

## You are not alone – Recovery Circles

Finding a sponsor can be difficult and sometimes feels very lonely. After working up the strength to ask someone to be a sponsor, it can be disheartening to find that it doesn't feel right. My first attempts to find a sponsor were confusing. I worked the twelve steps, I reported my food, and I called my sponsor at prearranged times, but it wasn't until I was invited into a recovery circle that I found the connection I needed to feel part of the group.

A recovery circle is a small group of members who get together on a regular basis to share the details of the program, read a book, or work the steps. Based on my experience, it seems like the best number for a recovery circle is five. More than five doesn't allow enough time for everyone to share and less than five can be too few. If a couple of members can't make a meeting, there is still a nucleus of people to have a successful meeting.

I belong to two recovery circles, and they are very different. The bottom line is that I have something in common with everyone in the circle, yet we all have differences that make the process very interesting. The best way to start a recovery circle is to send chat messages to people in meetings that you identified with their shares. If someone says something that you find helpful, there is a good chance that person will be someone you would like to get to know better. You also can just post a chat to everyone in a meeting saying you would like to join a recovery circle, but don't expect it to happen the first time.

I frequently have a hard time understanding my own emotions. I can feel a pang of despair or foreboding which historically I have handled by eating. When I am abstinent, I feel my feelings more and some members report that they turn the food compulsion into shopping, drinking, video games or other maladaptive behavior. I self-medicate with food and as my abstinence became stronger, I first got addicted to on-line gadget shopping. Then I started playing silly little video games for hours a day. Both activities became addictive. I started to dream of matching three of a kind just like the games I was playing.

I was relieved to hear that many people in my recovery circle had the same experience. The format of the recovery circle makes it a little easier to explore problems in depth because you get to know each other so well and have longer times to share. When I have gone through a difficult time, I felt so supported by my recovery circle in ways that other friends have not been able to match. It's wonderful having a group of people who are dedicated to recovery meeting weekly to bolster each other's progress, commiserate and support is so freeing. There have been many times I have told myself – "Just hang on to the next meeting. They will help me sort it all out."

To set up a recovery circle, someone must know enough about Zoom to create a meeting. If no one has a paid zoom account, you can still schedule a meeting, but you will be limited to 45 minutes based on the first person who logs into the meeting. When Zoom kicks you all out, you can immediately sign back in. There are many people in the program who know how this works so just ask for help and you can get through this technical step.

When I first joined the program, I did not ask for help. I was ashamed of my problems. I felt like no one was as “bad” as I was. Over time, through the generous sharing of others, I began to identify with others and eventually trust them with my truth and eventually expect them to help show me a different way. My recovery circles have really been my first real connection to people who understand my problems with food. I share things with them that I have never told my closest family members. For me, it was really the first three steps in action. Admitting I was powerless and trusting my recovery circle enough to be a power greater than myself.

- Anonymous