Media Addicts Anonymous

Fasting and Media Sobrity Worksheet

***WHAT DOES MEDIA FASTING MEAN?***

***Newcomers may have a tough time wrapping their heads around what true media/tech fasting entails.***

***There is a distinction between abstaining from our addictive media and fasting. Abstaining from our addictive media is where many of us want to end up, but this is not something we can usually attain in early recovery from media addiction. The lines are too blurry for us to make those kinds of decisions. Most of us need to start with fasting from all unnecessary media, and we need to continue to fast for a long 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 way of living.***

***FASTING is what is required in a closed Back to Basics Step Study. This 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 have found people can achieve true media/tech sobriety. 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 maintaining long-term sobriety by 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.***

***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 TV (which is quite uncomfortable and often not successful, so be careful). 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.***

***This is not meant to be easy nor 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 commitment, then you may need to try recovery in some other way than Closed Back to Basics.***

***Eventually, after months and months, or even years, of fasting, some of us move to a recovery phase of just staying away from our addictive media/tech. We may find that some forms of media or tech are not addictive to us. It becomes very individual at this point, and using your sponsor’s guidance and accountability can help you discover which media and tech usage does not put you in danger of a binge or relapse. Be careful, however, because it can be a slippery slope.***

**Part 1**

**How and Where has Media/Tech Been Affecting You?**

*Please answer the following questions:*

Where have you spent more time than you planned in front of electronic screens?

Where have you put off home chores, personal care, and taking care of business while still finding time to focus on your tech/media?

Do you “graze” on your media throughout the day? Explain.

Do you binge on it for hours at a time? Explain.

Do you plan to use tech/media to further your businesses, goals, or visions and yet end up distracted from your target by it? Explain.

Do you turn to your media instead of live people to feel connected and end up more isolated and lonely than when you started? Explain.

Do you tend to neglect healthy intellectual stimulation since your mind is focused on passive media consumption? Explain.

Where have your creative endeavors become impeded by your electronic focus?

Do you believe it is necessary to spend time with tech/media to “relax?” Is it your main source of recreation?

Where have you become disconnected from your body or neglected your health or body’s basic needs for rest, sleep, exercise, good nutrition, etc., because of media usage?

Where have you become disconnected from the natural world and all your senses due to media usage?

**Part 2**

**TOP, MEDIUM, and BOTTOM LINES**

Top Lines:
Top lines are activities and actions that are positive for us, build our self-esteem, and help us maintain sobriety while meeting our needs in healthy, functional ways. This includes healthy or aspirational practices around our internet and technology use, such as using only when necessary, having a plan before using, or keeping our use as minimal as possible.

Middle Lines:
Middle lines are the behaviors, emotions, and situations that feed our urge to act out. We seek to abstain from middle-line behaviors whenever possible and we benefit from reaching out for support when we have to engage in a necessary middle-line activity or find ourselves in a middle-line situation. Middle-line behaviors tend to pull us towards our bottom lines, so we don’t treat them as safe or acceptable alternatives to our bottom lines.

Bottom Lines:
The bottom lines are the compulsive behaviors and media that are self-destructive for us. They are the things that once we start we can’t stop, they trigger the “obsession of the mind.” We abstain from our bottom lines when we are fasting, but even after our fast, our bottom lines remain something we continue to abstain from. The bottom lines are our alcoholic media and we consider them unsafe to use under any circumstance. The bottom lines are self-defined activities that we continue to refrain from so we can maintain our physical, mental, emotional, sexual, and spiritual wholeness. Recovery begins by admitting that following our addictive path is making our lives unmanageable and we are powerless to stop

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. What media is necessary for work, family, recovery, or personal needs? Discuss with your sponsor or media accountability partner what these are. Remember, **when in doubt, leave it out.** All media should help create an abundant and useful life, these are your top lines combined with using all the 12 Steps and UA Tools.
2. What media is your alcoholic media, the media that you can't stop using once you start, or the media that triggers the obsession of the mind? These are your bottom lines.
3. What triggers you to want to use media? What are your gateway drugs: i.e., reading news headlines, talking to people about movies or TV shows, subscription updates, etc? These are things to avoid and are your middle lines. Do everything you can to clear out from your phone, computer, and household, anything that may be a trigger. If you live with someone who uses your alcoholic media, talk to them about your needs and ask them to help you. Do the same when visiting friends. Let people know about your need to be fast from unnecessary media. Most friends, if they are your friends, will help support you in this fast.

**Part 3**

*Please create your top line, middle lines, and bottom lines with media/tech:*

Examples:

Top line:

I am living joyfully and freely. Working the steps daily, meditating daily, going to meetings daily, enjoying my life without media no matter what, etc.

Middle line: (these are things that are gateway drugs—they lead us to pick up):

Negative thinking, self-pity, self-protection, resentment, fear, etc. Opening up YouTube and reading the titles, talking to people about the media we are addicted to, not telling people we need to turn the TV off or let them know that media doesn't agree with us, etc.

Bottom line:

Watching or using any of your alcoholic media. Media that triggers the compulsion to use more. Media that triggers the obsession of the mind. etc.

**TOP LINE:**

**MIDDLE LINE:**

**BOTTOM LINE:**