

EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER

LIFE ADVISOR

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“ Life can be hard. Talking can help.

Maintaining Recovery from Addiction During COVID-19

Isolation is one of the great challenges and risks of early recovery from alcohol and substance addiction, yet right now we are living in a period of time where many of us are being asked to self-isolate to help curb the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Creating and fostering a network of recovery is one of the most important things a newly sober person should do for themselves. While the current public health crisis has made this task much more challenging, it is not impossible.

Peer support groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.), have thriving communities online and by phone – communities which were in existence long before COVID-19. While twelve-step programs like A.A. and similarly modeled groups such as Narcotics Anonymous may not be to everyone's personal taste, these organizations have a long and established history, and multiple resources available.



What are A.A. meetings like during COVID-19?

Even before COVID-19, Alcoholics Anonymous had a vibrant support community online and via telephone. These telephonic and chat meetings continue, with many of them hosting larger audiences as a result of the pandemic. Additionally, many in-person meetings have changed and temporarily adapted to virtual online settings with platforms like Zoom and GoToMeeting.

Despite the change from in-person to virtual meeting settings, the format of meetings typically remains the same. There is a meeting “chairperson” who is responsible for timekeeping and assigning any readings at the start or end of the meeting. Meeting attendees then share their experience, strength, and hope with one another in short shares (usually 3 to 5 minutes each) until the meeting ends.



Meetings typically last one hour. There are different meeting formats and types of meetings. For example, there are closed meetings (only individuals with a desire to stop drinking or using may attend) and open meetings (open to anyone). There are speaker meetings and A.A. literature meetings. While most A.A. meetings are open to members of either sex, there are also some men’s-only and women’s-only meetings.

There are a few important things to remember with the change in setting from in-person to virtual/online:

1. Anonymity is one of the cornerstones of the A.A. program and privacy is often very important to A.A. members. If you are attending an A.A. meeting virtually in your home using your webcam, be sure that only you are visible and within hearing distance of the meeting.
2. To minimize background noise, mute yourself when you are not sharing.
3. For some reason, the virtual meeting setting seems to encourage crosstalk. In the A.A. milieu, crosstalk happens when a member shares his/her experience and then another member shares directly responding to the earlier share, often offering advice or giving a different perspective. Some meetings are less restrictive about this than others, but generally speaking, crosstalk during an A.A. meeting is a major no-no. It’s very important that members not feel judged or talked down to, and often crosstalk has this effect on people, which is why it is usually discouraged. As they say in A.A., keep your side of the street clean and let others focus on theirs.

A.A. meetings in print

Alcoholics Anonymous has its own digest-sized monthly magazine, called the "A.A. Grapevine," which is often called "a meeting in print." The current cost of a one-year subscription to the A.A. Grapevine is less than \$30. Even if that price is too steep, many Grapevine articles are available to read for free online at aagrapevine.org. So, even if a person can't make a virtual or phone meeting, there is free literature available online through the Grapevine website and via aa.org.

What if A.A. is not for me?

While A.A. has a long history and great visibility, there are alternative peer support communities such as SMART (Self-Management and Recovery Training) Recovery. SMART Recovery is a mutual support group that emphasizes self-empowerment and a science-based approach to addiction recovery. This organization also has an active online community. According to the SMART Recovery website smartrecovery.org, SMART Recovery intends to remain fully operational throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, there is Women for Sobriety, an abstinence-based self-help program for women recovering from alcohol and drug addiction. They host in-person meetings, most of which have converted to online video counseling meetings as a result of COVID-19. For more information about the organization, visit womenforsobriety.org.

Recovery Dharma is a peer-led organization which supports individuals in recovery through the use of Buddhist practices and principles. They have daily meetings available online during the COVID-19 health crisis. For meetings and additional information, visit recoverydharma.org.

Outside of peer support groups, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (**SAMHSA**) **National Helpline – 1-800-662-HELP (4357) – "is a confidential, free, 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year, information service, in English and Spanish, for individuals and family members facing mental and/or substance use disorders. This service provides referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations. Callers can also order free publications and other information."**

Last but certainly not least, if these alternatives don't seem right for you, remember your Ulliance Life Advisor Employee Assistance Program. We provide free, short-term, solution-focused counseling services. Our consultants are standing by, ready to listen, and happy to help. The most important words to remember are – you are not alone.

Don't forget to reach out for additional assistance by contacting Ulliance. Call today and schedule a one-on-one counseling session (via video or phone appointments available), telephonic coaching, and access to many community resources. We're available 24/7 for crisis.



Contact us we're here to help: 800.448.8326
