

## SMART Recovery Establishes Discussion Meetings

SMART Recovery is establishing a new type of meeting in the US, the SMART Recovery discussion meeting, hosted by a trained host. The discussion meeting will exist in addition to the standard SMART Recovery meeting facilitated by a trained facilitator.

The discussion meeting will have almost the same agenda as a SMART Recovery meeting: Welcome, Check-in, Discussion, Pass the Hat, and Checkout. The primary agenda item missing is "Agenda Setting." Instead of creating an agenda (by asking if a participant has an issue to discuss) the host will introduce around-the-circle exercises based on SMART tools.

For instance, at the conclusion of the Check-in, the host might state: "Thanks for that Check-in. Let's begin with an exercise based on the SMART Recovery tool Change Plan Worksheet. What could you do *tomorrow* to advance your recovery or your life? What could you do *today* to increase the chances of following through tomorrow?"

Or the exercise might be: "Let's do an exercise based on the SMART Recovery tool Roleplay. You are about to say *one sentence*. You need to tell someone something. Don't tell us who it is, or the story behind the sentence. Just tell us the *one sentence*, with expression. "

Many different exercises have been created for hosts. With experience hosts will also be able to create their own exercises.

At the conclusion of going around the circle (participants may pass if they wish) the host asks: "Did anything come up that you would like to discuss?" The ensuing discussion might take up the remaining time, or another exercise can be introduced. The exercises end when it is time to Pass the Hat.

"Pass the Brochure" may occur, or may be substituted for by passing out a host's handout at the beginning of the meeting. This handout has a summary of meeting guidelines, the 4-Point Program and the Tools and contact information. The primary purpose of the handout is to summarize SMART Recovery for new participants. The handout can be used as a brochure outside the meeting, eliminating the need to Pass the Brochure.

The expected advantage of offering discussion meetings is a more rapid increase in the availability of meetings. Discussion meetings will require fewer decisions on the part of the host (as compared to the number and complexity of the decisions potentially facing a facilitator). The host training requires significantly less time. The meeting structure runs the meeting more than the decisions of the host. Everything the host needs to say is included in the meeting script, which can simply be read to the meeting. More participants are expected to volunteer to host, given that hosting

is less demanding than facilitating. All hosts will be encouraged to continue on to complete facilitator training, raising the \$75 fee from their pass the hat contributions if necessary.

The host's efforts will center on keeping the discussion within SMART meeting guidelines (including no lengthy statements, no advice and no off-topic discussions), and introducing suitable around-the-circle exercises. The exercises can help participants learn the tools by actively engaging with them and by hearing other participants engage with them. These around-the-circle exercises have been used for approximately two years around the US, and appear to generate a high level of meeting engagement by participants and a satisfactory level of learning about the tools.

Free host training will be offered from the website and be available at any time. Hosts will be supported by a mentor, the weekly SMART Meeting Management meeting online (also open to facilitators), and collection of feedback about each meeting. In addition to discussion meetings SMART's future may also include tool trainings, Handbook trainings and speaker meetings. These types of meetings will require a facilitator rather than a host.

To introduce discussion meeting participants to other aspects of SMART Recovery, the following "Pass the Hat" statement is included in the script:

Thanks for this discussion. There are several *free* ways to learn more about SMART Recovery. You can attend more meetings (including online meetings), read the website, or participate online in the chat room or the message board. You can also purchase the Handbook for \$10, or sign up for the Overcoming Addictions web app on the home page, [smartrecovery.org](http://smartrecovery.org). As we learn more about SMART Recovery, we will have more helpful meetings.

We're passing the hat for donations. Any donations you make are greatly appreciated. With your contributions, we can reach everyone who needs to know about SMART Recovery. Because you can also think of SMART as Save Money at Recovery Training, maybe you'll be willing to give us a portion of the money you are saving!

SMART Recovery needs more meetings. Tonight's meeting is a Discussion meeting. We offer training on how to host a Discussion meeting and how to facilitate other kinds of meetings. Research suggests that the greatest benefit from SMART Recovery comes from leading meetings. We strongly recommend you become a host or facilitator. You'll be glad you did.

Notice the language of the final paragraph. This language introduces a greater level of encouragement to volunteer than SMART has previously

used. Please consider using this language whenever you pass the hat in any type of meeting.

All current facilitators are encouraged to view the host training when it becomes available online. No registration will be required. You will find that around-the-circle exercises are an excellent addition to the techniques you already use for leading a meeting, especially at those times when participants appear to have no issues to volunteer for the agenda.