

# Meeting Format Script

**Suicide prevention lifeline phone 24/7 1-800-273-TALK**

**Samaritans suicide prevention lifeline phone free 24/7 212-673-3000**

**Lifenet 24/7 1-800-NYC-WELL**

\*Read the **highlighted** below.

## **Preamble**

Self-Mutilators Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other, that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from physical self-mutilation. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop mutilating oneself physically. There are no dues or fees for SMA membership. We are self-supporting through our own contributions. SMA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stop mutilating ourselves and to help others to recover from self mutilation.

## **Opening Statement**

We believe that we are as sick as our secrets and that self-disclosure and honesty with others is the key to recovery. There is no cross-talk in meetings, and no advice is given. We encourage members to identify what they do to self-mutilate, but we ask that you do not elaborate about specific episodes of self-mutilation or call specific attention to scars or wounds. The moderator may intervene if a share becomes graphic or continues too long. Please know, if you are asked to wrap up a share, that there is no judgment in this and no criticism; the moderator is simply trying to ensure that we do not inadvertently trigger self-mutilation in each other, or come to the end of the meeting without everyone who wishes to speak having had a chance to do so. All of us have struggled at times with feelings of loneliness, low self-esteem, and despair over our behaviors, and we know that sometimes these feelings can become truly unmanageable. You alone can judge if you need help of a kind that goes beyond what a peer support group can give. SMA is not a professional organization and cannot give medical advice, intervene in emergencies, or provide medical care. If you are feeling suicidal at any time, or if your self-mutilating behaviors are or risk becoming life-threatening, please reach out to a professional and/or call a suicide prevention hotline.

**Disclaimer: Layers to Discovery-** Self Mutilation is complex, dynamic, and multi-layered. Self mutilation has much to do with inner-child work. Which

is why, we believe the below layers help us understand and discover the “why” to our self mutilation and how to regain healthy control, freedom, and coping mechanisms.

There is no quick fix or perfectionism in layer work. Recovery is ever-changing and evolving. Layer work is the beginning of walking into your freedom of the person you are meant to be.

Recovery isn't linear and neither are the layers to discovery. These layers coexist and can be done in any order and repeated. The process of recovery includes returning as often as necessary to behaviors and thought patterns that lead to your mental freedom.

## **Layers to Discovery:**

**\*Only read the subject line of each layer.**

### **Layer One: What Keeps Us From Knowing Ourselves?**

**Identify your self-hatred**, worthlessness, being aware of negative self-talk, Writing down negative self-talk. How you self-talk/talk around others and how people talk around you.

**Recognize when you have a false mask** on and when you're able to take it off.

- a. who you wear a false mask around i.e. (family)
- b. realizing when you don't have a mask on. When you are authentically yourself. you feel authentically yourself (understanding how much pain you're in) when you are physically mutilating.
- c. Picking up the clues in your body when you are wearing or not wearing the mask. When you feel disconnected from your body you are wearing the mask.
- d. Figuring out how you feel in your body to identify your authentic self.
- e. The behavior tells you something important, but the behavior is not a solution.
- f. During the act: Re-playing the events during the day in your head (like a movie), to realize what was actually bothering you. Figuring out what was really bothering you. To process the trigger and the anger. Some judge themselves during the re-play i.e. (you shouldn't have felt etc.), and some people during the re-play are able to not judge themselves because they are engaging in the act. The act neutralizes the self-blame and is able to process the trigger. It's an attempt to do something constructive and adaptive, although maladaptive, but being able to help us contain the feelings we felt we couldn't before the act.

### **Layer Two: Breaking up with guilt**

**“The Break Up” / “Renegotiation” start an open dialogue with self.**

- a. Guilt that creates action
- b. What does it mean for you to be without the behavior?
- c. Thinking of the behavior and the results of the behavior. Looking at both in new ways. Whether they are scars or not. What would your life feel like without the behavior? i.e. control, scars, the act itself, self judgement.
- d. Letting go.

**Write down all the judgements you have of yourself**

- a. forgive yourself of your “failures”
- b. recognizing the in-ward hate

**Identify when you feel guilty.**

- a. being aware when feelings of guilt come up. Write down what you feel guilty about. Forgive yourself and move on. Allow the guilty voice to come. Thoughts are just thoughts, not true stories. If they have something in them that you need i.e. insight. acknowledge it and allow it to come back in a healthy manner, rather than destructive. Allow the thought to leave your mind like a dream.

**Discover and let go of your rules/restrictions.**

- a. Write down 1-3 of your rules/restrictions.
- b. rules about your behavior i.e. (cutting, picking, pulling), rules to control your own behavior, ways you try to reign yourself in, restrictions for yourself.
- c. We identify that these rules are fear based. We created them for emotional safety.
- d. Describe what commonality your rules/ restrictions have.
- e. consider the origin of where your rules came from and how they served you.
- f. Identify how you box yourself in.

**Layer Three: Becoming Our Authentic Selves**

**Become your own loving authority figure.**

- a. i.e. praise instead of punishment. No self-judgement. Encouragement. Failure is learning. No negative self-talk.

**Start setting boundaries**, start saying no, start organizing a sense of self around our own opinions rather than others.

- a. Write down the things you would've gone for if it weren't for fear, rejection, fear of failure, fear of others opinions.
- b. Write down the things you did go for in life.
- c. Write down compliments you give yourself (no matter how small it may seem).

### **Discover what you like to do:**

questioning what you like to do, trying new things, what you like about yourself, who you like to be around, etc.

## **Layer Four: Forge a connection with self and others**

**Write an apology letter to yourself.** (can be written at any time, as long as you want to).

12 step programs typically include writing amends to others, but as self mutilators we consider it an important part in our process to acknowledge the harm we've done to ourselves. Many of us consciously choose to self damage ourselves rather than expressing ourselves and risking disappointing others. To us the mildest form of disapproval from others would feel catastrophic to us and wants to be avoided at all costs.

### **Connect with your spiritual self.**

\*(read highlighted part as well). **we leave your spirituality up to your own discovery.**

Many of our members are spiritual or agnostic and have not gravitated to any organized religion whereas some seem to have had a very painful experience with the idea of a higher power.

## **Continue to carry the message.**

## **Do I Self Mutilate?**

### **Do any of the following questions describe you?**

1. Do you find yourself drawn to any kind of repetitive physical activity that is focused on one or more of your own body parts and involves any form of picking, cutting, scratching, biting, burning, hair-pulling, head banging or other “attacking” behaviors?
2. If yes, does it feel like you can’t resist engaging in the behavior or that, once you start, you are unable to stop yourself?
3. Do you ever feel compelled to engage in the behavior even when a part of you is trying to resist?
4. Does your sense of time ever change when you’re engaging in your behavior so that you are surprised, when you eventually stop, to see how much time has elapsed?
5. Do you consider the behavior a secret and/or something that makes you different from other people?
6. Are there times when you feel you are withdrawing from other people, or unwilling/unable to engage in social activities, because you’re embarrassed by physical signs (scars, bruises, scabs, e.g.) or because the need to engage in the behavior is so intense that you’re unable to focus on something else?
7. Do you feel that the behavior you engage in, even if it seems self-destructive, is also calming to you? Does it help you in another way that feels important, for example by making an upsetting situation feel less threatening, or allowing you to focus when you’re feeling scattered, or helping you to settle down physically or emotionally when it’s time to sleep?
8. Do you have physical scars or injuries that you feel you cannot explain to people if you’re asked about them?
9. Is shame, anxiety or other feelings about your behavior a big part of what you think about in your daily life? Do you have a sense that without the behavior you would have lost an important part of your identity, even if you hate what you do?

## **Tools of Recovery:**

- \* Make attendance at meetings your first priority.
- \* Disclose what you do to mutilate and identify it as an addiction.
- \* Study SMA literature.
- \* Be aware of your triggers.
- \* Exercise regularly to relieve stress.
- \* Talk to another self-mutilator to short-circuit the behavior.
- \* Draw or write down your feelings; don't take them out on yourself.
- \* Break out of your routine.
- \* Find a constructive outlet for your anger.
- \* Find a creative use for your free time.
- \* Write your own recovery plan.
- \* Write a gratitude List
- \* Use these tools to abstain from secondary mutilation behaviors too.

## **The Floor is open.**

Shares Begin.

## **Affirmations**

**\*Once shares are over, each person says 1-3 affirmations from this list, or makes up their own.**

**Definition-** Help set boundaries/ framework to create the vision of what you are working towards.

I let my body heal.

I stay conscious of my feelings and write them down.

I have the right to be abstinent, no matter what.

I applaud my willingness.

I'm free to spend my time as I choose.

My body is beautiful; I want to take care of it.

I deserve to come into the inheritance of my own beauty.

Life is safe.

I accept myself exactly how and who I am today.

I am willing to become increasingly more gentle and loving to myself.

I joyfully say, "No."

I have survived my childhood.

I deserve to be the (man/ woman) I am.  
My humor is a sign of my recovery.  
If at first I don't succeed, I lower my expectations.  
I have nothing to apologize for  
As the days go on I will learn to hate myself less and less. I got this, I can do this.  
My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I wear my name proud today

## **Closing Statement**

The opinions expressed here were strictly those of the person who gave them. Take what you liked and leave the rest. Whatever your problems, there are those among us who have had them too. If you try to keep an open mind, you will find help. You will come to realize that there is no situation too difficult to be bettered and no unhappiness too great to be lessened. The things you heard here were spoken in confidence and should be treated as confidential. Talk to each other, reason things out with someone else, but let there be no gossip or criticism of one another. Instead, let the understanding, love, and peace of the program grow in you one day at a time. Will all who care to, join in the closing prayer?