

**MAA's 2nd Annual Anniversary Event**

*Happy, Joyous, and  
Media-Free!*

**Literature Packet**

October 23, 2022



## **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.

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The Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous have been reprinted and adapted with the permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. ("A.A.W.S."). Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions does not mean that Alcoholics Anonymous is affiliated with this program. A.A. is a program of recovery from alcoholism only - use of A.A.'s Steps or an adapted version in connection with programs and activities which are patterned after A.A., but which address other problems, or use in any other non-A.A. context, does not imply otherwise.

## **The Twelve Steps of Media Addicts Anonymous**

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 Higher Power that may be 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.

## 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 believing 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 which comes at once by taking a few drinks (getting on their media)—drinks (media) 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 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 psyche change. We create this psychic change by sincerely and consistently working the 12 Steps and the 12 Tools of MAA.

## 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 which used to bring us joy and connection.
6. Fantasizing—Rather than having meaningful relationships with real people, we turn to media to satisfy our need for romance, intimacy, and sexual fantasy. We end up feeling a deeper loss of intimacy with others which leads to more deprivation and loneliness than before.
7. Risky behavior—We will endanger our health, life, or someone else's life to get our media fix. We may drive while sending text messages, overeat while bingeing on TV, or deprive ourselves of sleep while using all forms of media.
8. Time irreverence—Time is the only commodity we can never get back. When grazing or bingeing on media, we lose track of time and forget what is truly important in our lives. Media takes priority over everyone and everything.
9. Avoiding our life's purpose—We abandon creative endeavors, intellectual pursuits, and prioritization of our goals because we focus on passive media consumption instead. We jeopardize our income, education, careers, and overall success by procrastinating and repeatedly using media during study and work hours. We lose faith in ourselves and hope for the future.
10. Disconnection from our bodies and nature—We become detached from our body and do not fully enjoy all of our senses. We fail to meet our body's basic needs for rest, sleep, exercise, and good nutrition. We hide indoors with media while avoiding the nourishment and beauty of the natural world.
11. Physical ailments—With prolonged media usage we experience backaches, neck pain, headaches, disturbances in sleep, digestive issues, carpal tunnel syndrome, and vision problems.
12. Withdrawal symptoms—When we stop using our addictive media, we experience withdrawal and detoxification symptoms. Any time we give in to our compulsion to use our addictive media, we reignite the "craving" and find it increasingly more difficult to stop again.

## **Tools of Action for Media Addicts**

*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. Meetings are the platform we use to build a robust personal support network and a real sense of belonging. We encourage newcomers to attend 90 meetings in 90 days to jump-start their recovery.
2. Give service—Giving service right away is THE MASTER PLAN for finding success in getting and staying media sober. Service gives us immediate purpose and connection within our fellowship. We suggest that every newcomer and old-timer choose a home group and take on a service position. Any form of service, such as moderator, time-keeper, action partner, dashboard operator, etc., adds to the quality of our own recovery and helps us stay sober. Sponsoring and carrying the message to the media addict who still suffers is the cornerstone of our own personal recovery.
3. Work with a sponsor—A sponsor is a media-sober member of MAA who is working MAA's Steps and Tools to the best of their ability. We ask a sponsor to guide us through the Twelve Steps and assist us in staying media-sober. We work closely with our sponsor to discover what behaviors, emotions, situations, and circumstances trigger the "phenomenon of craving," and the things that may contribute to being out of control and compulsively using media.
4. Fast from unnecessary media—Fasting is an essential tool if someone sincerely desires relief from media addiction. It is the tourniquet we use to stop the bleeding. We strongly advocate fasting from unnecessary media long enough to break the compulsive cycle. By fasting from all media except what is necessary for work, school, or family needs, we see our media addiction with greater clarity, detoxify our minds and bodies from the overuse of media, and begin to connect to ourselves and others in deeper and healthier ways.
5. Design a media replacement plan—Because media has become our main source of relief, relaxation, reward, recreation, and relationships, we need to find other activities we enjoy. A media replacement plan is an important system to create as soon as possible so we will have enjoyable and healthy activities to replace media.
6. Create a media withdrawal plan—When we stop using media, we find there is often a period of withdrawal and detoxification. A media withdrawal plan provides us with a strategy to get the help and support we need during early abstinence. A sponsor and/or action partner help provide tools and guidance in creating this personal plan.
7. Get an action partner and make outreach calls—We find it helpful to pair up with an action partner to help us stay accountable with our media usage on a regular basis. Media addiction isolated us from real people. We recover from loneliness and gain support by making frequent outreach calls to other media addicts. We use our support network to bookend our media use.
8. Prioritize sleep and body care—Our ability to get sober and stay sober from media includes getting proper rest and a good night's sleep. Therefore, we suggest setting a media curfew for ourselves along with a regular bedtime. We keep electronic media out of the bedroom. During the day, we stay connected to our bodies by eating nourishing food and getting proper exercise and fresh air.
9. Meditate—We regularly take time to meditate in order to feed our spirits in ways that media never could. Meditation helps us connect to a Power greater than ourselves which then trains our mind to turn to this Power rather than seek relief through media.

10. Read recovery literature—We regularly read and study MAA literature as well as the literature of Alcoholics Anonymous to deepen our understanding of addiction and the pathway to freedom and recovery.
11. Clarify through writing—When we write our thoughts down, it allows us to see our disease more clearly. Writing is an indispensable tool for working through our emotions. When we put our difficulties down on paper, it becomes easier to understand a situation and discern any necessary action.
12. Develop a media sobriety plan—After we have fasted and become media sober (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. This plan outlines our personal intentions for media usage. It is our unique guide to making media decisions, as it defines what, when, how, where, and why we use our devices. For many of us, our sobriety plan becomes a continuation of our media fast, that is, refraining from any unnecessary media. Ultimately, our media sobriety plan excludes any media that is our alcoholic (bottom line) media. We continue to re-evaluate our plan with our sponsor to stay media accountable and prevent relapsing.

# The Promises of MAA

## *Signs and Symptoms of Media Recovery*

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 as we have found continued relief, reward, recreation, relaxation, and fulfilling relationships in activities outside of media.
2. Cognitive indifference—We no longer have a *fear of missing out* and enjoy limiting the time on our devices. We stay attentive to what's happening in our personal lives. We actualize ourselves by being fully invested in our life purpose. We balance our media usage with what serves us and others. Our positivity and gratitude lead to greater contentment and peace.
3. Enthusiasm, gratification, and hopefulness—Where once we felt despair, we now feel enthusiastic, gratified, and hopeful about life. As we abstain from unhealthy media, we have found that we are living better and more fulfilled lives without it. 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 take time to encourage others and we try to be of service to them. This brings feelings of usefulness as we see that we are valued for who we are. We see through the myth of seemingly perfect people on media and know that our self-worth comes from our Higher Power.
5. Sociability—We prefer to socialize with others rather than isolate on media. When we are with real people, we are interested in their companionship. Sociability causes us to embrace those activities in life which bring us joy and connection.
6. Faithfulness—We have meaningful relationships with real people. We turn to authentic relationships to satisfy our need for romance, intimacy, and sexual fulfillment. When we stay faithful and honest with our commitments to others, we experience a deeper level of intimacy which leads to more love and affection than before.
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 because we are no longer focused on passive media consumption. We expand our income, education, careers, and overall success by facing and concentrating on our daily studies and income—generating opportunities. 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. "If tempted [by media], we recoil from it as

from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, and we will 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.**" (Quotation is modified for media addicts and taken from pages 84-85 of the Big Book of A.A.)

## **MEDIA ADDICTION SELF- ASSESSMENT**

Are you a media addict? Here is a list of questions that relate to life experiences common among people who show signs of addiction to electronic media:

1. When using any electronic media do you find that you lose track of time and feel surprised when you realize how much time went by without being aware of it.
2. Have you ever felt ashamed of or tried to hide how much time you spend on your electronic media devices?
3. Have you tried to spend less time using your electronic media devices but found it you couldn't quit indulging in its overuse?
4. Do you find yourself wondering about things on the internet when you are not able to use your electronic media?
5. Are you trying to fall asleep while browsing or watching something on your electronic media or TV?
6. Do you wake up in the middle of the night to check your electronic media devices?
7. Do you believe you cannot fall asleep without the aid of watching something or listening to something on your electronic media?
8. Do you find yourself frustrated and/or upset when others seek your attention while you are on your electronic media?
9. Do you isolate and want to be left alone with your electronic media programs.
10. Have you experienced issues related to sore fingers/thumbs, eye strain, numbness of extremities, headaches or other physical complications from long periods of electronic media use?
11. Has anyone in your personal life expressed concerns about the amount of time you spend on the internet?
12. Do you find yourself using electronic media in situations where it might be inappropriate or even dangerous? For example, while driving, at school during class, while at work despite rules against it, during a ceremony (funeral/wedding/church service), at a theater during a concert/play/movie, etc.

## **Resistance Worksheet for Taking a Media Fast**

(Complete this worksheet and read to your sponsor or media sobriety partner)

Goal: Example: I want to fast from all unnecessary media for one month

Start Date:

End Date:

1. Why do I want this goal?
2. Why don't I want this goal? (If you think you have no resistance, look deeper.)
3. Write one short sentence, what is my resistance? What is it I am afraid of or what is it that keeps me from enthusiastically committing to my week of media fasting. (Example: I will NOT be able to handle my feeling if I don't use my media.)
4. Can you absolutely know that your statement in #3 is true? (This is a yes or no question only)
5. What are your reactions when you believe this thought in #3?
6. Who would you be and how would you live without this thought?

7. Turn this thought around to the exact opposite. (Example: I WILL be able to handle my feeling if I don't use.)

8. Give 3 examples where this opposite statement is just as true as your original statement in #3.

1.

2.

3.

9. What are you willing to give up to reach this goal of a one month media fast?

10. What are you willing to receive to obtain this goal?

11. What are your liabilities that you need to address?

12. What are the assets you will activate to accomplish your goal?

## Urge Surfing Worksheet

Please fill out this worksheet **BEFORE** you get on media for relief, recreation, relaxation, or for any kind of retaliation. This is meant to be a breather, a short "time out," a way to transition from one activity to another.

***IMPORTANT:*** By filling out this worksheet, it doesn't mean you can't use your media. If, when you are done, you still feel you must use your media for any of the above "r" reasons, give yourself permission to do so. If you decide to get on media, you will be doing it consciously rather than unconsciously. But you need to commit to completing the whole worksheet.

Answer every question in the order it is given and don't jump ahead.

- Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths in through your nose and exhale through your mouth.
- Accept how you are feeling right now, accept the compulsion, accept yourself just as you are right now. Accept your life just as it is right now. Don't let yourself judge yourself for feeling this way. Don't attach any judgements you have to this situation.
- Find something to appreciate about yourself right now. It can be something very small, but something you can appreciate that you are doing or have done. Filling out this worksheet can be one of them.
- Take out a calculator or add on a piece of paper the number of years you have lived on this planet and multiply it by 365. This will give you the approximate number of days you have been living on earth as a human being. Write the number here \_\_\_\_\_ (if you want the exact amount of days, figure out how many days since your last birthday and add it to this number).
- Congratulate yourself for making it this far.
- Sing a song, any song. You don't have to sing it well. Don't sing for longer than 1 minute.
- Find something humorous about this moment. (It could be the way you just sang your song. )
- Write for one minute or less on what you are hoping to get from going onto your media. What do you think your media will give you or do for you? Write as much as you can in one minute.
- Close your eyes for 30 seconds and see yourself on one of your worst binges and media drunk days (or weeks).

- Did you get what you wanted from media then? Did media give you what it promised?
- Write for one minute about how you felt after binging on media. What did you think about yourself and your life?
- Looking at how many days you have been alive from the above number you wrote down, how much of your life so far do you think you have been on media? Make a guess? (1/4, 1/3, 1/2, 2/3, 3/4?) \_\_\_\_\_. How much of your life have you spent binging on media in the last 10 years?\_\_\_\_\_
- Answer this question: Am I WILLING to ASK my Higher Power to remove my compulsion to use media right now?
- Pause for at least 15 seconds and then say the "Serenity Prayer."
- Ask your Higher Power, in your own words, to remove the compulsion to use your media.
- Wait and listen. (you can repeat your prayer up to 3 times)
- Write down at least one thing you are grateful for right now.
- Make a conscious decision right NOW if you will use media or if you won't.
- I am deciding to (circle one) USE NOT USE my media because...
- If you don't use, what wonderful activity will you do instead?
- Go into your heart and listen and see how it would feel doing that activity instead. How it would feel at the end of the day if you didn't succumb to the media. Write down a few sentences of how it would feel.

Move into your life now with clarity and enthusiasm for whatever you decided to do.

You can always go back and do these exercises one more time if you feel you need or want to.