FORMAT FOR SIA STEP MEETING  
(suggested revisions per past meeting votes and other edits 8/10/2005)

WELCOME

Hello, my name is __________ and I am a survivor of childhood sexual abuse.

Before we begin, this is a reminder to turn off your cell phones.

Welcome to the Survivors of Incest Anonymous Step Meeting at Cabrini Hospital. This is a closed meeting of SIA which means it is reserved for women and men who know, suspect, or wish to further explore that they themselves are survivors of incest or childhood sexual abuse. Therapists, partners of survivors or anyone who is not here for their own recovery, are asked to leave. Current perpetrators of child sexual abuse are also asked to leave. In this meeting, you may not discuss any past perpetration you may have committed. Everyone, especially newcomers to SIA are warmly welcomed. Again, we welcome you to SIA and hope you will find here the hope, camaraderie and recovery we have been privileged to experience.

We are a self-help group of women and men, 18 years or older, who are guided by a set of 12 Suggested Steps and 12 Traditions, along with some slogans and the Serenity Prayer. There are no dues or fees. Everything that is said here, in the group meeting or member to member, must be held in strict confidence. We do not have any professional therapist working in our group. SIA is not a replacement for therapy or other professional service when needed.

We define incest very broadly as a sexual experience by a family member or by an extended family member that damaged the child. “Extended family” may include an aunt, uncle, in-law, stepparent, cousin, friend of the family, teacher, coach, another child, clergy or anyone that you were led to trust. We believe we were affected by the abuse whether it occurred once or many times, since the damage is incurred immediately.

We learn in SIA not to deny, that we did not imagine the incest, nor was it our fault in any way. The abuser will go to any length to shift the responsibility to the defenseless child, often accusing the child of being seductive. We had healthy, natural needs for love, attention and acceptance, and we often paid high prices to get those needs met, but we did not seduce our abuser. Physical coercion is rarely necessary with a child since the child is already intimidated. The more gentle the assault, the more guilt the victim inappropriately carries. We also learn not to accept any responsibility for the assaults even if these occurred over a prolonged period of time. Some of us are still being sexually assaulted.

In SIA we share our experience and common feelings. We realize that we felt we had to protect our
caretakers from this horrible secret, as if they were not participants. We felt alienated from the non-abusive family members. Often, greater anger is directed toward them, since it is safer to get angry at people we perceive to be powerless. We became caretakers in order to maintain an image of a nurturing family. Our feelings of betrayal by our families are immeasurable. We need to mourn the death of the ideal family that many of us created in our own imaginations.

In dealing with this pain, it feels as if we are pulling the scab off a wound that never healed properly, **AND IT HURTS.** However, it is easier to cry when we have friends who are not afraid of our tears. We **CAN** be comforted - that is why we are here. We will never forget, but we can, in time, end the regretting that accompanies destructive remembering. We can learn, *one day at a time,* that we are incest **SURVIVORS,** rather than incest victims.

It is our custom now to go around the room and introduce ourselves. As we do this, if there is anyone new to the program, six meetings or less, or new to this room, if you would like to, please let us know so we can welcome you. [Go around the room for introductions.]

We need a volunteer to serve as welcome person for tonight’s meeting. The welcome person is here to offer you general information about the meeting and to serve as a contact person tonight. You must have at least 2 months in SIA to volunteer. Do we have a volunteer?

The SIA program is based on the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. Reading the Steps can be a source of comfort and guidance in our recovery. We in Survivors of Incest Anonymous have learned to be creative, resourceful, and courageous on our own behalf. In order to do this, we have needed to face the challenges that our victimization has placed before us. We each do this in different ways. The 12 Steps have helped many of us in this process. We will now read the **12 Adapted Steps of SIA.** Please read (one, two, three, etc.) steps, or you may pass if you like.

**Activity/ TIMEKEEPER**

[On the 2nd Monday of the Month – the reading and writing/ drawing will be replaced by a business meeting, followed by share time.]

We will begin by reading some literature. [The chair can choose the literature that he/she wishes to read.] Please read one or two paragraphs and pass it on. [If the literature is long, set a time limit of 5-7 min., and read only to that point.] Now we will take 15 minutes to draw, journal, doodle, meditate, or whatever you would like to do to take care of yourself. [We will place literature and 1st Step inventory questions on the table for you to use.]
Do we have a volunteer to serve as the spiritual timekeeper for this activity and for this evening’s share time?

**WEEKLY MEETING FORMATS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1:</th>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Expressive Arts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 2:</td>
<td>Business meeting</td>
<td>“Would someone be willing to be the secretary for this meeting?”</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Approval of Minutes for last meeting</td>
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<td>Treasurer’s Report</td>
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<td>Committee Reports</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Old Business</td>
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<td></td>
<td>New Business</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 3:</th>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Expressive Arts</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Week 4:</td>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>Expressive Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>[Week 5:</td>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>Expressive Arts</td>
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**7th TRADITION BREAK**

It is time for a 7th Tradition break. Do we have a treasurer?

(***Treasurer**: SIA is self-supporting through its own contributions. We have no dues or fees for membership. However, we do have expenses. Please, give what you can. If you can’t give, don’t worry. We need you more than we need your money.)

Are there any SIA related announcements?  
(Literature Chair might mention that literature is available.)

**GUIDELINES FOR SHARING**

An important part of our recovery is speaking our truth and sharing our story, but for the safety of the meeting we do not crosstalk, give feedback, or refer to what anyone else has shared while we are sharing. We do not discuss conflicts we may be having with other members of the group, nor do we refer directly or indirectly to any member of the group while the meeting is in progress.

It is common during the course of a meeting to identify with or even feel triggered by what is being shared. In order to keep the focus on ourselves, we keep our sharing to our own experiences and feelings, and speak from the “I” position. The crosstalk rule ensures each person’s safety because it enables us to express feelings and long-suppressed memories without fear of being judged, hurt, or attacked by other group members.
Our goal is to create a safe place in these rooms where each person’s boundaries are respected. This means we respect each other’s share-time by not speaking or making noises or gestures while someone else is sharing. Also, please refrain from laughter or excessive head movements which might be interpreted as approval or disapproval of the speaker. Allowing ourselves to have our anger is a healthy part of our recovery. In consideration of others, we ask that if you feel the need to yell, that you try whenever possible, to give a verbal warning to the group ahead of time. Remember, it is completely acceptable to step outside of the room at any time for as long as you need to.

TIME

We will now decide on our share time. I suggest ____ minutes. *(Include time for 1-2 extra people to share.)*

*(Agree upon a time.)*

When you have one minute left, the timekeeper will give a “one minute” sign. *(Demonstrate with your hand)* or if you’re not looking, they may say “one minute.” At the end of your time, the timekeeper will give a “T” sign *(demonstrate with your hands)* or if you’re not looking, they may say “Time.” You do not have to stop mid-word. This is meant as a gentle reminder to wind up your thoughts.

We will now check to see if the room conditions (such as lights, temperature, etc.) are acceptable to the members. If anyone would like to change a room condition, we can take a group conscience.

The meeting is now open for sharing. This is a pitch meeting. We share by a show of hands, each person choosing the next person after their share. Would anyone like to start?

AFTER THE LAST SHARE

That is all the time we have. If you didn’t get to share, please try to find someone to share with after the meeting. Please help me thank our timekeeper ______________.

CLOSING STATEMENT

As we close this meeting, it is important for us to realize that no one here can tell us what we should or should not do. We must each decide our own course of recovery. In SIA we do not give advice. Take what you like and leave the rest. Let there be no judgment or criticism of one another.

Because we come together for support, it is important that we share, but let us always remember that what is said in this room must also stay in this room. Confidentiality is central to the program.

SIA is an anonymous program; therefore, we must remain unidentified at the level of press, television, radio and films. If we meet outside a meeting, we must not jeopardize anyone’s anonymity by acknowledging each other as SIA members.
Regardless of who abused us, how often, or what the nature of the abuse was, know that we are where we belong. Most of us suffer with many of the same feelings and consequences as other abused survivors and we can offer each other support.

We want to remind those who have recently joined us at SIA that each of us is a creative, courageous, and caring person. Each day we deal with our incest experience we will become stronger people, and we will come to recognize ourselves as survivors. We are sorry that suffering brought us together. We hope you will feel the love that we already have in our hearts for you. We know your pain. We want you to believe that you are not to blame, and you are not alone. We have come to the awesome realization that our pain is temporary, but denial and its consequences are forever. And, if any one of us can recover, then so can all of us.

**PHONE CALLS/ POST-MEETING**

If you would like to ask another member for their phone number, please do so. But remember that everyone’s recovery is a very different journey, and that having contact outside of SIA meetings can be difficult for a lot of members. Please respect the boundaries of others.

Many survivors are triggered by physical contact such as hugging and holding hands. Please gain someone’s permission first. Also, we ask other members’ permission before responding, either positively or negatively, to their sharing.

Including all in the circle, will all those who care to, please join me in the **Serenity Prayer** – hand-holding is optional.

> God/ Goddess/ Spirit/ Higher Power/ Forces,
> 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.