Media Addicts Anonymous

BEFORE & BEYOND BACK-TO-BASICS

Open Big Book Step Study Group

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**CREATING A MEDIA USAGE PLAN**

**WITH TOP/MIDDLE/BOTTOM LINES**

MEDIA USAGE PLAN: To become sober from our alcoholic media, we need to identify what it is for us personally and then set top, middle, and bottom lines around it so we can stop using it compulsively. In today’s world, we are inundated with media which makes it difficult to give it up entirely. We can, however, determine where and when we are using it unnecessarily and/or where it is damaging our well-being. We invite you to create a media usage plan that will help you to stay away from your alcoholic media. For clarity of mind, we have found that fasting from any unnecessary media for a period of time helps media addicts come out of denial and begin living a life free from the obsession of media. To help you determine the plan that’s best for you, please answer the following questions and share them with your action partner, sponsor, or a fellow member of MAA.

Bottom Lines: 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.” "Bottom lines" are self-defined activities that we refrain from in order to experience 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.

Middle Lines: What triggers you to want to use media? What are your gateway drugs (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 triggering. 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. Most friends, if they really are your friends, will help support you in this program.

Top Lines: What media is necessary for work, family, recovery, or personal needs? This is the media that you can use as long as it is necessary. Remember, **when in doubt, leave it out.** Any media you use should help create an abundant and useful life when used in combination with MAA’s Steps and Tools. “Top lines” are also the activities that are helpful and healthy for us to do and should be included in your Media Replacement Plan.

BOTTOM LINES (those things I stay away from altogether—my addictive media or media behaviors)

MIDDLE LINES (those things that are slippery or could be triggering for me)

TOP LINES (those things that are good for me to do for myself)

Many recovering media addicts have found it necessary to fast for at least 30 days to see the true effect that media has had on us. While it is not required as part of the Before & Beyond Back-to-Basics program, it is **highly suggested** especially if you are new.

**What Does Media Fasting Really Mean?**

New people can have a hard time wrapping their head around what true media/tech fasting means.

There is a difference between “staying away from our addictive media” and “fasting.” Staying away from our addictive media is where many of us want to end up, but that is not something we can usually do early in media addiction recovery. The lines are too blurry. Fasting is where most of us need to start and stay for a long time in order to detox our bodies and minds from the chemicals and effects of addictive media use and take on a new way of living.

FASTING is what is required in Closed B2B Groups. This means NO use of ANY media or tech that is not ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY for work, school or NECESSARY family needs (like setting up doctor appointments or messages to or from school). This means (but is not limited to) no TV, movies, streaming, social media, porn, news, non-necessary shopping, word games, dating and meet up apps, internet ANYTHING UNNECESSARY, phone or tablet apps, gaming, gambling and for many people COULD (and probably SHOULD) include podcasts, music, audiobooks, books online, fiction reading, magazines, 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 fasting, 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 media which isn’t absolutely necessary, 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/friends/partner watch a movie together each week, can I do that?” The response is, “How about suggesting that your family do something else together during that time, like play a board game, dance together, go to the park, go for a walk, read together, or do some other activity that doesn’t require media/tech?” There is a list of 300 things to do besides media on the website (it is right next to the Sunday Funday Meeting listing or under the Literature tab). Look at that, or have them look at that, and pick some things to try. And then there is, “But when I’m at my mom’s house, her TV is always on.” We suggest you ask her if it is 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 pretty uncomfortable, and often not very successful, so be careful). It means not sitting 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, DON’T DO IT. This is not meant to be easy or to be a punishment. It is meant to detox you so that you can get your life back.