

September 16, 2017

SAA Gathering of GTA Meetings

sponsored by SAA GTA Intergroup

David W (Mon, treasurer); tbd (Tues); tbd (Richmond Hill); David M (Wed, Outreach); Ron R (Thurs); tbd (Fri); Stephen H (Sat 9:30); John G (Sat 11); Don B (website); David O (Literature); Mark P (Group Service Rep for Eastern Canada Region SAA)

Agenda

- Discussion on our message: What do we do well? How can we do better?
- Social (potluck)

SAA GTA Intergroup - purpose

- every meeting is independent except things that would impact the group
- representatives from each SAA GTA meetings, plus service positions (not all meetings currently represented)
- oversee various communication channels:
 - saatoronto.org website (which is mobile-friendly)
 - phone line
 - email
- as well as:
 - sponsor the annual conference
 - maintain a literature inventory
 - created "Service" and "Sponsorship" pamphlets
 - created meeting lists in postcard and business card formats

SAA network at Regional level (learn, share, support)

- ISO (International Service Organization of SAA) wants local meetings to form regional areas (~30 meetings)
- we've reached out to Manitoba and all points eastward
- monthly conference calls started mid-2017

phone/email

- we have auto-response emails when they email
- Intergroup Communications rep responds to phone and email messages
- most of these are questions already addressed on the website – but perhaps because of fear, they didn't scan the whole website and/or they want confirmation
- ISO has standards for phone – needs to be a person who answers, that they 12-step the caller, and that they have a temporary sponsor the first time they attend a meeting
- in responding, we stress that, at the meetings, there are others who will listen and talk to you
- doesn't get into helping people determine they're sex addicts

- encouraging people to come to their first meeting ... making them feel welcome, allaying their fears
- volume goes up in September, and in January
- ~6 phone calls and 6 emails / month
- people ask about spouses: we say that SAA meetings are not for helping people to help their partners
 - we could refer to S-ANON on website
- can we somehow determine how many people came to a meeting as a result of visiting the website? Can we determine what proportion of those people kept coming back? (ISO tried to do this but found it very difficult)

Other communication channels

- there are other tools to get out the message – social media (Facebook, Twitter)
 - would need a moderator
 - need to establish boundaries, rules
 - need to consider how to provide for anonymity / security (private member groups?)
 - good example: Refuge Recovery Toronto (Facebook page)
- need a message board – could be on the website
- marketing is important, but it's not the top priority right now

Welcome at Meetings

- greeter role – person coming as a result of a phone or email message would be directed to them, and can approach them after the meeting (so that people would be less likely to run out in fear)
- having greeters break some barriers for people who are challenged by relating to others
 - walking through the door is the toughest part
- this should not preclude anyone else from welcoming newcomers
- newcomers would like to know at least one person they could talk to (otherwise newcomers see others talk to each other)
- greeter has to have the right message – should have an unwritten but understood checklist of what newcomers should hear
- our scripts try to refer to everything, but it's at the expense of explaining why we're referring to those things
- physical setup of the room – conducive to people feeling comfortable entering and leaving the room discreetly (e.g. not drawing attention to themselves by having to cross a room full of people to find a seat)

welcoming women

- our meetings are open to all women and men who are sex addicts or who think they may be sex addicts
- message needs to be consistent
- some people have suggested to women newcomers that there's another S-fellowship where there's more women – the intent is to be sensitive to women's

apprehension of facing a room full of men, but women have expressed that they're feeling discouraged from attending SAA

- ISO – Safe and Sober Meetings pamphlet – particular reference to welcoming women (disparity)
- could have a specified greeter for women newcomers, maybe with a minimum sobriety requirement, who could point them to the women's resources (**John?**)

Now that they're here...

- do we want to continue to say "handholding is optional"
- shouldn't assume everyone will appreciate a hug – need to ask people first if they're open to receiving a hug
- encouraging people to come back

Sharing:

- timing of shares: Toronto meetings started doing this because of the size (attendance)
- large groups tried to tackle this by splitting into two groups
- then decided to time (based on the tenet that sharing is a "right")
- this has become "our" culture
- round robin does give people more of a chance to share (so, pros and cons to both)
- at S-ANON, they split the sharing; one group is about newcomers and first step only (that group allows cross-talk)
- cross-talk: it's not in any recovery literature – it's a tradition

Sharing One's Sobriety

- there will always be people who come but don't share about recovery, don't work recovery, share mostly on their problem – what could we do to help these people?
- when John G came to SAA, only the one meeting
- only got sober when John R came and expressed what he got, what he has, how much better things are – and John G saw that John R had something they he wanted
- hearing about people's length of sobriety can be a pro – (shows people can get healthy, and it can last) also, pros and cons

new Friday meeting (planning underway – will start very soon)

- provides a significantly different option to other SAA GTA meetings -- different format for different needs
- Bill W designed the meeting for newcomers to find the meeting and hear the message
- at least 2 people greeting at the front door
- script will be shorter, but most important part is for the newcomer
- popcorn style – people who feel moved to share (as not everyone will feel like it)
- don't want people 'bolting' – encourage them to stay afterwards
- sponsorship./newcomer coordinator (be there for them, without pressuring)

- fellowship coordinator – host retreats, encourage talking with others, list of available sponsors
- script: 1st Friday – speaker who lives free of addictive behaviour
- shares will not be timed, and will only be about recovery (not checking in)
- 2nd Fri: step reading –everyone will have a copy of the SAA green book
- 3rd Fri: cross-talking meeting – others get to share on their experience based on someone's share
- 4th: topic discussion (draw from a hat)
- wants to organize a retreat
 - should offer something which eases people's transition back to the real world (how to sustain one's serenity, spirituality and sobriety)
- planning underway – many people are helping
- it's frustrating to hear only about other people's problems – many people like AA because people only talk about recovery
- should focus on the solution, not the problem
- no checking in on bottom lines, no checking in on amount of sobriety
- goal is to remove the shame

"taking inventory"

- what we've done today – a forum open to all fellowship members
- Intergroup could be working on this more regularly (this is our first attempt)