**Anything in red isn’t to be read out**

**Notes for the secretary,**

**prior to the start of this**

**Zoom / Telephone meeting**

It is your responsibility throughout the meeting to be aware of members in noisy environments or who are making a noise. Please announce with something like this:

“We are getting some background noise. I would like to remind members who are not speaking to please mute by pressing the mute button or \*6 {star 6} if you called in on the phone”

List of literature used in the meeting:

* Sex Addicts Anonymous (The Green Book)
* Intimacy Avoidance (Formerly Recovery from Compulsive Sexual Avoidance – A Return to Intimacy) pamphlet
* First Step to Intimacy – A Guide for Working the First Step on Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance or Sexual Anorexia pamphlet
* ISA Step Study Resources
* Alcoholics Anonymous (The Big Book)
* Sexual Anorexia: Overcoming Sexual Self-Hatred by Dr Patrick Carnes

**UK Wednesday ISA Group Meeting**

Welcome, this is the Wednesday Intimacy Avoidance & Sexual Anorexia Zoom meeting of Sex Addicts Anonymous. My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I am a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (sex addict/ intimacy avoidant/ sexual anorexic) from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (location).

**Disclaimer**

We ask that when participants are not speaking, they mute by pressing the microphone icon in Zoom or by pressing (star) \*6 if you are calling in by phone, unmute again by pressing the microphone icon or (star) \*6. Please dress and behave as if this were an in-person meeting and be sensitive and aware of what is on your camera. We encourage participants to change their Zoom display names to first name only and location if they wish.

**Serenity Prayer**

Please will you now unmute your microphones and join me in opening the meeting with the serenity prayer.

**God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,**

**The courage to change the things I can,**

**And the wisdom to know the difference**.

**Opening**

SAA is a fellowship of people who share our experience, strength, and hope with each other, so that we may stop our addictive sexual behaviour and help others to recover from sexual addiction and dependency in all its forms. This is a closed meeting, meaning anyone who has a desire to stop addictive sexual behaviour, whether this is acting out, intimacy avoidance, or sexual anorexia is welcome to attend and to participate.

This meeting is focused on intimacy avoidance and sexual anorexia. Doing things to prevent intimacy or not doing things that promote closeness and connection is sometimes referred to as “acting in” and can manifest in different ways and with varying degrees of severity. Through this meeting we aim to cultivate authentic closeness and connection with ourselves, our Higher Power, and others.

Our programme is based on the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, but we are not affiliated with AA or any other organization or agency. We are not a religious organization or aligned with any sect or denomination. This is not a place to meet sexual partners nor is it group therapy. We try to listen respectfully to what others have to say and to share our experience as it seems appropriate. We do not give advice.

Anonymity is a cornerstone of the Twelve Step Program. We use only our first names. Whatever our status or position outside this group, it is not an issue here. Anonymity and confidentiality are essential to this being a safe place for all of us. Whatever you hear here, let it stay here, when you leave here.

We hope you will join in sharing the collective experience, strength and hope that is ours when we work the program and trust our Higher Power to deliver the promises. If you are new or having a trying time remember that others of us have been there too. Keep coming back! It works!

**Introductions**

We will now take a few minutes for introductions. Please introduce yourself by your first name only, and location and how you are feeling if you wish. Please keep introductions brief as there will be time for sharing later. I’ll start…

Hi my name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I am a (sex addict/ intimacy avoidant/ sexual anorexic) from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (location).

**Tradition 5**

Could we have a moment’s silence to remember Tradition 5 which is that each group has but one primary purpose, to carry its message to the sex addict, intimacy avoidant, and sexual anorexic who still suffers. **{Silence} {15 seconds}** Thank you.

**Readings**

The Twelve Steps

I am now going to ask for a volunteer to read the *12 steps of SAA from Sex Addicts Anonymous (The Green Book)*, page 20 through to page 21. If you have a copy or can see the screen and are willing to read, please unmute now.

**Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:**

1. **We admitted we were powerless over addictive Sexual behaviour - 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 all 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 Sex addicts and to practise these principles in our lives.**

What is Intimacy?

I am now going to ask for a volunteer to read *“What is Intimacy” from the First Step to Intimacy - A Guide for Working the First Step on Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance or Sexual Anorexia* leaflet.

**Intimacy means a close, familiar, and usually affectionate personal relationship with self, others, or a Higher Power. A person can have friendships or relationships that are intimate but not sexual, and many sex addicts have learned that a person can have sex without being intimate.**

Acting In and Acting Out

I am now going to ask for a volunteer to read Acting In and Acting Out. This reading has been adapted from the SAA pamphlet *Sexual Anorexia* and excerpts from *Sex Addicts Anonymous (The Green Book),* pages 3, 14 and 15.

**Acting In and Acting Out**

**“Sex addiction is a disease affecting the mind, body, and spirit. It is progressive, with the behaviour and its consequences usually becoming more severe over time. We experience it as compulsion, which is an urge that is stronger than our will to resist, and as obsession, which is a mental preoccupation with sexual behaviour and fantasies. In SAA, we have come to call our addictive sexual behaviour ‘acting out.’” "Acting in" is any compulsive sexual behaviour that serves to avoid or block sexual, emotional, or spiritual intimacy with others, ourselves, or our Higher Power." Since different addicts suffer from different behaviours, and since our sexuality is experienced in so many different ways, it is necessary that SAA members define for themselves, with the help of their sponsors or others in recovery, which of their sexual behaviours they consider to be "acting in and acting out."**

Sexual Anorexia

I am now going to ask for a volunteer to read Sexual Anorexia. This reading has been adapted from *Sexual Anorexia: Overcoming Sexual Self-Hatred by Dr Patrick Carnes* and from *Sex Addicts Anonymous* *(The Green Book)*, page 6.

**Sexual Anorexia**

**"Sexual anorexia is an obsessive state in which the physical, mental, and emotional task of avoiding sex dominates one's life. Like self-starvation with food or compulsive debting or hoarding with money, deprivation with sex can make one feel powerful and defended against all hurts."**

**“We may always have felt unable or unwilling to be sexual. Or we may have experienced periods of feeling ‘shut down’ alternating with other periods of sexual acting out. Whether we were acting out or not being sexual at all, our addiction involved being emotionally unavailable.”**

**Meeting Focus**

We now come to the focus of today’s meeting, this being the (first/ second/ third/ fourth/ fifth) Wednesday of the month the focus is

**FIRST Wednesday:** a reading from the book *Sexual Anorexia: Overcoming Sexual Self Hatred by Dr Patrick Carnes*. If you have a copy or can see the screen and are willing to read, please unmute now. We encourage each reader to read a paragraph and then pass to another member to continue the reading. This way everyone has the opportunity to be of service.

**SECOND Wednesday:** the 18 Symptoms of Intimacy Avoidance taken from the SAA leaflet *Sexual Anorexia*. If you have a copy or can see the screen and are willing to read, please unmute now. (See below for the list of symptoms)

**THIRD Wednesday:** a reading from the SAA leaflet *First Step to Intimacy - A Guide for Working the First Step on Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance or Sexual Anorexia*. If you have a copy or can see the screen and are willing to read, please unmute now. We encourage each reader to read a paragraph and then pass to another member to continue the reading. This way everyone has the opportunity to be of service.

**FOURTH Wednesday:** a reading from the SAA leaflet *Intimacy Avoidance.* If you have a copy or can see the screen and are willing to read, please unmute now. We encourage each reader to read a paragraph and then pass to another member to continue the reading. This way everyone has the opportunity to be of service.

**FIFTH Wednesday:** a main share from (name of sharer) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who will share their experience, strength and hope with us for 15 minutes. Can I please have a spiritual timekeeper? **If there is no main share repeat one of the previous weeks.**

SECOND Wednesday:

Symptoms of Intimacy Avoidance

**Symptoms some of us have experienced include, but are not limited to:**

1. **Practicing avoidance of sexual thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.**
2. **Obsessive sexual thoughts (about having sex and/or avoiding it).**
3. **A feeling that our sexuality is inherently bad and something we should feel ashamed of and guilty about.**
4. **Pretending that flirtation and sexual advances aren’t really happening to us and acting uninterested purely based on fear of taking risks.**
5. **A pattern of sex and relationships with active sex addicts and/or other unavailable people.**
6. **A pattern of addictive sexual behaviour (acting out), followed by a pattern of compulsive sexual avoidance (acting in).**
7. **Extreme fear of combining emotional intimacy with sexuality.**
8. **Finding fault or starting fights with a spouse or partner to avoid sexual relations.**
9. **Being emotionally unavailable – in sexual and non-sexual relationships.**
10. **Only socializing in groups to avoid one-on-one relationships.**
11. **Avoiding social situations altogether due to extreme discomfort.**
12. **Only being sexual in non-intimate situations.**
13. **An inability to accept nurturing and care from ourselves, our Higher Power, and others.**
14. **An inability to trust and rely on others, believing that people will always let us down and it is safer if we just do things on our own.**
15. **The compulsive use of masturbation, with fantasy and/or pornography, as a way to avoid intimacy with others, and prevent sexual abandonment.**
16. **Mistaking compulsive sexual avoidance for recovery and/or healthy sexuality.**
17. **Preferring fantasy over interacting with the people in our lives; so much that fantasy creates a wall between ourselves and the real world.**
18. **Hiding the joys and pains of our life from people we know and trust, due to self-pity, false pride and/or fear.**

 **This list is not meant to be diagnostic. Each person must determine their own pattern of avoidant behaviour, with the help of a sponsor or others in the program. Working the Twelve Steps of SAA will lead to an awakening that allows us to live a new way of life according to spiritual principles.**

**General Sharing**

We now come to general sharing.

Does anyone have an additional recovery question or recovery milestone that they would like to pose to the group, where our experience, strength and hope can be shared during sharing time?

When sharing, please remember to avoid mentioning places and behaviours that may be triggering to others. We use “I” statements, rather than “you” statements to avoid sounding like we are giving advice. Please avoid cross-sharing and referring to other members by name. We try to remember that each group has but one primary purpose: to carry the message to the still suffering sex addict, intimacy avoidant and sexual anorexic.

Please try to keep your shares to approximately 3 minutes and do not be offended if you are asked to stop. Is there anyone who is willing to act as the spiritual timekeeper? Anyone willing to act as spiritual timekeeper, should give a one-minute warning towards the end of the share by saying “One-minute”, and by saying “Time” at the 3-minute limit.

Sharing will finish at 8.05pm UK time or 5 minutes past the hour wherever you are in the world (if we have group conscience the meeting will finish at 7.55pm).

Please introduce yourself if you wish to share, the meeting is now open.

**Sponsorship Statement**

Intimacy avoidance and sexual anorexia (ISA) is a relatively new focus for SAA. Some of us have found it challenging to find a sponsor with experience working the steps with this focus and have chosen to join an ISA step study group, but this is not a requirement for participation in this meeting. Those of us who already have a sponsor, have found it helpful to discuss ISA with them as they continue to support us with working the 12 steps focused on acting out. For more information on step study groups please speak to the secretary after the meeting or email avoidance@saa-recovery.org. Please feel free to remain on the meeting at the end for fellowship and to speak with fellows about what they are doing in their recovery.

**Group Business**

Does anyone have any group business or SAA related announcements?

# Tradition 7

Each SAA group should be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions. If participants wish to contribute, this group asks that contributions be made to the Telemeeting Intergroup by visiting saatalk.info/donate. According to our traditions, the Telemeeting Intergroup can only accept donations from members. Members are free to contribute as they see appropriate.

If any members would like to be of service to this meeting please stay on after the meeting for information on available service. If members would like to support the wider fellowship of intimacy avoidance and sexual anorexia recovery, including development of literature, they can contact the ISO Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance Awareness Committee by emailing avoidance@saa-recovery.org.

# Literature

SAA literature can be bought in the UK by visiting saauk.info and going to the ‘Shop’ section, internationally from saa-store.org, and can also be viewed online for free by going to saa-recovery.org/literature. In this meeting we occasionally use non-SAA approved literature as little has been written about the issue of intimacy avoidance and sexual anorexia. A list of the materials used in this meeting can be obtained by speaking to the secretary after the meeting.

**Closing**

I am now going to ask for a volunteer to read our group’s promises, developed from excerpts of *The SAA Promises* *(adapted for Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance)* from the ISA Step Study resources.

**By cultivating a sober and spiritual connection with ourselves, our Higher Power, and others, we will discover healthier experiences of connection and sexuality. Our serenity will grow as we continue to live according to spiritual principles. The miracle of recovery from the addiction of intimacy & sexual avoidance will become a reality we experience every day. Working the twelve steps brings us many gifts:**

* **We will find freedom from our addictive sexual behaviour; including intimacy & sexual avoidance.**
* **We will live in the present and enjoy our lives.**
* **We will learn to be emotionally present during sexual experiences, and use our sexuality to express our love, appreciation, and faith.**
* **We will grow in humility and will be able to admit when we are wrong.**
* **We will deepen our compassion and become more forgiving of others and ourselves.**
* **We will keep the company of people who love and respect us.**
* **We will start to see life in terms of growth, change, and transformation.**
* **We will have a greater sense of belonging, emotional intimacy and true friendship with others and ourselves.**
* **We will learn to express our affection, rather than seek isolation, false protection, power, or control.**
* **We will ask for and receive help when we need it.**
* **We will experience profound healing from shame as we learn to let go and cultivate vulnerability.**
* **We will see that the world is a much safer place than we had ever known before, because we are always in the care of a loving Higher Power.**

**Are these extravagant promises? WE THINK NOT!**

**They are being fulfilled among us, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, but they will always materialise if we work for them.**

This group meets every Wednesday at 6.55pm UK time for a prompt 7pm start.

I will now read the Yellow Card:

Who you see here,

What you hear here,

When you leave here,

Let it stay here.

Thank you to those members who have been of service to the group and thank you for allowing me to be of service.

That brings us to the end of this weeks’ meeting. You are more than welcome to stay online after the meeting for fellowship and to share phone numbers.

Please will you now unmute your microphones and join me in closing the meeting with the serenity prayer.

**God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,**

**The courage to change the things I can,**

**And the wisdom to know the difference**.