Survivor’s of Incest Anonymous
Suggested Format for an SIA Meeting

Instruction to the Chair: Thank you for functioning today as chairperson. This document is your guide. General instructions to you are in italics, while all material that you will read is in conventional type. This document contains everything that you will need to read through. You will need to distribute a series of readings: these are labeled as “Supplemental Readings” and are at the back of this binder. At the end of the meeting, we ask that you place all of the documents and readings back in sequence in the binder for the convenience of the next leader. You are encouraged to start the meeting promptly at 7:00 pm.

Starting Statement: We welcome you to a closed meeting of Survivors of Incest Anonymous. My name is __________ and I will be leading this meeting.

Anonymity: During this meeting we ask that you use only your first name. We request the anonymity of all persons present so that who you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here. In group conscience we also ask that you refrain from writing, drawing or doodling during the meeting, as it can feel unsafe and distracting.

Introductions: So that we may know each other better, let us introduce ourselves. Feel free to introduce yourself however you feel comfortable. My name is __________, and I am __________.

Serenity Prayer Would all who care to please join me in the serenity prayer? “God/ess, 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.” Thy will and mine be one.

Announcements: This is a no smoking meeting, but if smoking will keep you away, please keep your smoking to a minimum, and outside. This meeting is scheduled to begin at 7:00 pm and end at 9:00 pm. We take a ten minute break at about 8:00 pm. There are any other announcements?
The Welcome: We welcome you to Survivors of Incest Anonymous and hope you will find here the hope, camaraderie and recovery that 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 any other professional service when needed. The only requirement for membership is that you are a victim of child sexual abuse and that you are not abusing any child. We define incest very broadly as a sexual encounter by a family member or by an extended family member that damaged the child. By “extended family” we mean a person that you and/or your family has known over a period of time. This may be a family member, a family friend, clergy, another child or anyone who betrayed the child's innocence and trust. We believe we were affected by the abuse whether it occurred once or many times since the damage is incurred immediately.

(Definition)

We learn in SIA not to deny; that we did not imagine the abuse, 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 attack, the more guilt the victim inappropriately carries. We also learn not to accept any responsibility for the attacks even if they occurred over a prolonged period of time. Some of us are still being sexually assaulted.

In SIA we share our experiences 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 fantasy family. Our feelings of betrayal 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 like 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. Our pain is no longer in vain, We will never forget, but we can, in time, end the regretting that comes with destructive remembering. We can learn, One Day At A Time, that we are SURVIVORS, rather than incest victims.
Newcomer’s Welcome: Read the Newcomer’s Welcome if there are any newcomers present. If in doubt, read it.

We are happy to have newcomers with us and respect your courage in joining us this evening. We hope you will give SIA at least six meetings to see whether it is a useful tool in your healing process. As a newcomer, you may wish to know some of the tools of the program.

Sharing: We do not interrupt each other and we do not cross talk or over talk. Everyone has a chance to speak or pass.

Cuddlies: The cuddlies are here for you to use, if you choose, to get in touch with your inner child. You may wish to bring your own.

Telephone: You may choose, when you are ready, to propose exchanging telephone numbers with other members of the group.

Hugging: You may, when you are comfortable, either ask for or offer hugs to other members of the group. We hug to relearn safe, comforting touch. You may decline any hugs offered without hurting our feelings. We know how scary touch can be.

12 Steps Ask someone to read the 12 Steps, labeled as Supplemental Reading #1.

12 Traditions Read the Tradition corresponding with the month, from Supplemental Reading #2.

Five Barriers Ask the group to share in the reading of the Five Barriers To Success. Each person may read a paragraph, if they are comfortable, and pass to the next person. The Barriers are labeled as Supplemental Reading #3.

Format: Each month we follow the following format:

Week One: Step
Week Two: Topic/Open Discussion
Week Three: Speaker
Week Four: Slogans/Tools of Recovery
Week Five: Open Discussion

As leader, you now read (and share reading) the Step of the month, introduce a Topic of your own choosing, introduce the speaker (or speak yourself, read (and share reading) of a slogan or tool, or open the meeting for general sharing. When you do open the meeting for sharing, please read the following:

We ask that participants refrain from cross talk, meaning that we ask you not to speak directly to anyone during the meeting about the contents of their sharing. If you have a thought you wish to express to someone concerning their sharing, you may do so at the break, or after the meeting has ended. Remembering that the meeting is scheduled to end at nine o’clock, please limit your sharing so that all will have a chance to share.
General Sharing  
*The rest of the meeting is available for general sharing. Your role is to maintain order, prevent cross talk and to discourage anyone from verbally or physically dominating the meeting.*

Break:  
*At approximately 8:00, the group may break for about ten minutes. You should announce the time and take a group conscience about the break. Note the time that people should reconvene and invite people to feel free to use the restrooms (tell folks where they are), get refreshments, and introduce themselves to one another.*

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Reconvening  
We hope that you will give SIA six meetings before you decide whether or not this program will work for you. We are here to share our experience, strength and hope with each other.

7th Tradition  
*Pass the basket and calendar in opposite directions.*

We follow the seventh tradition. We ask that you contribute only what is comfortable to share. We have no dues or fees, but we do have expenses and we are self supporting through our own contributions. With this donation, we pay group expenses and donate to the Philadelphia-area SIA Intergroup and the SIA World Service Office in Maryland.

Calendar  
The calendar is here for you to sign up to lead a meeting if you would like. We request that you have been in the program for at least 90 days before leading.

Ending Option  
The meeting is scheduled to end at nine o’clock and we would like everyone who wants to share to be able to. We would also like everyone who wants to, to be able to participate in our closing. Therefore, we remind you to please limit your sharing so that all will have a chance to share. If, at nine o’clock, there are still those who have not shared, we may take a group conscience to continue the meeting for another fifteen minutes. Those who must leave at nine o’clock may do so and should seek recognition early if they choose to share.

The meeting is now re-opened for sharing.
Closing: As we end 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 their be no judgement 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 this 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 feelings and consequences as other abuse survivors.

We want to remind you that each of us is a creative, courageous and caring person. Each day we deal with our incest experience, we will become stronger and come to recognize ourselves as survivors rather than incest victims. We are sorry that suffering brought us together. We hope you will feel the love we already have in our hearts for you. We know your pain. We want you to believe that you were 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.

12 Promises: Please join in reading the Twelve Promises.
Start and pass the 12 Promises, labeled as Supplemental Reading #4.

Clean up: Please help put the meeting materials away and return the room to order.

Circle: We have a nice way of closing. We join in a circle, and hold hands.

We ask for a moment of silence to remember those still suffering in incest.

Will all who care to please join in the Serenity Prayer:

God/ess, 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. Thy will and mine be one. Keep coming back, it works if you work it, so work it, you’re worth it.