

## SMART Recovery Ground Rules

**1. Allow others to make their own decisions but be responsible for your own behavior and decisions.** We regard the use of alcohol, other drugs, or other potentially harmful behaviors as a personal matter. You are welcome to attend regardless of whether you are currently using or not. If your behavior is disruptive for any reason, it will be pointed out, and you may be asked to leave if it continues; however, no one will try to shame you or pressure you into quitting.

**2. All participants agree to confidentiality.** So that everyone can feel safe to work on their issues, it is not permissible to tell anyone outside the group about who attended or what was said that might in any way identify any individual. Do not identify people as meeting attendees if you meet them outside the group. You may, of course, discuss the tools and techniques that you learn at meetings and how you are using them to promote your own recovery. Violation of confidentiality is grounds for being barred from meetings.

Socializing between group members is seen as a private matter between the individuals. However, no reason exists for attendees to unnecessarily expose themselves to possible harm by sharing private information. The group will not provide a list of names, phone numbers, email addresses, or any other personal information to members.

**3. Participate actively, if you like. Try not to hold side conversations and stay focused on the group.** Feel free to ask questions and to share ideas that have helped you or to just listen and observe. You stand to benefit more from participating actively. Be sure to give others time to participate, too. We encourage “cross talk” but discourage drunk-a-logues as well as participants giving an extended presentation about SMART Recovery that may be suitable for a lecture but is too long for a meeting.

**4. Show respect for all by not labeling others or using offensive language or behavior.** Threats, intimidation, violent behavior, and possession of weapons are all grounds for being barred from meetings.

**5. Our focus is on how to abstain.** If you have a goal other than total life-long abstinence, that is your choice, but the groups’ focus remains on abstinence. Hopefully, what you learn will still be of help to you no matter what your chosen goal.

**6. Participants benefit most by taking primary responsibility for their own recovery.** No sponsorship or buddy system exists in SMART Recovery (though these can be found in other groups). In our opinion, practicing what you learn at meetings on a daily basis and following through on self-imposed assignments best supports recovery.

**7. Stay focused on business—gaining independence from harmful behaviors.** We join together to work on ways to abstain from harmful addictive behaviors. Try to keep meetings friendly and full of fun, but focused on recovery.

**8. Stay focused on (and use) the SMART Recovery program.** The SMART Recovery 4-Point Program<sup>®</sup> has been developed by professionals based on the best research available and reviewed by an international panel of experts. While you are welcome to explore other paths and discuss alternative treatments at meetings, meetings are not a place to promote or sell treatments, recruit clients, etc. nor a place to bash other groups, treatments, or programs.

**9. Relapse is seen as a chance for practicing your new skills, not something to be ashamed about.** Instead of downing yourself or using your relapse as an excuse to give up, use it to observe how you got yourself to relapse, what the triggers were and what thoughts led you to use against your better judgment. Write down an ABC analysis and bring it to the next meeting for discussion.

**10. If you think someone has a life-threatening problem,** like severe depression, suicidal thoughts, incoherence, or is “flipping-out”, strongly recommend that the person call their doctor or mental health professional and contact the group’s Volunteer Advisor immediately.

**Although attendance is free, please help by making a donation or volunteering to help.** Ask the Facilitator or Volunteer Advisor for ideas on how you can help the group as a volunteer, such as:

- Donate money to help defray direct costs like materials, etc.
- Volunteer to help with opening and closing the room, managing materials, etc.
- Consider becoming the facilitator or co-facilitator for the group.
- Help to promote SMART Recovery
- Spread the health!
- Tell your friends, counselor, minister, doctor, neighbors, etc. about SMART Recovery
- Put up posters, give speeches, talk to the media.
- Help explain and demonstrate the methods to new members.
- Replace yourself before you leave the group.

Many of the ideas you hear may not make much sense at first. Plan to attend at least five meetings before you make up your mind about whether this approach will help you. Dependency on the group is discouraged and self-reliance encouraged. However, self-management and recovery skills usually require practice and effort over a period of weeks to months, so plan to attend regularly for several months, then irregularly for up to a year or more. Discuss your progress and any plans to leave the group at meetings. It can also be helpful to have periodic “booster” sessions from time to time after you have recovered to keep up your self-management and recovery skills.