WEDNESDAY NIGHT SALEM SIA MEETING FORMAT

6:30 p.m. Opening

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. This is the Wednesday Night Salem Meeting.

This is an open meeting for incest survivors and pro-survivors. The only requirement for membership is that you were a victim of sexual abuse as a child or adult and that you are not abusing any child. As children we may have acted out sexually with other children. However, no one who, while age 18 or over, has sexually abused a child is allowed in this meeting.

We've discovered that pacing ourselves is critical to recovery. Therefore we encourage you to participate in a way that feels safe for you. Following are some self-care ideas.

Members “pass” whenever we want. For example, we can pass the literature to the next person without reading. We can say “pass” instead of introducing ourselves, or we can introduce ourselves in a manner that feels safe to us.

We encourage members to step outside the room at any time to prevent becoming overwhelmed or shutting down. We find it much more helpful to be outside the room for a while and be able to feel safe, rather than be in it and not feel safe.

We recommend sharing in a way that feels safe. If you feel the need to share graphic details, please let people know in advance so they can step out of the room if they need to.

Using grounding techniques, like the ones posted, can sometimes help us to stay present.

The only limitation on the way we participate is that we must follow the guidelines for other member’s safety as well.

Because boundaries are important for survivors, please note:

Please, no food, gum or candy, because some survivors are triggered by these. Beverages are allowed.

Many survivors are triggered by physical contact such as hugging and holding hands. Please gain someone’s permission first.

We ask other members’ permission before responding, either positively or negatively, to their sharing. We will not discount any memories you have.

Any safety concerns should be handled as outlined by the “Safety Issue Guidelines” in the “How this Meeting Works” section of this notebook.

Now let us go around the room and introduce ourselves by first name only.

Let us open the meeting with a minute of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer

God/Higher Power,
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.

SIA is a self-help program of women and men, 18 years or older, who are guided by a set of 12 Sug-
gested 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. 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 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. Some of us are still being sexually assaulted.

In SIA, we share our experiences and 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 with people we perceive to be powerless. We became caretakers in order to maintain an image of a fantasy 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 like we are pulling the scab from 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 accompanies destructive remembering. We can learn, One Day at a Time, that we are incest SURVIVORS, rather than incest victims.

We will now pass around and read the 12 Traditions.
We will now pass around and read the 12 Adapted Steps.

Today’s meeting is the (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, or 5th) meeting of the month.
So it will be a (1st = Tradition – and there will be a business meeting from 7:45-8:00, 2nd = Slogan or Literature (Chair chooses), 3rd = Step, 4th = Speaker – up to 20 minutes, 5th = Open Topic) Meeting.
We will now read from the literature on this topic.

**Remember, when sharing:**
Please do not respond to other peoples’ sharing. If you want to talk to them about it, ask them if you can during the break or after the meeting. Give them the right to say no.
Please, no interruptions, no advice and no judgment.
We encourage members to step outside the room at any time for as long as necessary.
Please address the suggested topic, or another recovery from sexual abuse topic.

The meeting is now open for sharing.
7:15 p.m.  (Break)  We will now take a 5 minute break.  Raise your hand if you are able to talk to newcomers today.  Literature is free.

7:20 Are there any announcements?
For the 7th Tradition, we will now pass the basket for voluntary contributions to cover expenses.  Remembering that the gifts of the program are free, newcomers are not asked to contribute.

The meeting is now open for sharing.

7:40 p.m. (If this is the 1st meeting of the month, the business meeting starts at 7:45, so close the meeting at 7:40)

7:55 p.m.  We will now pass around and read the 12 Adapted Promises.
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 helps us to 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, Internet 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.  Most survivors find that they experience excruciating pain at the beginning.  It does fade over time, to gradually be replaced by joy and peace of mind.  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 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.

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

God/Higher Power,
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.