**BACK TO BASICS, “A Design for Living”**

A Closed and Committed 12-Step Study and Media Sobriety Group

**Assignments for Month 3**

**WEEK ONE**

**Gratitude Practice**: Reflect on some of the people, places, living beings, institutions, personal circumstances, experiences, or things you are grateful for. Select ten of them and write about them briefly. Read your gratitude list to someone or share them at an MAA meeting this week.

**Day 1 Through 4**

**Writing Assignment**: Read the *Tools of Action for Media Addicts* below. These actions support media sobriety. Write about the tools you’ve been implementing. Read what you wrote to your sponsor.

**Question**: (a) Which tools have you started using?

(b) Which tools do you need to use more often?

(c) Have you created a **Media Sobriety Plan**? If not create one now.

**TOOLS OF ACTION FOR MEDIA ADDICTS**

1. **Go to meetings**: We attend MAA meetings to learn about media addiction, stop isolating, and gain support. It is suggested that newcomers attend **90 meetings in 90 days** to jump-start their recovery.
2. **Give service**: Choose a meeting to be your **home group** and take a **service position**. Any form of service, no matter how small, which helps a fellow sufferer, adds to the quality of our own recovery and helps us to stay sober. Carrying the message to the media addict who still suffers is the basic purpose of our fellowship.
3. **Work with a sponsor**: A sponsor is a media-sober member of MAA who has taken all Twelve Steps and is living the Steps and Traditions to the best of their ability. We ask a sponsor to guide us through the Twelve Steps and assist us in staying media-sober.
4. **Identify your triggers**: We work closely with our sponsors to discover what behaviors, emotions, situations, and circumstances trigger the *“phenomenon of craving*,” the things that cause us to be out of control and compulsively use media.
5. **Fast from unnecessary media**: We recommend 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 more clearly and begin to connect to ourselves and others in deeper and healthier ways.
6. **Design a media replacement plan**: Because media has become our main source of relief, relaxation, reward, and recreation, 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.
7. **Create a media withdrawal plan**: When you stop using media, there will be a period of withdrawal and detoxification. A media withdrawal plan provides you with a strategy to get the help and support you need.
8. **Develop a media sobriety plan**: A media sobriety 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. We continue to re-evaluate our plans to stay accountable and to prevent a relapse.
9. **Make outreach and support calls**: Media addiction isolated us from real people. We recover from loneliness and gain support by making frequent outreach calls to other media addicts. We may also bookend our media usage at the start and end of our media activity to stay accountable.
10. **Prioritize sleep and body care**: Our ability to get sober and stay sober from media depends on 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.
11. **Meditate**: We regularly take time to meditate, 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.
12. **Read recovery literature**: We regularly read and study the *Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous* and other Twelve Step literature to deepen our understanding of addiction and the pathway to freedom and recovery.
13. **Discover 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.

**Week 2**

**Gratitude Practice**: Reflect on some of the people, places, living beings, institutions, personal circumstances, experiences, or things you are grateful for. Select ten of them and write about them briefly. Read your gratitude list to someone or share them at an MAA meeting this week.

**Day 1**

**Writing Assignment**: Read the following passages from the Big Book (page 124) and answer the question below. Read what you wrote to your sponsor this week.

* “Henry Ford once made a wise remark to the effect that experience is the thing of supreme value in life. That is true only if one is willing to turn the past to good account. We grow by our willingness to face and rectify errors and convert them into assets. The [media addict's] past thus becomes the principal asset of the family and frequently it is almost the only one!”

“This painful past may be of infinite value to other families still struggling with their problem…. Showing others who suffer how we were given help is the very thing which makes life seem so worthwhile to us now. Cling to the thought that, in God’s hands, the dark past is the greatest possession you have—the key to life and happiness for others. With it you can avert death and misery for them.”

**Question**: How can your painful past benefit others?

**Day 2 through 4 – Step 4**

**Read** the following passages from the Big Book (page 69).

* “We reviewed our own conduct over the years past. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate? Whom had we hurt? Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness? Where were we at fault, what should we have done instead? We got this all down on paper and looked at it.”

“In this way we tried to shape a sane and sound ideal for our future sex life. We subjected each relation to this test—was it selfish or not? We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them. We remembered always that our sex powers were God-given and therefore good, neither to be used lightly or selfishly nor to be despised and loathed.”

1. **Reading**: Read ***A Few Thoughts on Shame*** (document in your packet).
2. **Assignment: Fourth Step Inventory Short Form – Sex Conduct and Fantasy**

Fill out your *Fourth Step Inventory Short Form – Sex Conduct and Fantasy* and make an appointment with your sponsor to read it to them by this weekend.

**WEEK 3**

**Gratitude Practice**: Reflect on some of the people, places, living beings, institutions, personal circumstances, experiences, or things you are grateful for. Select ten of them and write about them briefly. Read your gratitude list to someone or share them at an MAA meeting this week.

**Day 1 – Steps 4, 5 and 6**

**Read** the following passage from the Big Book (page 69).

* “Whatever our ideal turns out to be, we must be willing to grow toward it. We must be willing to make amends where we have done harm, provided that we do not bring about still more harm in so doing. In other words, we treat sex as we would any other problem. In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come, if we want it."

1. ***Fourth Step Long Form – Sex Conduct and Fantasy***

Complete your *Month 3 Fourth Step Long Form* for one of the sex/fantasy situations you listed on your *Fourth Step Inventory Short Form*. Make an appointment with your sponsor to read it to them by this weekend.

1. Read to your sponsor when complete.

**Day 2 – Steps 6, 7, 8 and 9**

**Read** the following quote from the Big Book.

* “God alone can judge our sex situation. Counsel with persons is often desirable, but we let God be the final judge. We realize that some people are as fanatical about sex as others are loose. We avoid hysterical thinking or advice.”

1. Incorporate this into your daily **Quiet Time** and prayer by asking your Higher Power to remove your shortcomings and replace them with assets (*Seventh Step Prayer*).
2. ***Eighth Step Worksheet – People We Have Harmed*** and ***Eighth & Ninth Step – Amends Action Form***.

* Write a list of those you have harmed through your sexual behavior, using the *People We Have Harmed* worksheet and the *Amends Action Form* and include the required details in each form.
* Talk to your sponsor about how to make these amends.
* Begin to make those amends you can make right now. Start with the easier ones, as described in the *Amends Action Form*, and work your way to the more challenging ones.

**Day 3 and 4 – Steps 10 and 11**

**Read** the following quotes from the Big Book.

* “Suppose we fall short of the chosen ideal and stumble? Does this mean we are going to get drunk? Some people tell us so. But this is only a half-truth. It depends on us and on our motives. If we are sorry for what we have done and have the honest desire to let God take us to better things, we believe we will be forgiven and will have learned our lesson. If we are not sorry, and our conduct continues to harm others, we are quite sure to drink. We are not theorizing. These are facts out of our experience.”
* “To sum up about sex: We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing. If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of our selves….”

1. **Writing Assignment**: Write about what you believe is the right ideal for yourself in intimate relationships and how you can behave differently. Read this to your sponsor.
2. **Quiet Time**: Take time to sit with your Higher Power and ask for guidance in doing the right thing in your relationships going forward.

**Week 4 – 12**

**Gratitude Practice**: Reflect on some of the people, places, living beings, institutions, personal circumstances, experiences, or things you are grateful for. Select ten of them and write about them briefly. Read your gratitude list to someone or share them at an MAA meeting this week.

**Day 1**

**Writing Assignment**: Read the following passage from the Big Book and answer the questions below and read what you wrote to your sponsor.

* “…Never talk down to a [media addict] from any moral or spiritual hilltop; simply lay out the kit of spiritual tools for [their] inspection. Show [them] how they worked with you. Offer [them] friendship and fellowship. Tell [them] that if [they] want to get well, you will do anything to help.”

**Questions**: (a) What does service mean to you?

(b) What do you think we are talking about in Back to Basics when it comes to service?

**Day 2 – Step 12**

**Writing Assignment**: Please read the following paragraph from the Big Book, then answer the questions below. Read your answers to your sponsor.

* “When [they] see you know all about the [media addiction] game, commence to describe yourself as [a media addict]. Tell [them] how baffled you were, how you finally learned that you were sick. Give [them] an account of the struggles you made to stop. Show [them] the mental twist which leads to the first drink of a spree. We suggest you do this as we have done it in the chapter on alcoholism. If [they are a media addict], [they] will understand you at once. [They] will match your mental inconsistencies with some of [their] own.”

We have found that people who stay in Back to Basic as Group Sponsors have a much better chance of staying sober and of building a strong recovery. Remember, you are still new to recovery.

**Questions**: (a) Could you imagine continuing with Back to Basics and becoming a Group Sponsor or a Group Sponsor in Training?

(b) What benefits can you see for you if you stepped up to serve as a Group Sponsor?

(c) What would keep you from taking this position?

**Day 3 – Step 12**

**Writing Assignment**: Please read the following paragraph from the Big Book (page 153) and answer the questions below. Read your answers to your sponsor.

* "…Am I to be consigned to a life where I shall be stupid, boring and glum, like some righteous people I see? I know I must get along without liquor, but how can I? Have you a sufficient substitute?”
* “Yes, there is a substitute, and it is vastly more than that. It is a fellowship in [Media Addicts] Anonymous. There you will find release from care, boredom, and worry. Your imagination will be fired. Life will mean something at last. The most satisfactory years of your existence lie ahead. Thus, we find the fellowship, and so will you."
* “You are going to meet these new friends in your own community. Near you, [media Addicts] are dying helplessly like people in a sinking ship. If you live in a large place, there are hundreds. High and low, rich and poor, these are future fellows of [Media Addicts] Anonymous. Among them you will make lifelong friends. You will be bound to them with new and wonderful ties, for you will escape disaster together and you will commence shoulder to shoulder your common journey. Then you will know what it means to give of yourself that others may survive and rediscover life. You will learn the full meaning of ‘*Love thy neighbor as thy self*.’”

**Questions**: (a) In what ways could you help build Media Addicts Anonymous?

(b) Could you start a meeting?

(c) Could you serve as a General Service Rep (or GSR) for your home meeting?

(d) Could you find ways to reach out to schools, communities, families, therapists, etc.?

(e) How do you see yourself spreading the message?

**Day 4**

**Writing Assignment**: Please read the following paragraph from the Big Book and answer the question below. Read your answers to your sponsor.

* “Both you and the new [person] must walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress. If you persist, remarkable things will happen. When we look back, we realize that the things which came to us when we put ourselves in God’s hands were better than anything we could have planned. Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances!”

**Questions**: (a) How can you stay on track when you complete Back to Basics?

(b) How will you stay sober?

**Suggestions Going Forward:**

1. Continue with Back to Basics as a **Group Sponsor** if you can. Continue your fast until you have completed all your steps. This means fasting until you have completed all your amends. If you have living amends, keep talking to your sponsor about when you can feel complete with your amends.
2. Make sure you have developed a **Media Sobriety Plan** and begin implementing it. Have a solid after-care plan.
3. **Sponsor** or continue to sponsor your sponsee in Back to Basics, so they may finish their Steps through Month 3.
4. **Qualify** at the Saturday *There is a Solutions* meeting. Sharing your strength and hope related to your experience before, during, and after Back to Basics will help many media addicts, especially those newcomers to MAA. A Group Sponsor will notify you when you are scheduled to speak. Remember this is one of the commitments in Back to Basics.
5. **Attend** at least two media related recovery **meetings** per week, and three is even better (this includes MAA, ITAA, and Media Recovery UA meetings)—spread the message by sharing your experience, strength, and hope.
6. Stay in touch with your **B2B Sobriety Group** on a regular basis and have outreach calls with other MAA fellows.
7. Sponsor other MAA members one-on-one.
8. **Listen to *“Back to Basics”* and *“There Is a Solution”* recordings** regularly. If you feel the urge to use or that your sobriety is on shaky grounds, ask your Higher Power for guidance, go to a meeting, make an outreach call, fill out an *Urge Surfing Worksheet*, and/or listen to a B2B/Solutions recording. You may find it helpful to start your day by reading recovery literature, including sections of the Back-to-Basics meeting scripts.
9. Attend the *Before and Beyond Back to Basic* open meetings.
10. Continue to use **Two Way Prayer** on a daily basis.
11. Use ALL the **MAA Tools** daily or as many as you can on a given day.
12. **Give** **service** at media recovery meetings. Volunteer to serve as meeting moderator or to operate the Dashboard for the Saturday Qualifications phone meeting.
13. **Support your meeting(s)** and help build them up by attending their monthly **business meetings**.
14. **Start a meeting** with another MAA member if you can.
15. Apply the principles **Honesty**, **Confession** and **Freedom** with your sponsor to **stay on track**.
16. Finally, the most important assignment: **HAVE FUN EVERY DAY!** Enjoy your life. Insist on abundant living by regularly engaging in activities on your *Media Replacement Plan*. Find ways to be happy, joyous, and free without your media. Insist on enjoying your life.

**Definition of True Fun** (Source: *The Power of Fun* by Catherine Price)

“True fun … is the feeling of being fully present and engaged, free from self-criticism and judgement. It is the thrill of losing ourselves in what we’re doing and not caring about the outcome. It is laughter. It is playful rebellion. It is euphoric connection. It is the bliss that comes from letting go. When we are truly having fun, we are not lonely. We are not anxious or stressed. We are not consumed by self-doubt or existential malaise…. True Fun makes us feel alive.”

Discipline is remembering what you want. One hundred percent of your job is filling up your cup!