

The Joy of Missing Out

Denver Face-to-Face Meeting of Media Addicts Anonymous

2nd and 4th Saturdays of each month, 10:30-11:30 AM

NO MENTAL DEFENSE Meeting House

10210 W 26th Ave, Unit #12, Lakewood, CO 80215

Text **"Serenity"** to **84576** to receive text reminders and communications for meetings!

*(This meeting format suggests using a **lead share**, in which a sober member qualifies or shares their experience, strength, and hope before open sharing. When using this format, it is suggested to have this **member volunteer before the start of the meeting**. You may also wish to arrange **someone to introduce the member giving the lead share**. If no one will give a lead share, the meeting could **read literature as a prompt for sharing** instead. Be prepared to announce relevant dates: **next in-person MAA meeting, companion in-person ITAA meeting, closed B2B signup deadline, and this meeting's next group conscience.**)*

Welcome to The Joy of Missing Out, a meeting of Media Addicts Anonymous. This group meets 10:30-11:30 AM on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of each month.

Let's begin the meeting with 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."**

We will now take turns introducing ourselves. We especially welcome newcomers here today. If you'd like, you may indicate, when introducing yourself, whether this is one of your first MAA meetings. I will start: "My name is _____, and I am a media addict. To my left is..." *(Members introduce themselves.)*

Welcome everyone, we're so glad you made it. We encourage newcomers to stick around after the meeting, as a number of us will be available to help answer questions you may have.

- Would someone volunteer to read the MAA Preamble? *(Pass Preamble to the volunteer and they read it.)*

(Consider reading only 3 symptoms and 3 tools at each meeting. It is suggested to read 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, then 10-12, during the 1st meeting of Odd months, 2nd meeting of Odd months, 1st meeting of Even months, then the 2nd meeting of Even months, respectively.)

- Would someone read 3 symptoms of media addiction? *(Pass to volunteer to read the symptoms.)*
- Would someone read 3 tools of media sobriety action? *(Pass to volunteer to read the tools.)*
- MAA uses the 12 steps of recovery because it has been proven that the 12-step recovery program works. Would someone read the 12 steps of media addiction recovery? *(The volunteer reads the 12 steps.)*
- I will read the tradition of the month, and tradition 12. *(The moderator reads those traditions.)*

(Lead Share format)

We will now ask _____*(name)*_____ to share from their experience, strength, and hope in recovering with media addiction. *(Optionally, introduce the lead sharer to the rest of the group, or call on someone who is comfortable to do this. Let the lead sharer know how long they may share for, usually 5-10 minutes, and ask whether they would like someone to keep time for them. Ask the lead sharer to let the others know whether they are open to questions*.)*

Thank you, *(name)*, for your wonderful share.

(Recovery Literature format)

We will now select a reading from our recovery library as a prompt for reflection and sharing. *(Choose a reading that allows each member at least 2.5-3 minutes to share in the remaining time, including the conclusion of the meeting. For example, 8 members might need to start sharing at 11:00 to be done by 11:25. Long readings could be from The Big Book or 12 & 12. Short readings could be in daily reflection readers such as OA's For Today or NA's Just For Today. Additional readings from MAA literature can be found in this format's supplements.)*

Thank you to those who read.

...

We are about to open the meeting for sharing. We find it helpful to focus our shares on what we have **heard/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. If you are new, you may introduce yourself, and if you feel comfortable, you may share what brought you to MAA.

We do not engage in cross-talk, which is interrupting, making suggestions, giving advice, directly addressing another speaker, or commenting on someone else's share. In today's meeting, we will give you a gentle reminder after *(time limit)* of sharing, after which we ask you to wrap up your share.

I will now read our safety statement. As stated in Tradition One, our common welfare and unity come first. Remember that this is a place for recovery only. Harassment, stalking, or any aggressive or flirtatious behavior is not tolerated and will result in removal. We also do not allow discrimination based on gender, race, religion, sexual or political orientation. Please report any safety concerns to a trusted individual. To protect our media fast, please refrain from sharing current events, news, politics or any specific media content. These topics can be triggering for others. Please save specific details for your sponsor or another trusted member of MAA.

*(*If lead share is open for questions: _____(name)_____ is open to answering questions during the sharing portion of the meeting. If you ask a question, please allow enough time during your sharing time limit for an answer.)*

(The moderator may ask for a timekeeper.) The floor is now open for shares.

(Wrap up the sharing portion between 10 and 5 minutes before the end time of the meeting.)

That's all the time we have for sharing today. If you are new, didn't have a chance to share, or are struggling, please feel free to stay as a number of us are available to talk or answer any questions after the meeting ends.

Thank you to each of you for being here. *(Also thank the lead share, reader(s), timekeeper, and other service roles for their service.)* Our next meeting here is *(next meeting date)*. Please keep coming back! This meeting has a companion in-person meeting in the *Internet and Technology Addicts Anonymous* fellowship, which meets in this space, on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Saturdays of each month, 10:30-11:30 AM. That meeting next meets *(next ITAA meeting date)*. Media Addicts Anonymous also meet in South Boulder every Thursday 7:15-8:15 PM at St. Andrew Presbyterian Church. To get reminders about upcoming meetings in the Front Range, you can text "Serenity" to 84576.

In alignment with the 7th Tradition of MAA, our group has no dues or fees, but we do have expenses. We are fully self-supporting through our own contributions, which we collect in cash and on Venmo. Please give what you can, but if you can give nothing at this time, keep coming back, because you are more important than your money. *(Circulate the donation tin.)*

Media Addicts Anonymous is a growing program with Zoom and phone meetings every day of the week. MAA also offers monthly Back to Basics Step Studies, which allow members to quickly get sober from compulsive media use in a safe, stable, small group setting, while studying the Big Book and working all 12 steps with a sponsor. The deadline to sign up for the next round of Closed B2B is *(deadline date)*. The MAA website, mediaaddictsanonymous.org, has more information on B2B, and other meetings, literature, and fellowship.

This meeting's next group conscience is planned for *(next group conscience date)*. Are there any announcements for the good of this meeting or MAA as a whole? *(Hold space for announcements. Encourage that questions, discussions, and business items be addressed after the meeting ends.)*

- We will now read from the promises of the program. *(Read the 12 Promises, just 3 of the 12, or "Into Action" promises, or have a volunteer read them.)*

In closing, the opinions expressed here today are strictly those of the individuals who gave them. The things we 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 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 all so much for coming; this is the end of the meeting. *(Make time for newcomers and general questions, shares from folks who did not get a chance to share, and group conscience/business items, as they arise, and then fellowship time.)*

MAA 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 A.A. Preamble is adapted with permission of the AA Grapevine, Inc. Permission to adapt the Preamble does not in any way imply affiliation with or endorsement of this organization.)

Twelve Signs and 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 that 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

These actions support media sobriety.

1. **Go to meetings**—We attend MAA meetings to learn about media addiction, stop isolating, gain support, and identify with other recovering media addicts.
2. **Give service**—Giving service right away gives us immediate purpose and connection within our fellowship and helps keep us sober.
3. **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.
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.
5. **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.
6. **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.
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.
8. **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.
9. **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.
10. **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.
11. **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.
12. **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.

(These tools are described here in short form, adapted from the Boston Strong MAA face-to-face meeting format. The full tools can be found on the MAA website, mediaaddictsanonymous.org)

The Twelve Steps of Media Addicts Anonymous

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.

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 centers 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.

The Twelve Promises of Media Addicts Anonymous

Signs and Symptoms of Media Recovery (Short Form)

1. **Satisfaction with everyday life**—We turn to our Higher Power and our fellowship to share emotional discomfort, boredom, pain, and problems as well as our joys and accomplishments. Community and spiritual living have become our main sources of daily satisfaction.
2. **Cognitive indifference**—We no longer have a fear of missing out and enjoy limiting the time on our devices. We actualize ourselves by being fully invested in our life purpose.
3. **Enthusiasm, gratification, and hopefulness**—Where once we felt despair, we now feel enthusiastic, gratified, and hopeful about life. This gratification has allowed us to have prolonged periods of joyfulness and serenity.
4. **Identify and encourage**—We identify with what we see in our circle of friends. We see through the myth of seemingly perfect people in media and know that our self-worth comes from our Higher Power.
5. **Sociability**—We prefer to socialize with others rather than isolate with media. When we are with real people, we are interested in their companionship.
6. **Faithfulness**—We have meaningful relationships with real people. We turn to authentic relationships to satisfy our need for romance, intimacy, and sexual fulfillment.
7. **Conscientious behavior**—We protect our health, safety, and others by being conscientious of our media at all times. We don't drive while sending text messages, watch TV when eating, or deprive ourselves of sleep because of media.
8. **Time Reverence**—Time is the only commodity we can never get back, therefore, we focus only on what is truly important in our lives. Vital living takes priority over everything media-related.
9. **Achieving our life's purpose**—We achieve our creative endeavors, intellectual pursuits, and prioritized goals. We build faith in ourselves and hope for our future.
10. **Connect to our bodies and nature**—We become deeply connected to our bodies and fully enjoy all of our senses. We meet our body's basic needs for rest, sleep, exercise, and good nutrition. We regularly spend time outdoors enjoying the nourishment and beauty of the natural world.
11. **Physical health**—With less time in front of screens and constant media stimulation, we experience greater physical and mental health.
12. **Sanity has returned**—Eventually, withdrawal and detoxification symptoms pass, and we gain freedom from the mental obsession and cravings of media.

"Into Action" 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.

(The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, p 83-84)

MAA's Understanding of Media Addiction

We view media addiction as an illness similar to alcoholism. Like drugs and alcohol, media addiction is both a physical and mental dis-ease. Here are the reasons we believe this.

1. Media changes and destabilizes the brain. The overuse 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 "offline," weakening our ability to stop using media when we need to move on or go to bed.
2. Over time a mental obsession develops. After periods of extreme overuse of media, we eventually develop 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 we want to stop using media, the obsession of the mind will become so strong that it will overcome any ideas to try to stop or stay away from media. Our minds actually lead us to believe it's okay to use our media, even after a huge blackout binge. Each time we get on our alcoholic media we trigger this mental obsession and we can't stop.
3. Media also affects the pleasure center 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. Therefore, we see media as a mind-altering and mood-altering drug. Media becomes our dopamine high or our dope.

Because of the mental obsession, the brain-numbing response to media, and the chemical response to media, we have both a mental and physical craving for media and a mental and physical intolerance much like alcohol and drugs. We can't safely use media because of the body allergy and dopamine high, and we can't stay sober because of our mental obsession, therefore, we believe that we have become absolutely powerless over addictive forms of media.

Doctor Silkworth in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous observed this same phenomenon in his alcoholic patients. We have found, word for word, that the same holds true for the real media addict. He writes back in 1936:

Men and women drink (use media) essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol (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 alcoholic (media) life seems the only normal one. They are restless, irritable, and discontented unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort that comes at once by taking a few drinks (getting on their media)—drinks (media) that 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 drink again. This is repeated over and over, and unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of recovery.

Recovery is transforming mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual states of being, which we refer to as having a psychic change. We create this psychic change by sincerely and consistently working the 12 Steps and the 12 Tools of MAA.

Things We've Tried

While some of us have been able to stop using media for a limited time, the problem is, we can't stay stopped. Periods of abstinence give us a semblance of confidence that we have licked this thing, but eventually, we binge again—often even worse than before. After each failed attempt to get sober from media, we feel even more hopeless. Yet, we keep trying to manage our media.

Here are some of the things we've tried:

We got rid of our TVs; Got rid of cable service; Unsubscribed from streaming services; Removed social media and streaming apps from our phones and computers; Applied black and white settings to our phones; Set timers for our phone usage; Blocked websites on our computers; Only watched on weekends; Only watched with someone else; Timed our alcoholic media and bookended our use; Only browsed titles on social media, streaming services, and news outlets....

These actions might be helpful or workable for moderate media users, but for those of us who are real media addicts, such actions did not address the issues underlying our compulsive media use. We were under the illusion that we could be normal users. When we believed we might be able to use alcoholic media again, the mental obsession kicked in, and the inevitable slip or binge ensued. We were only complying. We never surrendered.

When we were first confronted with the reality of our media addiction, we didn't want to believe it. We hoped for an easier, softer way. We tried and tried, but eventually we had to become honest with ourselves.

In chapter 5 of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, entitled "How It Works," the authors describe a solution to our addiction and lay out a path to recovery:

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.