

BACK-TO-BASICS OPEN MEETING Format
Saturday 2:00 to 3:30pm ET
Call: 978-990-5000
Access code: 385988#
Leader Code: 5031#

NOTE: You will need 4 members for the following: opening prayer, closing prayer, reading How It Works from page 58 of the Big Book and reading the 12 Steps.

Leaders and speakers: Please come at least 10 minutes early to mute the phone and prepare for the meeting.

Touch Tone Phone Commands:

- *2 – for the leader to get the count of participants
- *5 – for the leader to do a mass mute of all the participants
Please mute the line before the meeting starts.
- *6 – for participants to mute and un-mute themselves
- *8 – for the leader to turn off entry and exit tones, if needed
- *9 – for the leader to begin the recording and stop the recording

MODERATOR A

Leader does a mass mute with *5. (this way people will come in to the meeting muted)
Leader starts the recording with *9.

Welcome to the Open Back-To-Basics Saturday meeting for people who are interested in recovering from media addiction. Today's date is __ (date) __, we are here to share our experience, strength, and hope with you.

My name is __ (name) __, and I am __ (name) __, and we are media addicts in recovery today, and we will be moderating this meeting.

We have __ (# of speakers) __, recovering members of one of the Back-to-Basics groups here today to share their experience, strength, and hope with us. Afterwards, you will have a chance to ask them questions. This meeting is being recorded. To listen to the recording of this meeting, you can call 978-990-5099, enter access code 385988# and press 0# to listen to the latest recording. This recording will also be posted on the Media Addicts Anonymous website at www.mediaaddictsanonymous.org.

So that you can absorb the important message our speakers have to offer, please turn off all unnecessary media and focus on this meeting alone.

We have asked __ (name) __ to start us off with the Set Aside Prayer:

God, please help us set aside everything we think we know about ourselves, our problems, our addictions, and about you. We ask that we may have an open mind and an open heart so we might have a new experience with these things. Help us to see the truth, so that we might learn to live our lives on a spiritual basis and be restored to sanity. Amen.

MODERATOR - B

Before we have our qualifications, let us give you a brief introduction to what we have learned about media addiction.

There are two models used for helping 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 most likely will work for you. Even if you are a heavy user, behavioral modifications can still be applied to your media usage.

The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous says that, and I will replace alcohol with media terms while reading:

"**Moderate users** have little trouble in giving up [media] entirely if they have 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 [them] 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..."

MODERATOR - A

The Cognitive Behavioral model may work for these first two types of media users. But there is another type that the behavioral modification has little or no affect on. That 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 [media drunk] 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 smart phone they] misplaced the night before."

MODERATOR - B

This third type of media addict certainly has us baffled. We have discovered that when we are dealing with media addiction we are also dealing with an illness of the body and an illness of the mind as Bill W relates to us in the Big Book. Bill's doctor, Dr. Silkworth, gave Bill the most important information an alcoholic could know at that time. Here is how two Big Book scholars, describe Dr. Silkworth's conversation with Bill W. (and again I replace "alcohol" with "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, and I don't think sin has got anything to do with it. I believe people like you are suffering from an illness, and it seems to be a very peculiar illness; It is 2-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, [you] develop an **actual physical craving** which makes it virtually impossible for you to stop [using] after you have once started. Because of the **allergy** which produces **physical craving**, you will never be able to **safely [use 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 [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 believing** it's okay to [use your triggering media].

You [get on media], and then you'll **trigger that allergy** and be 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].

So basically, 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.

MODERATOR - A

We have found that it is not that hard to stop using media for a short period of time. Most of us have been able to do that fairly successfully. The problem is, we can't say stopped.

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

After each failed attempt to get sober from media and stay sober we felt even more hopeless than before. We felt more helpless, yet still we tried to manage our media.

Here are some things we did:

- We got rid of cable TV

- We got rid of our TV
- We unsubscribed from Netflix and Amazon Prime
- We removed YouTube from our phones and computers
- We turned our phones to black and white settings
- We set on and off timers on our phones
- We only watched on weekends
- We only watched with someone else
- We timed our alcoholic media use and bookended it
- We only read the titles on YouTube
- And more...

Many of these actions were helpful, and for a media user of the moderate variety, they could probably work. But for those of us who were true media addicts, these actions could not protect us of an inevitable slip and eventual binge. These actions did not address the real problem. When we believed we might be able to use alcoholic media again, the mental obsession kicked in. We were complying, but we were still hoping we could be normal users. We never completely surrendered. Our experience is 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.

MODERATOR – B

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].
- c) That God could and would if [God] were sought."

Dr. Silkworth's description of the alcoholic also accurately describes the media addict. Please listen carefully as I read his description substituting media for alcohol. See if you can identify.

"Men and women [use electronic media] essentially because they like the effect produced by [electronic media]. The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. To them, their [electronic media addicted] life seems the normal one. They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by [watching a few videos, playing a few games, shopping online, surfing the net or losing themselves on social media], activities which they see others taking with impunity. After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do, and the phenomenon of craving develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to [become drunk on media] again. This is repeated over and over, and unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is little hope of [their] recovery."

When we were first confronted with the reality of our media addiction, we didn't want to believe it. When first confronted with the solution, we hoped we would be an exception. When first approaching the 12 Steps, we hoped for an easier, softer way. We hoped and we hoped, but eventually we had to become really honest with ourselves.

MODERATOR - A

__(name)__, could you please read How It Works?

HOW IT WORKS

"Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those too who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it—then you are ready to take certain steps.

At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.

Remember that we deal with [media addiction]—cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power—that One is God. May you find [God] now!

Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked God's protection and care with complete abandon."

The authors make it very clear that in order to recover, one must completely give themselves to this simple program, be honest with themselves, and seek help from the "One who has all power." They also tell us that, although we would like to find an easier, softer way to try to conquer our media addiction, the result is nil until we surrender completely. We are dealing with an addiction that is cunning, baffling, and powerful. Only a spiritual transformation will relieve us from the media obsession and the devastation resulting from being out of control. The authors now lay out the steps we must take in order to recover.

__(name)__, could you please read the 12 steps:

Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery

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.

In the first step we admitted we were powerless over our alcoholic media and that our lives had become unmanageable. This honest admission led us to acceptance. We became willing to accept our media addiction for what it was. It was an illness, not lack of self-control. Media addiction is not a moral issue.

MODERATOR - B

Once we accepted this, we immediately began working on the causes and conditions which had brought about our need to get drunk on media. First, we had to have faith in a power greater than ourselves and believe that this power could restore us to sanity. Second, we made the decision to turn our will, our cares, and our addiction over to this Higher Power. When we did, something miraculous began to happen.

The Big Book authors state:

"And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone—even [electronic media]. For by this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in [electronic media]. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, and we find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward [media] has been given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we have been placed in a position of neutrality—safe and protected. We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us. We are neither cocky nor are we afraid. That is our experience. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition."

The Big Book gives us "design for living" and a way to live without the need to compulsively use media.

MODERATOR - A

We are here today to share with you our experience in taking these Twelve Steps. We believe we have found a way out of the desperate cycle of media addiction, and not only that, but we have found a way to be happy, joyous and free that doesn't include using media. We are excited to share our solution with you.

Our first speaker is __ (name) __, will you please time yourself for 10 minutes?

Our Second speaker is __ (name) __, will you please time yourself for 10 minutes?

Our Third speaker is __ (name) __, will you please time yourself for 10 minutes?

Etc...

(After the qualifications)

We will end this portion of our meeting by reading from the Big Book:

"We have been speaking to you of serious, sometimes tragic things. We have been dealing with [media addiction] in its worst aspect. But we aren't a glum lot. If newcomers could see no joy or fun in our existence, they wouldn't want it. We absolutely insist on enjoying life. We try not to indulge in cynicism over the state of the nations, nor do we carry the world's troubles on our shoulders. When we see a [person] sinking into the mire that is [media addiction], we give [them] first aid and place what we have at [their] disposal. For [their] sake, we do recount and almost relive the horrors of our past. But those of us who have tried to shoulder the entire burden and trouble of others find we are soon overcome by them."

"So, we think cheerfulness and laughter make for usefulness. Outsiders are sometimes shocked when we burst into merriment over a seemingly tragic experience out of the past. But why shouldn't we laugh? We have recovered, and have been given the power to help others."

MODERATOR - B

7th Tradition and Announcements

Before we take questions we will first take time for the 7th Tradition and announcements. MAA has no dues or fees. We are self-supporting through our own contributions. Contributions can be made via PayPal on the MAA website. Please give what you can, and if you can give nothing at this time, keep coming back. You are more important than your money.

During this time slot every Saturday, we hold several different types of MAA meetings. Some Saturdays, like today, we have "Open Back-to-Basics" qualification meetings where two or more people who have finished their first month in our Back-to-Basics program speak about their experience with working all 12 steps while fasting from any unnecessary media. Other Saturdays we have "There is a Solution" qualification meetings where someone who has been fasting in Back-to-Basics for three months shares their experience, strength, and hope as they recover from media addiction.

We have special closed Back-to-Basics groups that meet 5 times/week, fast from all unnecessary media, and work all 12 steps with group sponsors. Every month we have openings and opportunities for members to join one of these closed groups. At the end of this meeting, we will announce when those openings will occur and how to join.

We also have open Back-To-Basics groups that meet once a week and complete all 12 steps in about 4 months. Everyone is welcome to attend, whether you have never done a Back-To-Basics meeting before or you have finished the course. Everyone is invited to attend these meetings. Details can be found on the MAA website.

Back-to-Basics groups are not a part of MAA, but are an associate structure to help MAA members recover more quickly with the help of a sponsor.

Media Addicts Anonymous is a new 12-Step program. We hope you will become active in helping our membership grow by supporting all of our meetings and joining our recovery fellowship. At the end of this meeting, we will stop the recording and share phone numbers for member outreach.

MODERATOR - A

Questions:

I will now open up the meeting for questions for our speakers. If you have a question for ___(names)___, please press *6 and un-mute your phone. I am ready to take some names.

Wrap Up at 3:25 ET:

That's all the time we have for questions. Thank you all for being here today. I would like to remind you that the opinions expressed here today are strictly those of the individuals who shared them. The things we have heard here are spoken in confidence and should be treated as confidential. Let there be no gossip or criticism of one another; rather, let's all reach out to each other with understanding, love, and the spirit of fellowship.

Thank you everyone for allowing us to do service today. Again, our names are ___(name)___, and ___(name)___, and we have been your moderators for this meeting today.

We will ask ___(name)___ to close this meeting with the serenity prayer, after which we will stop the recording and allow those who would like to give out their phone numbers to do so.

Stop the recording with *9

Ask speakers if they would like to share their phone number.

Ask if there are any newcomers who would like to introduce themselves.

Ask if anyone would like to leave their phone number for outreach.

Let people know how to get information about upcoming Back-To-Basics classes. (go to the MAA website and fill out the contact/ mailing form, asking for information about B2B)