA OR TECH that is not ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY** for work, school, or essential family needs (like setting up doctor appointments or dealing with messages to or from school). This means (and this list is not exhaustive): no TV, movies, news, streaming, social media, gaming, porn, nonessential shopping, word games, dating and meet-up apps, Internet use for unnecessary reasons, phone or tablet apps, or gambling.
- For many people, this fast *could*—and probably *should*—include podcasts, music, fiction books, magazines, online reading, audiobooks, meditation apps, sports apps, unnecessary messaging apps, or any other sort of input that you get lost in, or spend more time on, than intended.
- This may be different than other media/tech programs' definitions of a media fast, but this is how we define it here. REMEMBER: *Always* ask yourself, "*Is it REALLY necessary?*" We have found that the more sober we are from ALL unnecessary media, the better chance we have of working the 12 Steps with a clear mind.
- Some people say, "*But my family/partner/friends watch a movie together each week. Can I do that?*" The response is: How about suggesting that your family does something else during that time, like playing a board game, dancing together, going to the park, going for a walk, or some other activity that doesn't require media or tech? There is a list of *300 Things to Do Other Than Use Media* on the MAA website under the Literature tab. Look at it, or have them take a look, and pick some things to try out. Ask your family and friends to support you in your media fast.
- Then there is, "*But at my mom's house, her TV is always on.*" We suggest you ask her if it's okay to turn it off while you are there, so you can spend some time talking with her or doing something else together. If you are somewhere where you absolutely cannot get them to turn the media off, then either be in a different room or turn your back to the screen. It means either not facing a TV in a restaurant or finding restaurants where there are no TVs on. It means not watching ball games and often not listening to them either. It means IF IN DOUBT, LEAVE IT OUT.

B

This is not meant to be a punishment. It is meant to detox you, so you can get your life back and be receptive to your Higher Power's guidance. If you are not ready for this kind of commitment, then you may need to try recovery in some other way than Closed Back to Basics. If fasting feels scary or daunting, don't worry, we are here to support you every step of the way.

A

This commitment is for one month. It does take 3 months to work through all the 4th Step B2B inventories (resentment, fear, and sex) using the Big Book format. To fully give yourself the entire Back-to-Basics recovery experience, you will want to complete all 3 months. In doing so you will give yourself the ongoing gift of group support, a strong foundation for your media sobriety, and time for your Higher Power to work miracles within and around you.

B

If you want to take your B2B recovery to the next level, you can become a Group Sponsor like we are. After you complete your third month, we hope you will consider doing this. Watching others

recover from this media addiction and knowing we are a part of the process gives us a deeper purpose. It has helped our sobriety and recovery.

A

We have found that when we sponsor a newcomer, even after 1 month in B2B, our recovery accelerates and becomes stronger. For this reason, we request that starting in your 2nd month you sponsor at least one incoming group member if a new member is available.

B

Also, for planning purposes, we request that you all let your Group Sponsors know if you plan to continue the next month by the Monday of our 4th week together. We will remind you when this time approaches.

Please note that the program is designed so that you remain in the same group at the same time slot for all three months. This is so that you can grow in unity together with your group and so that you can have the same sponsor for a full three months. It is expected that you will stay with this group throughout your program.

A

We will now answer any questions about this commitment or these classes.

(Q & A time TBD by GS. Stop screen sharing.)

We understand if media fasting seems like a big pill to swallow right now, but please have faith that we will get through this together one day at a time. We will now call out your name. Please state if you are "all in" or if you will "opt-out."

(Read names and take commitment)

Thank you all! Welcome to Freedom. Welcome to Back-to-Basics. For those of you who are "all in," a sponsor will be assigned to you and you will receive this information in the next day or so. We will end today's session with the Serenity Prayer.

(Serenity prayer)