

Twelve Step Meeting—Step One

Recovery School Students

Jeffrey has entered Young People's Twelve Step Meeting

andrew has entered Young People's Twelve Step Meeting

Jeffrey says Hi, Andrew!

andrew says Hi

andrew says Looks good for the meeting tonight

Jeffrey says Thanks for your help. I am grateful that this chat room is functioning today.

andrew says Me too, it's my pleasure

Jeffrey says If you are OK with me staying in the room as a silent observer, that would help me collect the transcript.

andrew says No problem

Jeffrey says Thanks. Please let the others know when the meeting is happening that I am not responding so as to keep the meeting for all of you.

andrew says sure

Jeffrey says So I will stay in the room (unless, as sometimes happens, I am booted out, and then I will return.)

andrew says sounds good

Jeffrey says Fantastic. I hope you have a great first meeting!

andrew says Thanks. I'll be logging back in a little before 10:00 EST. See you then.

Jeffrey says I am leaving my computer now. I will be back at 10. Bye for now.

andrew has logged out

Jeffrey D. Roth, MD is present in the chat room to facilitate collection of the transcript. His presence at the meeting also provides an immediate representation of the readers' virtual presence here, since the members are aware that this transcript will be published. The process of the meetings being held is also challenged by some dysfunction of the chat room technology.

austinm62 has entered Young People's Twelve Step Meeting
austinm62 has logged out
austinm has entered Young People's Twelve Step Meeting
Andrew has entered Young People's Twelve Step Meeting
S.K.11 has entered Young People's Twelve Step Meeting
S.K.11 says Am I late?
Andrew says nope
austinm says how many more are we waiting for?
Andrew says hopefully 3 more
S.K.11 says Just making sure didn't know if EST was an hour ahead or behind me
Andrew says but we'll start in about 2 mins
austinm says k
Andrew says so Austin did you want to take the lead in setting up the next meeting?
austinm says sure, we should do this time again.
Andrew says this seemed to be the best time for everyone
S.K.11 says Yeah this time works out best for me as well
austinm says Hopefully everyone shows up and we can set a time for sure
Andrew says Yeah I hope
Andrew says Well we may as well get started for now
austinm says k
Andrew says Welcome to the Young People's 12 Step Meeting
Andrew says Jeffrey is here as an observer and to copy the meeting transcript.
Andrew says The topic for the meeting is Step 1
Andrew says Step one says We admitted we were powerless over alcohol-that our lives had become unmanageable.
Andrew says This meeting is not affiliated with any particular fellowship so feel free to comment about drugs or alcohol or anything else.
Andrew says To comment, type an ! and when you are called on you can comment.

Stef indicates her awareness of time boundaries, which is so often impaired during active addiction, and is often restored during recovery. Austin similarly indicates his awareness of group boundaries of membership.

Andrew exercises his authority as chair of the meeting to determine the starting time, and demonstrates his respect for the Tradition of rotating leadership of the meeting by offering to transfer authority for the next meeting to Austin.

Austin agrees to perform this service for the group, since service is understood to be useful as part of the process of recovery.

The group then effortlessly agrees on the boundaries of their next meeting, and proceeds to open the formal meeting with a welcome.

Andrew announces the presence of an observer, again indicating an awareness of group boundaries, and then sets the group task for this meeting, which is Step One. He continues with another boundary concerning the task; since this meeting is not an AA meeting or any other specific Twelve Step meeting, the discussion of Step One may relate to any area over which the member is powerless and which generates unmanageability.

Andrew says Type a couple sentences at a time and hit send so that we can read as you continue to type.

Andrew says Does anyone care to begin sharing on anything related to Step 1?

austinm says !

Andrew says Austin

austinm says I guess I'll start

austinm says I was sent to a treatment center on Aug. 24, 2000 by my parents. I was 17 austinm says I fought very hard when I first got there, I didn't think that anything that the treatment center was trying to sell applied to me.

austinm says I was miserable in the confines of the treatment center for about 3 months when I became very suicidal

austinm says At that time I decided that it was not normal that I was fighting to use cocaine again so bad taht I was willing to kill myself rather than be sober

austinm says That was when I first admitted that I was powerless over cocaine.

austinm says I began working the steps with a sponsor and also with the therapists at the treatment center.

austinm says They helped me to realize that my life was unmanagable way before I started cocaine

austinm says That realization really floored me, because I was such an egotistical prick that I thought that everyone else was my problem and I wasn't responsible for the state my life was in

austinm says Admitting that I was powerless over cocaine really helped me to put life back into perspective and turn my life around

austinm says I've been sober for about 6 1/2 years now thanks to that treatment center getting me started on my way

austinm says I guess I'll stop for now so I can give someone else a chance to talk, I'll speak more later if we have time

S_K_11 says thanks austin

Andrew says thanks Austin

Andrew says !

austinm says HI ANDREW!!!

Andrew concludes with some procedural boundaries, and then invites the group to participate.

Austin volunteers to open the sharing section of the meeting. He eloquently describes the unmanageability of his addiction in terms of his inability to accept help and support, either from his parents or from the treatment center, and his powerless over his addiction in terms of his willingness to die rather than stop using.

Austin them alludes to surrendering to a power greater than himself (Step 2) in working with a sponsor and his therapists.

Austin shares that he suffered from one of the typical defenses of the practicing addict, projection.

Note that 6 1/2 years later, Austin remains committed to sharing his story with others in the service of maintaining his recovery.

The group acknowledges Austin's contribution in the usual Twelve Step meeting fashion, and then welcomes Andrew to share.

S.K_11 says Hi andrew!

Andrew says I first got sober in a similar situation

Andrew says After basically destroying my opportunity at success in my first year of college

Andrew says I was written up a bunch of times

Andrew says I was sent to see a school counselor who specializes in drug and alcohol abuse.

Andrew says I had done really poorly my first semester, never going to class, skipping homeworks and tests, and so on

Andrew says So i figured for my second semester that I would just cut down on my use of drugs + alcohol and stick to just weekends

Andrew says Well, as soon as I started using, I couldn't stop

Andrew says Within a few days I was back where I had left off the month before

Andrew says After the writeups that followed and the meeting with the counselor, I had to start a treatment program or be kicked out of University housing

Andrew says I figured I would take an extended summer break and stay sober for a while and then go back to what I wanted to do, which was use

Andrew says I started an outpatient program last year in March and after a couple of weeks, the physical changes I began to notice was amazing

Andrew says I had to start going to meetings and I began to relate with other people there

Andrew says I saw that my life was totally unmanageable

Andrew says I started to realize I am powerless not over drugs and alcohol but a lot of things in my life

Andrew says That was really the beginning of my recovery.

Andrew says So with that I'll pass.

S.K_11 says thanks andrew

S.K_11 says !

austinm says thanks andrew, hi S K

Andrew says hi S K

S.K_11 says Hi my name is Stef I am an alcoholic and an addict

While commenting directly on what another members shares is discouraged, identification by offering similar experiences is an important part of the process of the Twelve Step group.

Andrew first offers a list of the ways in which his academic career was sabotaged by his addiction, and then indicates his powerless over his disease by his inability to cut down on his use, and his inability to stop.

Andrew is also honest about a common strategy among all addicts, which is to "go on the wagon" with the implicit intention to resume using. He then offers his insight into how recovery took hold in his life by giving him the opportunity to experience a different physical, psychological and social way of being.

Andrew says Hi stef

austinm says hi stef

S.K.11 says Step on for me is similar to the both of yours, though I am younger

S.K.11 says I first started to use drugs and alcohol when I was in middle school, around age 12

S.K.11 says I would use only occasionally on the weekends, but it slowly progressed into every other day to every day

S.K.11 says I went into my first out patient treatment program at age 14, I didn't understand why they didn't want me to experiment with drugs and alcohol after all I thought that was what teenagers were suppose to do

S.K.11 says Between 14 and 15 I attended 3 treatment centers, I didn't take anything seriously and continued to use

S.K.11 says untill the summer of 2005 I was a complete mess. I was 15 years old and was running away from home to get drugs and only caring about getting that next high

S.K.11 says I was then put into a inpatient treatment center and I started to realize how powerless I was over drugs & alcohol

S.K.11 says I also became suicidal and didn't want to live. I felt there was nothing to live for. Once I got out of treatment I went to meetings.

S.K.11 says I began to see that the people at meetings were happy and had many things in common with me. I started to talk to people and got a sponsor, whom have helped me to get to 2 years sober coming up on 4/11

S.K.11 says I to have to remember that I am powerless over other things besides just drugs and alcohol such as, people places and things. I guess I will pass for now, thanks

Andrew says Thanks Stef

austinm says thanks stef

austinm says !

austinm says Hi, Austin I'm an addict

Andrew says Hi Austin

S.K.11 says Hey Austin

S.K.11 says austin* sorry

austinm says I guess some other things related to step 1 I could talk about is that recovery and step 1 in general apply to behavior after being sober as well as to drugs

Stef opens our eyes to a situation that most of us would like to deny: that drug and alcohol use may begin early and progress insidiously. How, at the age of 14, she received the idea that teenagers were supposed to be using alcohol and drugs is an important foundation for this book. Her continued use despite three treatments underscores the importance of integrating recovery into the educational community. She shares her identification with Austin's suicidality, and the relief that she received by attending meetings.

Since this is a small meeting, Austin offers to share again.

Stef's slip of the keyboard may represent a wish to have another female member of the meeting. She apologizes for the slip without interpretation.

austinm says I have gone through periods while in recovery in which my life was again unmanageable
austinm says I think it has everything to do with how I react to the world when I get depressed.
austinm says I've had many bouts of serious depression for my whole life
austinm says This pattern of depression continued on through my sobriety
austinm says I would sometimes go through a period of depression and act out in unhealthy ways that made my life unmanageable again
austinm says One example of this was about 3 years ago.
austinm says I was having a major bout of depression coupled with an existential crisis in which I didn't know what I wanted to do for a career anymore or what I wanted to do with my life
austinm says I fixated and obsessed about poker during that time
austinm says I have always enjoyed poker and it seemed to be the only avenue that gave me any joy at that time
austinm says The poker made life even worse and I ended up dropping out of school for 2 semesters in a row
austinm says There were many other issues and extenuating circumstances going on at the time, for example obsessing about my girlfriend at the time and our horrible and chaotic relationship, but gambling was a big piece of the puzzle
austinm says I sort of had an epiphany with that situation when I realized that I needed to seek real help for my situation
austinm says I started going to therapy again and life really started to turn back around
austinm says I stopped playing poker for a while and eventually the girlfriend situation dissolved for good
austinm says I was close to using during this time
austinm says I realized that recovery and the first step does not just apply to using, it also applies to living.
austinm says For me to be in recovery, I need to be living a qualitatively different lifestyle than the one I had before

Austin takes up the implicit invitation from Stef to examine another area of powerlessness in his life, his use of gambling associated with periods of depression. Like alcohol and drugs, the impact of gambling and other compulsive behaviors on students may be minimized and underappreciated in our educational communities.

Austin's story indicates that even after sobriety from drugs and alcohol, the need for continued recovery extends into other areas of the recovering addict's life, including relationships. The unmanageability from these other areas may affect the addict's ability to remain sober. Fortunately, many recovering addicts recognize the need for and availability of help.

austinm says I still play poker today, but have learned when it is appropriate and healthy to do so.

austinm says I was frustrated because everyone labeled me a compulsive gambler at meetings and other recovery communities

austinm says I however have learned much about a healthy lifestyle and balancing fun with responsibility

austinm says I guess I'll stop rambling now

austinm says thanks

Andrew says Thanks Austin

S.K.11 says thanks austin

S.K.11 says !

Andrew says Hi Stef

austinm says hi stef

S.K.11 says Hello, well i liked what Austin had to say about how step one is not just for staying sober and not using, and about how it is used in living

S.K.11 says Step one is somethinG I have to remind myself of daily

vijay has entered Young People's Twelve Step Meeting

S.K.11 says The powerlessness over not only drugs and alcohol but people places and things

vijay says Hi everyone – sorry I'm late, I just got back from my homegroup, forgot we had a business meeting

S.K.11 says When I am at work, school, around family, and friends I always have to remember that I am powerless over them and their actions

Andrew says it's ok

S.K.11 says I can really work my self up when I want to control outcomes of situations or the way that people act

S.K.11 says I also have to accept that I am powerless.

S.K.11 says Well I feel like I am rambling [img id=em-10] so i will pass. thanks

Andrew says Thanks Stef

vijay says thanks for sharing!

austinm says thanks stef

Andrew says !

S.K.11 says hi andrew

vijay says hi andrew

austinm says hi andrew

Significantly, Austin chooses a different “bottom line” for his poker playing than for his alcohol and drug use. He does not see himself as a compulsive gambler. He demonstrates to us the importance of humility and maintaining an open mind with respect to the process of recovery. When he says he will “stop rambling for now,” he does not indicate whether he is aware of the play on words, “rambling” and “gambling,” but the effect seems to achieve his balance of fun with responsibility.

Vijay's name has been changed to protect his anonymity. Note how his late arrival does not disrupt the flow or the process of the meeting. As Stef notes, those in recovery from addiction engage in the group process, they accept their powerlessness over people, places and things in addition to their addiction. Therefore, the group accepts its powerlessness over a member who shows up late. Andrew, who chairs the meeting, uses his authority to welcome Vijay, and the meeting proceeds seamlessly.

Andrew says Thanks for your comments so far, I like what has been said about remembering I'm powerless over lots of things and about remembering Step 1 every day
Andrew says For me, remembering I'm powerless over other people, places and things is essential

Andrew says I often find myself trying to control situations and people that I'm powerless over

Andrew says My support group, especially my sponsor, is helpful in pointing this out.

Andrew says I try to get to a lot of beginner's meetings and talk to new people to remind myself that I'm powerless over drugs + alcohol

Andrew says I often hear people say that step 1 is the only step I have to work perfectly

Andrew says Because if I forget I'm powerless then why not take that first drink

Andrew says So thanks again, I'll pass

S.K.11 says thanks andrew

austinm says thanks andrew

Andrew says Any further comments? We still have a bit more time.

austinm says I'm good

S.K.11 says I think thats all for me tonight

Andrew says Ok then, if you could please join me in (saying, not typing) the serenity prayer:

Andrew says Thanks for coming tonight, thanks for your comments, and I believe Austin is taking the lead in the next meeting, so check your email for more info i guess.

austinm says Ill email everyone that didnt

make it, lets do 10 EST next sunday

austinm says That Vijay?

Note that Andrew makes space for Vijay to share, but no one pressures Vijay.

Andrew turns over leadership of the next meeting in advance.

Again, the group includes Vijay in the group conscience, whether or not Vijay chooses to participate.

austinm says work for you I meant to type

S.K.11 says Sounds good to me. Thanks a lot guys. I enjoyed the meeting

austinm says K see you all next sunday at 10 est

Andrew says ok, later all

S.K.11 says sounds good Thanks. Take care austinm has logged out

Andrew says DId you get the transcript Jeffrey?

S.K.11 has logged out

Andrew has logged out

Andrew acknowledges my presence at the very end of the meeting with regard to the task of recording the transcript. Note that Vijay has not yet logged out.

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