

## Santosha Recovery Meeting Etiquette

**Here are a few suggestions** on how to mindfully conduct yourself during a meeting and get an idea of what the group leader is asking of you. I hope this reduces any anxiety that you might have and increase a sense of ease which allows you and other sangha members, to get the maximum benefit of each meeting. Sangha is a group of people coming together for a common purpose. In Santosha Recovery, we are coming together to learn ways and techniques to becoming more content and happy in our lives and relationships. The SR meetings encourage deep listening and sincere reflection and compassion for yourself and others. Please be patient with yourself and others. Everyone is exactly where they should be in their evolution.

**1. Confidentiality:** Please be respectful of others privacy. What is said in the meetings stays in the meeting. Also please respect the privacy of others by not using names outside of the meetings. If two of you who were at a SR meeting meet outside meeting and discuss meeting, do so in the content of your own experience not using others names or what they shared in meeting. The group leader will also respect confidentiality except in the case where the group leader believes that someone is in danger, then it is the group leader's responsibility to take action to keep everyone safe.

**2. Try Not to Label:** See people as people or spiritual beings; and see actions of people as actions of people. I am a person with addictions, not an alcoholic. You will not be asked to get up in front of others and announce that you are an alcoholic or any other label. People are not good or bad. You are not good nor bad. People can have some very inharmonious actions or even harmful actions but people are spiritual beings with an innate desire to love and be loved. Respect yourself and others by seeing the light in each other.

**3. Let Go of Stories:** Stories are the minds way of making sense of a situation, or even to control a situation. We get fearful when we lose control of a situation or some aspect of our life. The story your mind comes up with is totally based on the lens you use to see life. If you happen to have on your "this always happens to me" lens then the stories will all be about being a victim. If you happen to have on your "I am right and everyone else is wrong" lens, then the stories will reflect that in a self righteous story by line. In SR, you will be asked to let go of your stories and eventually see life from a lens of santosha (contentment) and acceptance. But as long as your memory bank is full of your old stories you will be pulled back into seeing life from those harmful perceptions. A quote from Lao Tzu "When I let go of who I am, I become what I might be"

**4. Sharing:** There will be opportunities within the meeting in which the group leader will ask if anyone would like to share. During these share times, please share from your self-awareness of how these experiences effected you and you only. When you share your feelings and reflections out loud you learn new things about yourself. Sharing can be very healing as long as you remain in the context of the reflection. If your mind starts to loop or move away from the reflection into past stories or trauma the group leader may encourage you back to the main reflection using a verbal Que or a bell. If you find yourself wanting to share something with another person in the meeting, or if you have a personal issue you would like to discuss with the group leader, there will be time at the end of the meeting after the closing Mantra to engage in conversations. While someone in the sangha is sharing, absolutely no interruptions. It is asked of the rest of us to put on our deep listening skills and just listen with compassion and acceptance. If there is a need the group leader may implement a procedure in which the person sharing holds a "speaker's item" such as the conch shell. And with this everyone will know that it is that person's time to speak.

**5. Right to pass on sharing:** No sangha member is required to share or join in on any activity that makes them feel uncomfortable. If during a sharing the turn comes to someone who wishes to not participate, just say "pass" and your right to pass will be respected. If you wish not to join in with Mantras or prayers, just sit quietly and non judgmentally and try to get a sense of the group vibration.

**6. Questions are encouraged:** Please raise your hand and the group leader will get to you as soon as it is most auspicious. If the leader does not immediately get to the person raising their hand, it may be because it is interrupting the flow of the teaching or the teacher intuitis that the question may be answered by continuing the teaching. When a question is asked. The question is to the group leader and thus the group leader will be the person to answer. If the group leader thinks that the discussion or answer could benefit from others sharing their experience, then the group leader will ask if anyone else would like to share.

**7. Deep Listening Skills:** Start with listening to others as they are sharing. If your mind is developing questions or responses to the content of someone sharing then you are not listening. If your mind is telling you "ah, I get this, this happens to me all the time", you are not truly fully listening. Deep Listening is a skill that I hope can be uncovered in SR meetings. Deep listening is *present moment* living. Deep listening can bring your mind to balance,

clarity and santosha. Deep listening happens from the intuitive center. You have to really move inward and upward to listen from your spiritual heart.

**8. Avoid Side Conversations:** Meetings will run more smoothly when side chatter is kept to a minimum. Although it can be tempting to whisper to the person sitting next to you, it can also be distracting and disrespectful to others, and the person speaking. Remember, there are three parts to every meeting; before, during, and after. If you wish to make connections and converse with others, do so either before or after the meeting!

**9. Limit Cell Phone Use:** These days, we are always accessible, glued to our phones and habitually scrolling on social media. However, in order to stay entirely present, hear the message and not distract others, it is asked to keep your phone put away and on silent for the duration of the meeting. If you need to receive an important phone call that absolutely cannot wait until after the meeting, put your phone on vibrate, and be sure to take the call outside the room.

**10. Alcohol and mind altering chemicals:** Santosha Recovery encourages those who come to SR meetings to not be under the influence of mind altering chemicals. This may look like alcohol, caffeine, sugar, marijuana, and other mood enhancing drugs. This is not to say that you need to fast before coming to a meeting. But there is a balance. A cup of coffee or tea in the morning is not the same as getting all wired up and coming to class and struggling to move inward and upward. It is understood that some caffeine can calm and center a person. A dose of marijuana may also center and bring balance. Some people need a bit of protein to stabilize them. Those who use such substances to stabilize and balance are just fine. But those substances that create your mind to crave more or to give a false sense of reality or that prohibit your ability to listen to others and engage in the practices of SR are not advised.

**11. Food and Drink During Meeting:** In the event that you cannot get through a meeting without food or drink other than water, this food or drink should be held discreet in the possibility that there are others coming to the meeting with those such addictions. Sometimes even smells can trigger addictions so if you have to eat during the meeting for medical reasons, please do so quietly and if possible move into the back of the room to do so.

**12. Water Bottle Encouraged:** While we are chanting, meditating, and doing physical postures, it is best that the body is free from digesting food or beverage and instead quiet and content to bring focus on the inner body, mind, emotions and the teachings. Having a water bottle or glass of water with you to drink from serves to quench thirst and smooths the throat.

**13. Special events:** There may be times where enjoying healthy drinks or snacks after a meeting may be appropriate. These events will be announced ahead of time in a meeting, on the website and on the FB page so that members can be made aware of these events and from there make healthy choices. At these special events the sharing of drink or food will be after the meeting is entirely over and those wishing to leave have left the meeting.

**14. Coming Late or Leaving Early:** If you need to come late or leave early please talk to group leader ahead of time.

**15. Most of all, have fun!** Can healing from addictions be fun? Yes and rewarding. But you may have to re-frame your experience. Learning about yourself and why you make the choices you do can be very rewarding and fun. Ah-Ha moments are incredibly enlightening and fun. Let go of the self-criticism. We are here on Earth to learn and to find more joy. If you are criticizing and judging, you cannot learn about yourself. Your judgment will cloud your self-awareness and growth. Know that everyone's path looks different. Please do not assume the person sitting next to you is going through the same experiences as you, nor will be able to heal using the same methods as you. Even if the experiences are similar, the perceptions and therefore the method of healing may be completely different. Enjoy listening to others around you and being totally present to their path and ways of healing. We come together to accept and support one another and the best way to do that is to be present without giving advice.

**16. Reach out to your group leader:** Please feel free to reach out to your group leader with questions or guidance. The group leaders understands that some people prefer to reach out with questions privately and this is fine. You can email [recoverysantosha@gmail.com](mailto:recoverysantosha@gmail.com) or if you have the group leaders email or cell number, you can contact them directly to set up a time to speak over the phone or in person.

## **AHAM BRAHMASMI**

You are the creator of your life. If the teachings of SR speak to you, create the space and time to come to the meetings and do the practices. Let your group leader know if they can assist you in any way!