



Tlaloc petroglyph in Northern Jornada
Mogollon Region, New Mexico

MAA*EZ
***NA, too**

Making

Alcoholics Anonymous

Easier

developed by

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INTRODUCTION

SPIRITUALITY

PRINCIPLES, NOT PERSONALITIES

SPONSORSHIP

LIVING SOBER



Introduction

The desired outcome of MAAEZ is to facilitate participation in Alcoholics Anonymous and/or in other 12-step programs such as Narcotics Anonymous and Cocaine Anonymous. It regards such active involvement as important for sustained abstinence. The intervention prepares clients for a transition into the culture of Alcoholics Anonymous. It does this by addressing some of the myths about AA and by creating a safe environment for clients to honestly share their experiences with 12-step programs (both positive and negative). MAAEZ is delivered in a group rather than an individual setting because the group dynamic helps the individual prepare for the group process of Alcoholics Anonymous.

MAAEZ requires the counselor to function alternately as educator (instilling knowledge about AA) and as facilitator (focusing interactive group discussion). The counselor should be supportive and encouraging as opposed to confrontational. The counselor needs to create a mutually supportive environment in which participants do not criticize one another, but where they are allowed to voice their concerns about AA. Members of the group need to know that the group is safe, that whatever is said within the group will not be discussed anywhere else, and that the group exists for their benefit--conditions which also are in place at AA/NA/CA meetings. MAAEZ does, however, allow for feedback, unlike A.A. where directly responding to what someone says is considered "cross talk."



Objectives

The primary objective of MAAEZ is to equip clients to deal with some of the experiences they are likely to encounter in an AA meeting, so that they will not immediately reject AA as a potential source of help. MAAEZ is not intended as a summary of AA concepts nor as an intervention that teaches the program of recovery as outlined in the AA “Big Book”: those tasks are left to the fellowship of AA. Rather, MAAEZ is meant to soften newcomers’ resistance to AA so that they do not quit going to AA before they have had a chance to see how the fellowship and the AA program can help them.

The approach underlying MAAEZ is grounded in the principles of AA, but the intervention has no official relationship with or sanction from Alcoholics Anonymous. This is because of the AA traditions of not endorsing outside enterprises (tradition 6) and of remaining non-professional (tradition 8). AA does not sponsor or conduct research into alcoholism or its treatment, nor does AA endorse any treatment program or method.



MAAEZ Structure

MAAEZ consists of six weekly 90-minute sessions, each with a 10 minute break. To implement the group intervention, two MAAEZ sessions must be conducted weekly at the facility:

- Each week, an introductory session must be offered for new clients
- Each week, one of the four core sessions must be offered for continuing clients

The introductory session is the only session that needs to be held every single week. It serves two purposes, to introduce new members to the group and as a guest speaker session for graduates. The introductory session is always session #1 for incoming clients. It also always serves as session #6 for program graduates, who attend the introductory session as a senior peer for the newcomers. This serves three functions. First, the positive AA experiences of the MAAEZ graduates serve as a credible counterpoint to the negative AA experiences many clients will bring to their first session. Secondly, it offers the opportunity for graduating clients to experience the positive therapeutic benefit of being in the service-oriented role of "helper." Third, it means that the counselor is not alone in contending with clients' negative AA experiences. The other four sessions do not need to be experienced in any particular order. One different core session should be offered each week, so that all four core sessions are covered within a 4 week period.

To review: Clients attend the introductory session as their first session. For the next 4 weeks, they attend the four core sessions being cycled through the facility, in whatever sequence they are currently being presented. The 6th week, they return to the introductory session as a program graduate whose experiences will be drawn upon as an essential component of the introductory session for new participants. (For the first-ever Introductory session at a clinic, there will be no program graduates, so the counselor must instead explain his or her own experiences with AA as a one-time substitute for this important part of the MAAEZ intervention.)

A 6-week treatment cycle has been chosen for MAAEZ for three reasons. First, the intervention needed to be consistent with the length of stay at most outpatient programs. Related, we wanted MAAEZ to be short, so as to minimize the time commitment for the newcomer. Last, we wanted to cover the key objections to and benefits of 12-step program involvement, and this required an initial introductory session, four content sessions, and a graduation session as "helper."



The Facilitator

The sessions should be led by an active AA, NA or CA member who is also adept at facilitating groups. The counselor who facilitates the MAAEZ groups should be capable of answering questions about sponsorship, the AA steps and traditions, and the types of meetings available in the geographic area. Counselors in MAAEZ should rely on the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous to serve as an instrument of change in the clients' pursuit of sobriety. While the counselor should make every effort to cultivate a warm and safe group environment, it is essential to continually focus the group on the fellowship of AA as an agent of change.



Session Content

There are five separate curriculums to MAAEZ. These particular curriculums were chosen to provide tangible help to the newcomer--such as how to pick which meeting to go to, how to ask someone to be your sponsor, and how to understand some of the language and culture of the AA fellowship that they will inevitably encounter at AA meetings. These curriculums were also selected to candidly address known reasons for resistance to AA-- such as its spirituality component and the diversity of personalities and opinions.

- The INTRODUCTION session focuses on the benefits of attending AA and how to choose meetings
- The SPIRITUALITY session provides clients with a wide range of definitions of spirituality that do not all require a religious orientation or God belief system, but that are consistent with AA's emphasis on spirituality. AA is a spiritual program but not a religion.
- The PRINCIPLES, NOT PERSONALITIES session deals head-on with myths about AA, different types of AA meetings, and AA etiquette and ritual.
- The SPONSORSHIP session explains the function of an AA sponsor, offers guidelines for picking an appropriate person, and includes role-playing to practice asking for a temporary sponsor, overcoming a rejection, etc.
- In the LIVING SOBER session, tools for staying sober are tackled: triggers to relapse, service, and avoiding slippery people, places and things.



Session Format

Each 90-minute MAAEZ session involves a 15 minute check-in, about 55 minutes dedicated to the session topic (with a 10- minute break mid-way through the discussion), a 5-minute summary, and 5 minutes to explain next week's homework assignment.

Check-in

Each session begins with a 15-minute check-in. In the introductory session, this time is used to introduce all of the clients to one other and to the counselor. In the core sessions, the check-in is used to report on homework assignments, with names picked at random to determine who will have a chance to discuss their homework assignment that particular week. However, any "burning desire" to share is also honored. This mimics the reality at AA meetings, in which everyone does not always have the opportunity to share.

Topic

The core session topic is then presented by the counselor. For each session, a counselor outline is provided, which includes the essential points that need to be communicated to the clients. Opportunities to engage the group are suggested throughout the outline and are labeled with the following symbol: 🗨️

A section on Conducting the Sessions (see next chapter) provides instructions for employing the group dynamic when this symbol is used. It is generally important to touch upon every point and sub-point in the outline during the course of the 90-minute session. The only exception to this is in the PRINCIPLES, NOT PERSONALITIES session where each common objection to AA need not be covered.

Summary


Each core session outline ends with a Summary of the session's three "take-home" messages. The counselor should ask what ideas stood out for members of the group at the end of the session. If a group member mentions one of the three points in the session outline, the counselor should paraphrase and re-state the concept. Any of the three points in the outline that are not mentioned should be emphasized by the counselor before assigning the homework. It is always helpful to review these take-home messages yourself before walking into a particular group session.

Homework

The final task of the counselor is to assign homework. Each MAAEZ session has a corresponding homework assignment, shown on the homework schedule page of this manual as well as the bottom of each session outline.


Conducting Sessions

The outline on the following pages is also provided to the counselor as laminated cards to use as an aid in the presentation of new material. It is important that every point and sub-point in the outline be addressed. Rather than reading the bullets verbatim, paraphrase the concept in a way that feels more conversational for you. The material should be presented in the sequence given in the outline. Please be careful to avoid reading the numerals or letters in the outline.

Opportunities for engaging the group are indicated by this symbol:  When you see this symbol next to a topic, begin by asking the question about the topic stated in the outline. Allow several of the group members to respond, thanking each person and validating the especially relevant comments. Refer to the outline in order to remain aware whenever a sub-point in the outline is brought up. If necessary, expand on the topic to cover the gist of the idea in the outline. The objective is to insure that each aspect of the topic mentioned in the outline is presented thoroughly while avoiding repetition.

Draw from your own experience in leading groups to introduce sub-points in the outline that are not brought up by clients. Counselors are encouraged to incorporate their own personal style in presenting the material in this intervention. A natural and comfortable delivery is preferable to a lecture style of facilitation. Interject personal stories from your own recovery that illustrate the topic, but try to stay within the guideline of limiting this to 1 or 2 times per session. Don't feel that you always need to plan this ahead of time; rather just let it happen.

In MAAEZ, the counselor should allow and even encourage cross-talk among clients (unlike an AA meeting). However, when the focus drifts from the topic, it is the counselor's job to bring the group awareness back to the topic without discouraging discussion. The counselor should make every effort to get as many members of the group involved as possible, and to limit a single individual's sharing to 3-5 minutes. For the person who is reluctant to share, it is recommended that the counselor speak privately with the person after the group (rather than confronting them during the group), asking them why they haven't said anything during the group. It is fine to encourage their active participation, but don't insist. Remember that the goal is to facilitate their involvement with a fellowship that requires next to nothing of its self-proclaimed members ("the only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking").

Topics that do not have the group engagement symbol () are meant to be delivered in the style of a lecture. This is not to say that the group is not encouraged to contribute, but rather that you, as counselor, will not be actively soliciting group participation. Instructions to the counselor, that are not to be read to the group, are **shown in bold font**.

Conducting sessions, continued

MAAEZ counselors are expected to expand upon the didactic topics, drawing upon their own acquired knowledge and experience. A skilled counselor will build on the outline, explaining what the terms mean, how a particular ethic evolved, how it protects AA members and AA itself. This procedure should be applied throughout MAAEZ.

To highlight particular points on the outline, or to write down clients' responses to your questions, counselors should feel free to use a whiteboard, chalkboard or blank flip-chart. Just be careful to not overdo this, otherwise the session will feel too didactic.



Clinic Requirements

The clinic requirements for conducting MAAEZ are the following:

- A set of laminated session outlines for use by the counselor when leading the sessions
- Recovering counselor who is currently involved in AA, NA or CA and is experienced at running groups (note: experiential knowledge from being in recovery is a "must")
- AA literature for reading assignments
 - AA Big Book Alcoholics Anonymous 4th Edition (\$5.31 each; available at local AA central office)
 - NA Narcotics Anonymous 5th Edition (\$9.70 each; available at the NA central office)
 - AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (12 by 12; \$5.32 each; available at central office)
 - Living Sober (\$ 2.90 each; available at central office)
 - Pamphlet on sponsorship (free at central office and at most meetings)
 - Slips of paper for writing attendees names, to randomly pick who shares at check-in
 - Assignment sheets indicating that week's homework assignments
 - AA and NA directories (free at AA/NA central office and at most meetings)

In addition to the above, the clinic might optionally provide photocopies of the scientific quotations about the benefits of AA involvement (pp.12-13 in the manual).

If your local AA central office does not have copies of the three AA books, contact AA World Services in New York City (phone 212-870-3400). The page numbers on the homework assignments are from the 4th edition of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Scientific Studies of AA Effectiveness

Many MAAEZ clients will question whether AA is effective. In the Introductory session, the question of “why go to AA?” is raised right away, because clients need to understand that AA leads to less drinking and improvement in other areas of life. Related, the value of AA for non-religious people is brought up in the Introductory session and again in the Spirituality session. Another question clients will have is about getting a sponsor, and this is discussed in the Sponsorship session.

Scientific studies of AA’s effectiveness can be quoted during those sessions, to give MAAEZ participants a sense of the benefits of AA meeting attendance and AA involvement. Here are relevant quotes from 11 scientific articles:

1. “Higher rates of AA attendance during treatment were predictive of higher frequency of abstinent days during follow-up” at 6 months (p.160)
2. “AA is associated with significantly less drinking when drinking occurs. . . . Frequency of AA meeting attendance was positively and significantly predictive of total abstinence, during treatment and at all follow-ups” at 6/12/18 months (p.21, p. 23 in draft)
3. “Overall, 12-step attendance and involvement were more strongly related to positive outcomes than was outpatient treatment attendance” (p.519)
4. “AA involvement was a significant predictor of lower alcohol consumption and fewer related problems” (p.891)
5. “The number of AA meetings . . . predicted remission, lower depression, and higher quality relationships with friends and spouse/partner” (p.231)
6. “Post-treatment attendance at AA was not predictive of drinking outcomes. However, a measure of the degree to which patients had become involved in AA did predict more favorable outcomes.” (p.241)
7. “Involvement in AA predicted abstinence, suggesting successful outcome for patients who undergo a treatment regimen, which bridges patients into AA involvement” (p.169)
8. “The most significant area of involvement was in reaching out to other members of AA for help and in the use of a sponsor The relapsers lacked the ability to use their sponsors and to reach out to other members in the AA program” (p.104)
9. “Almost three-fourths (73%) of the regular (weekly) attenders remained chemically free, compared with one-third (33%) of the non-attenders” (p.311)
10. “Referrals to 12-step groups were effective at increasing meeting attendance, irrespective of patients religious background, and all experienced significantly better substance abuse outcomes when they participated in 12-step groups” (p.790)
11. “AA should be considered as an important ingredient in interventions with clients having social networks supportive of their drinking. For such clients . . . those involved in AA had superior drinking outcomes. . . For clients having networks not supportive of their drinking, AA involvement was much less important.” (p.1327)

These are the articles the above quotes come from:

1. Tonigan JS, Miller WR, Connors GJ. The search for meaning in life as a predictor of alcoholism treatment outcome. In: Longabaugh R, Wirtz PW, editors. Project MATCH Hypotheses: Results and causal chain analyses. Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism; 2001. p. 154-65.
2. Tonigan JS, Connors GJ, Miller WR. Participation and involvement in Alcoholics Anonymous. In: Babor T, DelBoca FK, editors. Matching Alcoholism Treatments to Client Heterogeneity: the results of Project MATCH. New York: Cambridge University Press; in press. p.21, p. 23 in draft
3. Aime PC, Moos RH, Finney JW. Influence of outpatient treatment and 12-step group involvement on one-year substance abuse treatment outcomes. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 1998;59:513-22.
4. Kaskutas LA, Bond J, Humphreys K. Social networks as mediators of the effect of Alcoholics Anonymous. *Addiction* 2002;97(7):891-900.
5. Humphreys K, Moos RH, Cohen C. Social and community resources and long-term recovery from treated and untreated alcoholism. *J. Stud. Alcohol* 1997;58:231-38.
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7. Cross GM, Morgan CM, Mooney AJ. Alcoholism treatment: a ten-year follow-up study. *Alcohol. Clin. Exp. Res.* 1990;14(2):169-73.
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9. Hoffmann N. Alcoholics anonymous after treatment: attendance and abstinence. *Int. J. Addict.* 1983;18(3):311-18.
10. Winzelberg A, Humphreys K. Should patients' religiosity influence clinicians' referral to 12-step self-help groups? Evidence from a study of 3,018 male substance abuse patients. *J. Consult. Clin. Psychol.* 1999;67(5):790-94.
11. Longabaugh, R., Wirtz, P.W., Zweben, A., Stout, R.L. Network support for drinking, Alcoholics Anonymous and long-term matching effects. *Addiction* 1998;93(9): 1313-1333.

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Sample schedule

Week 1

MONDAY night: **Introductory Session**

TUESDAY night: **Spirituality**

Week 2

MONDAY night: **Introductory Session**

TUESDAY night: **Principles Not Personalities**

Week 3

MONDAY night: **Introductory Session**

TUESDAY night: **Sponsorship**

Week 4

MONDAY night: **Introductory Session**

TUESDAY night: **Living Sober**

Week 5 (same as week 1)

MONDAY night: **Introductory Session**

TUESDAY night: **Spirituality**

ET CETERA



Homework

Each MAAEZ session has a specific homework assignment. Homework always involves going to an AA meeting, doing a short reading from the AA literature, and reporting back to the ongoing MAAEZ group about their homework experience.

I. After Introductory session:

- Go to an AA meeting in the next 7 days
 - Write down what you did and didn't like, and any questions
 - Be prepared to share your experience (and how it felt) at MAAEZ next week
- Read "The Doctor's Opinion" from the AA Big Book 4th edition, pages xxv to xxxii or "Who Is An Addict" from Narcotics Anonymous 5th edition, pages 3-8

II. After Spirituality session:

- Go to an AA meeting in the next 7 days
- Talk to someone you do not know, who has more sobriety than you, after the meeting
- Be prepared to share your experience, and how it felt to do this, at MAAEZ next week
 - If this is your 5th week, you'll share your AA experiences at MAAEZ Introductory Session next week, AND pass on your books to a newcomer
- Read "Bill's Story" from AA Big Book 4th edition, pages 1-12 only or "Recovery and Relapse" from Narcotics Anonymous 5th edition, pages 74-83

III. After Principles not Personalities session:

- Go to an AA meeting in the next 7 days
- Ask someone you don't know, who has more sobriety than you, for their telephone number
- Talk to them on the phone (don't just leave messages) before the next MAAEZ session
- Be prepared to share your experience, and how all this felt, at MAAEZ next week
 - If this is your 5th week, you'll share your AA experiences at MAAEZ Introductory Session next week, AND pass on your books to a newcomer
- Read "More About Alcoholism" from AA Big Book 4th edition, pages 30-40 only or "Just for Today—Living the Program" from Narcotics Anonymous 5th edition pages 90-96

Homework assignments, continued

IV After Sponsorship session:

- Go to an AA meeting in the next 7 days
- If you do not have a sponsor, ask someone to be your temporary sponsor
- If you have a sponsor, connect with them before the next MAAEZ session
- Be prepared to share your experience at MAAEZ next week
 - If this is your 5th week, you'll share your AA experiences at MAAEZ Introductory Session next week, AND pass on your books to a newcomer
- Read sponsorship pamphlet

V. After Living Sober session:

- Go to an AA meeting in the next 7 days
- Do something social (go to coffee, etc.) with one or more people from AA who have more sobriety than you
- Be prepared to share your experience at MAAEZ next week
 - If this is your 5th week, you'll share your AA experiences at MAAEZ Introductory Session next week, AND pass on your books to a newcomer
- Read 5-10 pages from the book Living Sober



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***NA, too**

Making

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Easier

MAAEZ Session Outlines

Introductory Session: What to Expect Out of AA

Spirituality

Principles, Not Personalities

Sponsorship

Living Sober

INTRODUCTORY SESSION: WHAT TO EXPECT OUT OF AA

- I. Check-in 20 minutes
- A. introduction of counselor 3 minutes
1. name
 2. time in recovery
 3. experience with AA and treatment
 4. counselor training, and time working as counselor
 5. group rules
 - a. confidential and anonymous ethic – only first names are used
 - b. supportive feedback to each other is ok (crosstalk allowed)
 - c. no private conversations during group
 - d. don't dominate with long shares—gives others a chance to talk too
- B. personal introductions of new clients: done in round-robin 10 minutes
1. first name only
 2. drug of choice
 3. if prior AA or not
 4. if prior treatment or not (yes/no only)
 5. why you're here today
- C. personal introductions of graduates: done in round-robin 5 minutes
1. report on homework
- D. layout of MAAEZ intervention (MAAEZ stands for Making AA Easier) 2 minutes
1. there are six groups
 2. the first and last group are the same: they are the "Introductory" session
 - a. clients return to introductory session as alumni
 - b. this serves as their sixth session
 - c. graduates pass-on their books to the newcomers
 3. we will talk about how AA can be useful to your recovery in the first five MAAEZ sessions
 - a. why go to AA, and how to pick meetings: that's this session
 - b. "Spirituality" session is about spirituality in AA, and how AA is not a religion
 - c. "Principles Not Personalities" session covers common objections to AA, and the diversity in AA
 - d. "Sponsorship" session discusses value of having a sponsor, and how to pick a sponsor
 - e. "Living Sober" session is all about how to live a sober life, and have fun doing it
- II. Graduate vignettes of their AA experiences 13-14 minutes
- A. graduating clients share their impressions of MAAEZ & of AA with incoming clients
- B. new participants share their reactions
- III. 🗣️ Why go to AA? (Note: throughout, when we say AA, we mean AA/NA/CA (not Alanon, OA, etc.))
10 minutes
- A. Research studies repeatedly find higher rates of abstinence among people who go to AA during treatment (study findings are in italics): *(1) Higher AA attendance during treatment predicts more days of abstinence 6 months later. (2) When drinking does occur, those who go to AA drink significantly less. (3) Frequency of AA meeting attendance after treatment predicts abstinence a year later. (4) 73% of the people who go to AA regularly--meaning weekly--remain chemically free, compared with only 33% of the non-attenders.*
- B. Studies find AA involvement leads to new relationships with people who don't drink or use drugs: *(1) Going to more AA meetings leads to less depression, and higher quality relationships with friends and spouse or partner. (2) The most important types of AA involvement are: reaching out to other members of AA for help, and using a sponsor. (3) Relapsers lack the ability to use their sponsors or reach out to other members in the AA program.*
- C. AA will inoculate you from the influence of those who do drink or use drugs: *3 years after treatment, people with networks highly supportive of drinking who were highly involved in AA were sober 91% of the last 90 days.*
- D. AA works for both genders, for all ages & races, & for both alcohol and drug problems
- E. Research has found that AA works for atheists and agnostics: *Irrespective of their religious background, patients experience significantly better substance abuse outcomes when they participate in 12-step groups.*
- F. It's a safe place: Anonymity protects everyone's identity (What does "anonymity" mean?)
1. "Who you see here, what you hear here, stays here."
- G. 🗣️ Were any of you going to AA when you relapsed?

10 minute break

INTRODUCTORY SESSION (continued)

- IV. What about Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Cocaine Anonymous (CA)? 1-2 minutes
- A. explain the differences between AA, NA and CA.
 - B. note how "drinking" and "using" can be used interchangeably in some groups but not in others.
 - C. discussion of drug use is discouraged or even taboo in some AA meetings.
 - D. members use the term "addict" instead of "alcoholic" in NA and CA.
- V. 🗨️🗨️ How do you pick an AA meeting? 15 minutes
- A. location
 - 1. close to where you live or work
 - 2. on your daily or weekend route
 - 3. somewhere that has lots of regular meetings
 - Alano Clubs or dedicated AA meeting rooms
 - B. timing
 - 1. fits your schedule (noon; early morning; after work)
 - C. comfortable
 - 1. find "people like me"
 - similar age, race, social group
 - 2. big vs small
 - 3. drugs vs alcohol
 - D. content (as indicated in meeting directory legend – varies by region): **Pass out meeting directories now**
 - 1. Open vs closed ("C" often means closed)
 - 2. Gender-specific: women-only ("W"); gays-only ("G" could mean gay)
 - 3. Beginner ("B" or "BG")
 - 4. Speaker vs. speaker/discussion vs discussion only ("S", "D", etc.)
 - 5. Big Book study ("BB")
 - 6. Step Study meetings ("SS")
 - 7. Birthday/Chip meetings ("CH")
- VI. Rules of the road at an AA meeting (partial list; unwritten suggestions) 5 minutes
- A. don't hog the floor
 - B. don't interrupt or ask questions to someone when they are sharing, or afterwards
 - 1. this is called "crosstalk" in AA
 - C. don't criticize other people
 - D. it's customary to just listen at your first few meetings, unless called on
 - E. no last names
 - F. keep what you hear at the meeting, and who you see at the meeting, to yourself
 - G. donations are absolutely not required
 - H. avoid romantic involvement with members of the AA group your 1st year sober
 - I. 🗨️🗨️ Are there any others that you know about?
- VII. Summary 5 minutes
- A. 🗨️🗨️ What ideas stand out for you from today's session – what are the "take-home messages" you heard?
 - 1. AA works; people who affiliate with AA stay sober
 - 2. pick meetings that are convenient and comfortable
 - 3. there are many different meetings: you'll find one that you'll like
- VIII. Homework assignments 10 minutes
- A. go to an AA meeting in the next 7 days
 - B. 🗨️🗨️ look at the directory and pick your meetings now
(suggest back-up meeting that's good for beginners, for those who can't find a meeting)
 - C. it's OK to go in pairs (no mixed gender)
 - D. after the meeting, write down what you did and didn't like, and any questions
 - 1. be prepared to share your experience (and how it felt) at MAAEZ next week
 - E. read "The Doctor's Opinion" from the AA Big Book 4th edition, pages xxv to xxxii or "Who Is An Addict" from Narcotics Anonymous 5th edition, pages 3-8

SPIRITUALITY SESSION

- I. Check-in: 15 minutes
- II. 🗨️ Why is spirituality a necessary issue for recovery? 10 minutes
- A. it isn't always (SMART, SOS, Women For Sobriety)
 - B. but in AA, it is: AA is a spiritual program of recovery
 - 1. the AA Big Book says we were "beyond human aid"
 - a. that doesn't mean that alcoholics can't help one another—they do!
 - b. but no single person can keep you sober
 - c. will power isn't enough: 🗨️ Has will power been enough for you?
 - d. AA suggests trying to be willing to believe in a power greater than yourself
 - this can be the AA group; it can be God; it can be a conception of your own choosing
 - didn't alcohol and drugs used to be a power greater than yourself?
 - 2. the only defense against the first drink is one's spiritual condition
 - a. this is because alcohol is "a subtle foe"
 - there is no cure
 - there is only a "daily reprieve" based on our spiritual condition
 - it's not enough to just remember the bad things that happened behind our drinking
 - b. with advent of AA, people started to stay sober
 - c. this is because AA brought in a new dimension—your spiritual condition, or spirituality
 - 3. involvement in AA gradually builds up your spiritual condition
 - a. "We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience" (AA Big Book 4th edition, p.75)
- III. AA is a spiritual, not a religious program. 15 minutes
- A. 🗨️ Is AA a religion? It can seem like it (religious overtones), but it isn't
 - B. religion is a set of beliefs about the nature of the universe, created by a supreme being (Webster)
 - 1. AA has suggestions about recovery, not beliefs about the nature of the universe
 - 2. "These are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery" (pages 59-60, AA Big Book 4th edition)
 - C. AA suggests reliance on a "higher power"
 - 1. there is no set of beliefs about who or what the higher power is
 - 2. only defined as "a power greater than ourselves"
 - 3. later referred to as "God as we understood Him"
 - D. atheists and agnostics get sober in AA
 - 1. when you hear the phrase "God as we understood Him":
 - a. admit that you are not God
 - we played God by using chemicals to control the way we felt
 - b. not being God means you can't control things
 - this comes as a relief to many AA's
 - c. admit that there is a power greater than yourself
 - 🗨️ Weren't alcohol or drugs a power greater than yourself?
 - d. you need another power to supplant the power that alcohol or drugs had over you
 - that's why alcoholics/drug addicts need a higher power of some sort
 - e. try thinking of God as "Good Orderly Direction"
 - direction from the fellowship and program of AA
 - E. Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, etc. also get sober in AA
 - 1. they have not found AA to conflict with their religious beliefs

10 minute break

SPIRITUALITY SESSION (continued)

- IV. 🗨️🗨️ What does spirituality mean to you? 15 minutes
- A. spirituality can just be the spirit of recovery
 - 1. as opposed to the drinking/using way of living
 - B. it can be "HOW": Honesty, Open-mindedness, Willingness
 - 🗨️🗨️ In what way is honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness a form of spirituality?
 - C. spirit can mean "enthusiasm"
 - D. spirituality can be a change in attitude over time
 - E. some feel it is the meaning you find in your life
 - F. to others, spirituality is equated with religion or with God
 - G. 🗨️🗨️ What else?
- V. Spirituality in AA 15 minutes
- A. it is not about philosophical belief systems, it's about your behavior
 - 1. "The spiritual life is not a theory, we have to live it." (AA Big Book 4th edition, p.83)
 - B. it is about taking responsibility for your actions each day
 - 1. it is not about being responsible for everything else
 - 2. "do the footwork, don't try to control the outcome"
 - 3. accept life on life's terms
 - 🗨️🗨️ What does that mean to you?
 - 4. "God, 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." (Niebuhr, in the Jan. 1950 issue of *Grapevine*)
 - a. 🗨️🗨️ let's get some examples of how you could use this prayer in your life today
 - b. using that prayer can change your spiritual condition
 - C. "act your way into good thinking"
 - 1. 🗨️🗨️ Can you think your way into good acting? (No.)
 - a. How's that worked for you so far, as far as your drinking goes?
 - 2. 🗨️🗨️ Can you think of some examples of actions you can take to improve your thinking?
 - a. telling the truth—being honest
 - b. doing service at AA meetings
 - c. giving rides
 - d. helping someone out
 - D. get outside yourself
 - 1. connecting with "the larger universe" is one definition of spirituality
 - 2. doing service in AA, and helping other living beings inside or outside the program, are forms of spirituality that get you outside yourself
 - E. don't try to do too much
 - 1. while it is important to get involved, stay within what is possible for you.
 - F. "act as if" (for instance, act as if you believed in a higher power other than yourself)
 - 1. see if your thinking changes; see if you feel any different
- VI. Summary 5 minutes
- A. 🗨️🗨️ What ideas stand out for you from today's session – what are the "take-home messages" you heard?
 - 1. changing your spiritual condition is how AA gets you sober: your only defense against the 1st drink is your spiritual condition
 - 2. using the serenity prayer can help change your spiritual condition; so can helping others
 - 3. AA isn't a religion because no set of beliefs is required
- VII. Homework assignments 5 minutes
- A. go to an AA meeting in the next 7 days
 - B. talk to someone you do not know, who has more sobriety than you, after the meeting
 - 1. be prepared to share your experience, and how it felt to do this, at MAAEZ next week
 - 2. if this is your 5th week, you'll share your AA experiences at MAAEZ Introductory Session next week, AND pass on your books to a newcomer
 - C. read "Bill's Story" from AA Big Book 4th edition, pages 1-12 only or "Recovery and Relapse" from Narcotics Anonymous 5th edition, pages 74-83

PRINCIPLES, NOT PERSONALITIES SESSION

- I. Check-in: 15 minutes
- II. Today's session is about "principles not personalities." 5 minutes
- A. the principles are the steps of the program, the personalities are the people in the program
 - B. this concept comes from one of AA's traditions (#12), which talks about how AA members are one among many – no more or less important than any other member
 - C. the views of domineering personalities don't carry any more weight than anyone else's – so don't let them turn you away from AA
 - D. the goal of this session is to help you take what you can get from AA that is of use, without running away because of the things or people that you don't like
 - 1. even if you hated most of the meeting, usually you will hear one "pearl of wisdom"
- III. 🗨️ What are some of the things that turned you away from AA? 10 minutes
- IV. One common objection is that **AA is a cult**: This is about cult vs culture 15 minutes
- A. cults enforce rigid control over mobility & thinking of their members
 - 1. AA culture does discourage challenging the program content, BUT:
 - 2. "The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking" (3rd tradition)
 - a. abstinence is the only rigid rule in AA
 - b. you must choose to stop drinking or using
 - 3. everything else is suggested as a program of recovery
 - a. there are dogmatic people in AA, but they don't represent AA
 - b. "take what you need and leave the rest"
 - B. AA has its own culture, its own language of recovery
 - 1. 🗨️ meeting ritual – this varies by geographic region: What rituals have you seen at AA?
 - a. steps & traditions hanging on the walls
 - b. reading of excerpt from AA's Big Book, or of steps & traditions
 - c. saying the "serenity prayer" together
 - d. inviting newcomers to introduce themselves by their first name – group replies back at you: "Hi, Pat"
 - e. very candid sharing of personal things
 - f. storytelling: "what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now" – this can sometimes feel negative, but it fosters identification and shows similarities
 - g. holding hands and saying the Lord's prayer – if you'd rather not, you don't have to say the prayer
 - h. after the Lord's prayer, saying "Keep coming back, it works"
 - 2. 🗨️ slogans: what are some of the slogans you've heard at AA?
 - a. one day at a time; keep coming back; first things first; easy does it; live and let live
 - C. AA's culture can feel like a **clique** when you are a newcomer
 - 1. it's often that way, whenever you go anywhere new, not just AA
 - a. there's not something wrong with you, if you feel you don't fit in
 - 2. most AA'ers want to be welcoming to newcomers, and do not want (or mean) to be cliquish
 - a. MAAEZ homework assignments will help you see AA'ers as individuals (vs as a clique)
- V. Another common objection is that AA says **alcoholism is a disease**: issue is being bad vs sick 5 minutes
- A. disease concept implies being an alcoholic is not your fault: not a moral failing
 - B. disease concept can help you make sense of your life, give you direction for the future
 - C. alcoholics aren't responsible for their disease, but they are responsible for their actions (and for doing something about their drinking or drug use)
 - D. in AA, we diagnose ourselves: this requires rigorous honesty *to yourself*
 - 1. if you don't want to introduce yourself as an alcoholic, don't
 - E. to be helped by AA, you don't need to believe alcoholism is a disease

PRINCIPLES, NOT PERSONALITIES SESSION (continued)

VI. Another common objection is that **AA is a religion**: it's not, but it seems like it sometimes: whole session on spirituality

10 minute break

VII. Principles, not personalities 20 minutes

- A. no single person speaks for AA
 - 1. AA leadership rotates
 - a. no one personality dominates for very long
 - b. don't let personalities turn you away
 - c. 🗨️🗨️ Aren't there people in your life/work etc. that you don't like?
– naturally, we find those people in any group, including AA
 - 2. there are no rules in AA
 - a. rather, there are methods of behaving and ways of speaking: this was discussed before break
 - 3. individuals interpret the program in their own way
 - a. for instance, it is ok to take psychotropic medications that are prescribed
– but some members will say it isn't ok
 - b. some believe in God as higher power, others believe in nature
- B. there is a huge diversity of meetings, each with its own local flavor
 - 1. settings (e.g., churches vs Alano Clubs), special populations (e.g., women-only)
 - 2. 🗨️🗨️ Have any of you been to meetings that felt different from each other?
 - a. some groups may feel dogmatic, while others feel more encouraging of open exchange
–you might run into "Big Book thumpers" or "AA Nazi's"
 - b. others may feel uncomfortable with someone's share (just like you may be feeling), but because of AA etiquette, they won't speak up at the meeting
–you might be in the majority, and not know it!
- C. there is diversity in the interpretation of the program
 - 1. the program is the principles of AA as written down in the Big Book and 12-by-12
 - a. "The principles we have set down are guides to progress" (AA Big Book 4th edition, pages 59-60; also see NA big book, 5th edition, p. 17 or p.55)
– by "principles", the Big Book is referring to the 12 steps
 - 2. other things in AA are passed down by oral tradition
 - a. they are not in the Big Book or 12-by-12, but have been found to work
 - b. they have grown into the language and practices of the fellowship
– meeting attendance, sponsorship, etc.
 - 3. 🗨️🗨️ Why do you think AA's make the suggestion of going to 90 meetings in 90 days ("90/90")?
 - a. you get to know lots of meetings, lots of people
– you'll find more than one meeting that you like, where you feel you fit in
 - b. you start to feel welcome and at home at meetings
 - c. it's something to do instead of what you used to do (drinking); something to fill spare time with
 - d. it gets you in the habit of going to meetings, and fitting them into your daily life
 - e. it breaks old routines from your drinking and using lifestyle
 - f. if you are close to having a drink, you'll know of a meeting to go to (without looking it up)
 - g. it takes about 90 days to get your head cleared (you need a clear head to grasp AA concepts)
 - 4. 🗨️🗨️ Have you ever tried to "take what you like, and leave the rest?"

VIII. Summary 5 minutes

- A. 🗨️🗨️ What ideas stand out for you from today's session – what are the "take-home messages" you heard?
 - 1. don't let any one person or opinion turn you away from AA.
 - 2. don't let AA ritual or etiquette turn you away
 - 3. AA meetings are diverse: you will find one you like if you stick with it

IX. Homework assignments 5 minutes

- A. go to an AA meeting in the next 7 days
- B. ask someone you don't know, who has more sobriety than you, for their telephone number
 - 1. talk to them on the phone (don't just leave messages) before the next MAAEZ session
 - 2. be prepared to share your experience, and how all this felt, at MAAEZ next week
 - 3. if this is your 5th week, you'll share your AA experiences at MAAEZ Introductory Session next week, AND pass on your books to a newcomer
- C. read "More About Alcoholism" from AA Big Book 4th edition, pages 30-40 only or "Just for Today–Living the Program" from Narcotics Anonymous 5th edition pages 90-96

SPONSORSHIP SESSION

I. Check-in: 15 minutes

II. Getting a sponsor

A. sponsorship is an oral tradition less than 1 minute

1. not in Big Book or 12-by-12
2. sponsorship has been found to work by people in the program over the years
3. AA is harder if you don't have a sponsor

B. 🗣️🗣️ What is a sponsor? 5 minutes

1. a sponsor is someone with experiential (vs academic) knowledge of recovery
 - a sponsor has practical tips about how to stay away from alcohol and drugs
 - a sponsor helps you stay away from the first drink or drug
2. a sponsor reflects the AA principles (the sponsor has worked the steps)
3. a sponsor is someone to call who will make time for you and knows your story
4. a sponsor is a primary connection to the fellowship
 - a sponsor can be your first friend in AA
 - a sponsor will introduce you to others in the fellowship
 - being with people who don't drink or use drugs will help you stay clean and sober
5. having a sponsor makes you feel less of an outsider, and more like you belong
6. a sponsor is someone you can talk to about your daily life problems
7. a sponsor is someone you can trust with your secrets
8. a sponsor will work the steps with you
9. a sponsor can be temporary
 - common practice in AA is to get a temporary sponsor right away
 - this helps you avoid waiting for that "perfect" sponsor to get started on the steps

C. 🗣️🗣️ Why should you get a sponsor? 5 minutes

1. we need a sponsor to work the steps with, and for support
2. we need another viewpoint to see ourselves accurately
 - when we're stuck in our own heads, we're alone in a bad neighborhood
3. you can share things with a sponsor that you don't want to share at group level
4. it will give you regular contact with someone who doesn't drink or use
5. you'll have someone to talk to when you are lonely or can't get to a meeting
6. you have someone to call when you are thinking about taking a drink or a drug
7. people who get sponsors are more likely to stay sober
8. Research studies have found that the most important areas of AA involvement are in reaching out to other AA members for help, and in the use of a sponsor. Relapsers lack the ability to use their sponsors and to reach out to other members in the program. (reference for this is on p.13, study #8)

10 minute break

D. 🗣️🗣️ Who should you ask to sponsor you? 5 minutes

1. someone who "has what you want"
2. someone who has been sober for awhile and worked the steps
3. someone you look up to
4. may be someone who said something positive at a meeting that struck you as true
5. someone you will feel comfortable around
6. someone who seems happy in their recovery
7. someone of your same gender – (If gay/lesbian, avoid romantic involvement or use opposite gender)
🗣️🗣️ why?

E. don't feel like you are imposing on someone, when you ask them to be your sponsor 5 minutes

1. in AA, the belief is that "we only keep what we have by giving it away"
2. you are helping your sponsor
 - a. you are a reminder to them of where they came from
 - b. you are giving them the opportunity to be of service
 - The 12th step of AA is to help others to recover

SPONSORSHIP SESSION (continued)

- F. how to ask someone to be your sponsor: role playing with vignettes 25 minutes
1. vignette 1: You are going to ask someone to be your temporary sponsor. It is someone you went to coffee with, who shared at a meeting, and you liked what they said.
 2. vignette 2: You are going to ask someone to be your sponsor. You had already gotten their phone number at a meeting, and have called them a few times already, just to talk.
 3. vignette 3: You really liked what a featured speaker had to say. After the meeting, you are going to go up to that person, and ask them to be your sponsor.
 4. vignette 4: You are going to ask someone to be your sponsor. It is someone who said something you connected with. But when you ask them to be your temporary sponsor, they say no, they're "too busy right now"
 - how did that feel – was it about you or about them? (Can't be! They didn't even know you yet!)
 - how do you get your courage back up to ask someone else?
 - next time, ask someone to be a temporary sponsor
- G. take little steps that put you in situations where you could ask someone to be your sponsor 5 minutes
- call someone on the phone to get used to talking to them
 - go to coffee with people after the meeting
 - come early to the meeting and get to know people; help set-up chairs, etc.
 - mention in your share, that you are looking for a temporary sponsor
 - 🗨️🗨️ what are other things you can do, to move yourself close to getting a sponsor?
- H. 🗨️🗨️ come up with a plan now: who to ask, how to ask, and when to ask 5 minutes
(if you already have a sponsor, come up with a plan to get more involved with him or her)

III. Summary 5 minutes

- A. 🗨️🗨️ What ideas stand out for you from today's session – what are the "take-home messages" you heard?
1. people who get sponsors are more likely to stay sober
 2. sponsors guide you through the steps
 3. pick someone you're comfortable with, who seems happy in their recovery

IV. Homework assignments 5 minutes

- A. go to an AA meeting in the next 7 days
- B. if you do not have a sponsor, ask someone to be your temporary sponsor
1. if you have a sponsor, connect with them before the next MAAEZ session
 2. be prepared to share your experience at MAAEZ next week
 3. if this is your 5th week, you'll share your AA experiences at MAAEZ Introductory Session next week, AND pass on your books to a newcomer
- C. read sponsorship pamphlet

LIVING SOBER SESSION

- I. Check-in: 15 minutes
- II. This session is about how involvement in AA can show you how to live a truly happy life, without drinking or using
- III. 🗨️ Has anyone heard about HALT from an AA meeting (don't get too hungry, angry, lonely or tired)? 10 minutes
- A. these states of being are all triggers to relapse
1. hungry and tired: physical states of being
 2. angry and lonely: emotional states of being
- B. 🗨️ Has that every happened to you?
- C. 🗨️ When you get into these physical or emotional states, what are some things that you can do?
- III. In AA, you'll hear people say to stay away from "slippery people, places and things" 20 minutes
- A. 🗨️ Why stay away from slippery people?
1. might make you want to drink or use drugs
 2. you don't always need to dump them, just spend less time with them, and more time with sober people
 3. you may find that you don't have as much in common with them
 4. you need to replace this loss, by connecting with a sober social network
- B. 🗨️ How can you get more clean and sober people in your life?
1. one result of AA involvement is that you eventually end up hanging out with different people
 2. this is the other side of losing old friends: making new friends in AA
 - a. go to coffee with AA's after meetings: that'll be an option for your homework this week
 - b. use the telephone: that's a homework assignment after the "principles, not personalities" session
 - c. AA members are accustomed to taking calls from each other all the time
– some day, someone in need is going to call you!
 - d. if you don't want to call a particular AA member, call the AA hotline
 3. 🗨️ doing things with sober people keeps us sober: Why is that?
 - a. it keeps us from drinking or using because we are in a group where sobriety is normal and is valued
 - b. you won't drink when you are with them
- C. 🗨️ letting go of slippery places: How can you do this in your daily lives?
1. take a different route home, or to work
 2. avoid restaurants, bars, or people's houses where you drank or used
 3. some say even avoid bars or anywhere that alcohol is served
- D. 🗨️ letting go of slippery things: What does this mean? How will you do it?
1. don't have any alcohol, or any drugs or drug paraphernalia, in the house
 - a. when you go home today, throw it all out: don't wait until tomorrow

10 minute break

- IV. 🗨️ What are some ways to become a part of AA? 10 minutes
- A. show up at meetings AND LISTEN: don't just sit there and space-out
1. sitting through a meeting is one hour where you are not using or drinking
 2. meetings are a place where you hear and see how the program works for others
 3. telling your drinking, drug use and recovery story as a newcomer, reminds AA old-timers what it's like
 4. changes your frame of mind
 - a. often you'll hear people say that they feel better after they've been to a meeting
 5. helps you put your own problems in perspective
- B. have a small service commitment (e.g., help set up chairs, put them away after the meeting):
1. "doing service" means you'll go to that meeting every week
 - a. this helps you get to know the people there
 - b. this makes you feel "a part of" the group (like you belong)
 2. "doing service" also helps your recovery
 - a. doing service takes us out of ourselves
 - b. doing service increases our self esteem
 - c. 🗨️ What are examples from your life, where helping others made you feel better?
 3. doing service does actually help others, but this is a lucky by-product

LIVING SOBER SESSION (continued)

- V. 🗨️🗨️ What are some things you can do, when you feel like drinking or using? 5 minutes
- A. call an AA member
 - B. go to meetings when you have urges
 - C. go to church or talk to a minister
 - D. go out with other sober people
 - E. share a meal with someone who is sober
 - F. go for a walk in nature
 - G. read AA literature
 - H. clean out a drawer or a closet
 - I. start your day with some quiet time and an appreciation of nature
 - J. take a nap
 - K. 🗨️🗨️ any other ideas?
- VI. Sober Fun (or: Is there life after sobriety?) 5 minutes
- A. many think this is the hardest part of all
 - B. drinking can actually limit our repertoire of things to do for fun
 - C. early sobriety has periods of boredom because we don't know what to do without drinking
 - D. 🗨️🗨️ What are some things you can do for fun, without drinking or taking drugs?
 1. sober AA events
 2. picnics
 3. attending sporting events (like baseball games)
 4. participating in sports (working out, bowling, skating, etc.)
 5. dances
 6. take a hot bath
 7. join a choir
 8. take that class you've always wanted to
 9. cook a meal for yourself
 10. invite a sober friend over for dinner
 11. read a book
 12. go to a movie
 13. write a letter
 14. read the newspaper
 15. any others?
- VII. Learning to do things sober, that you used to do drunk, or high, or on drugs 5 minutes
- A. 🗨️🗨️ What are some things you are worried about being able to do without the help of alcohol or drugs?
- VIII. Summary 5 minutes
- A. 🗨️🗨️ What ideas stand out for you from today's session – what are the "take-home messages" you heard?
 1. remember HALT, and to stay away from slippery people, places and things
 2. you will meet people in AA that will help you stay sober and/or drug free
 3. recovery is not grim and barren – it can be rewarding and fun
- IX. Homework assignments 5 minutes
- A. go to an AA meeting in the next 7 days
 - B. do something social (go to coffee, etc.) with one or more people from AA who have more sobriety than you
 - C. read 5-10 pages from the book Living Sober
 - D. be prepared to share your AA experiences at clinic's MAAEZ Introductory Session next week
 - E. if this is your 5th week, you'll share your AA experiences at MAAEZ Introductory Session next week, AND pass on your books to a newcomer