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15

PEOPLE AROUND YOU

GROUP FACILITATOR GUIDE

Running Free Peer Support Groups with These Books

STEPHEN DEASON
BEN WILSON

Alder Creek EDITIONS

Group Facilitator Guide

With Thanks

These books are offered at a low price in print and free online through the generous support of Matthew Marberry and the Michael Marberry Family Fund.

Thank you, Matthew, for helping put these books in the hands of the people who need them.

Stephen Deason

DON'T PANIC

If you are in danger, call 911.

If you are in crisis, or thinking about suicide, call or text 988.

For free help finding treatment, call 1-800-662-4357.

For the sixteen meeting plans, turn to page 63.

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The Mile Marker Library

BOOK 15 · PEOPLE AROUND YOU

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Alder Creek
EDITIONS

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Recovery Books

The Mile Marker Library: standalone books and tools for people getting into recovery on their own. Each one is numbered and labeled by what it helps with. Start with any of them.

RIGHT NOW

1. *Don't Panic: The First Hours After You Stop*
What to Do When You Stop Drinking or Using

2. *Wallet Crisis Card* **Free Printable**
Numbers to Call, Ready to Print

3. *Free Help Directory*
Meetings, Helplines, and Low-Cost Care

4. *Medications for Addiction, Explained*
What They Are, How to Ask, and How to Pay

DAILY PRACTICE

5. *Tools You Can Use on Your Own*
A Guide to Self-Directed Recovery

6. *Cravings and Hard Hours Workbook*
A Companion to Tools You Can Use on Your Own

7. *One Day at a Time, Written Down*
A 90-Day Gratitude Journal, in General and Christian Editions

8. *Daily Reader, 365 Days* **Forthcoming**
For Any Recovery Path

9. *Worksheet Library* **Forthcoming**
Every Journal Page and Exercise, Ready to Print

REBUILDING

10. *Money in Early Recovery*
Budgets, Debts, Benefits, and Credit

11. *Work and Recovery*
Finding a Job, Keeping It, and What to Tell Employers

12. *Finding a Safe Place to Live*
Sober Housing and What to Check Before You Move In

13. *Court, Probation, and Recovery* **Forthcoming**
What to Ask a Lawyer and What Records to Keep

PEOPLE AROUND YOU

14. *For Families*
When Someone You Love Can't Get to Treatment

15. *Group Facilitator Guide* **This book**
Running Free Peer Support Groups with These Books

16. *Employer Guide* **Forthcoming**
Hiring and Keeping People in Recovery

Who This Book Is For and How to Use It

You are thinking about starting a group. Maybe somebody asked you to. Maybe you went looking for one near you and there was nothing.

This book will get you from that to a room with chairs in it and people sitting in them. It assumes you have no money, no training, no organization behind you, and no idea what you are doing. All four of those are survivable. One of them, having no organization behind you, is worth fixing early, and Chapter 4 explains why.

What you need to start

- A room.
- A time that is the same every week.
- One other person who will come.
- A copy of whichever book the group is working through.
- Ninety minutes.

What you do not need

- A license, a certificate, or a credential.
- Money.
- Permission from anybody, unless the room belongs to them.
- Experience running groups.
- More than two people at the first meeting.

How to use this book

- Read Chapters 1 through 8 before you do anything. They are the part that keeps you out of trouble.
- Chapters 9 through 12 are the meeting itself, including what to say out loud. You can read them off the page.
- Chapters 13 through 20 are the hard moments. Read them before they happen.
- Chapter 22 is sixteen meetings you can run without preparing anything.
- Chapter 25 is your plan.

The fill-in pages are yours. Every service named in this book is free or low cost.

1. What This Group Is

Define it in one sentence before you do anything else, because everything after this follows from it.

> **A free weekly meeting where people in recovery work through a book together.**
> Peer-run. No professionals, no fees, no requirements.

What that means in practice

- Everyone in the room is a peer, including you. There is no staff.
- There is a book, and the book does the teaching so you do not have to.
- People read a few pages, do a written exercise, and talk about it.
- Attendance is voluntary and nobody is tracked.
- It is free, forever, with no basket and no dues.

Why the book matters

A group without material becomes either a complaint session or a performance by whoever talks most. The book gives the room a third thing to look at, so the conversation has somewhere to go that is not around the table. It also means a new facilitator does not have to generate ninety minutes of content, which is the thing that kills most new groups by week four.

Who it is for

People doing recovery on their own, with no treatment program and no money for one. Some of them will also be in a 12-step fellowship, in therapy, on medication, or all three. None of that is your business unless they bring it up.

My one-sentence description of this group:

Which book we will work through first:

Who it is for, in my own words:

2. What This Group Is Not

Say these out loud at the first meeting and say them again whenever somebody tests the edge.

Not treatment

This group does not treat anything. It does not substitute for a doctor, a counselor, or a program, and it does not sign anything saying somebody attended treatment.

Not therapy

You are not running group therapy. You do not probe, you do not interpret, and you do not take somebody back through a trauma in front of eleven people. Where that line is, and how to stay on your side of it, is Chapter 4.

Not AA, NA, or any other fellowship

Do not call it one, do not list it on their meeting schedules, and do not imply any of them endorse it. Those fellowships have their own traditions about affiliation, and borrowing their name creates a problem for them and for you. People in your room may also go to those meetings, which is good, and you can say so without claiming any connection.

Not a court-reportable program

Somebody will eventually ask you to sign a sheet for probation, drug court, or a child welfare case. Chapter 4 covers what to do. The short answer is that you are not

that kind of program and signing as though you are creates a problem you do not want.

Not yours

The room will go better if you hold it loosely from the start. A group that depends on one person ends when that person has a bad month. Chapter 23 is about building the second person.

What I will say about what this group is not:

Who has already asked me for something it is not:

What I will say to them:

3. Are You the Right Person

There is no credential for this. There are a few conditions, and they are worth being honest with yourself about now rather than in month three.

Reasonable conditions

- You are steady enough right now that a hard meeting will not take you out.
- You can show up on the same day every week for at least three months.
- You can sit with somebody else's silence without filling it.
- You can be told you are wrong in front of a room and not retaliate.
- You have your own support outside this group: a sponsor, a counselor, a group of your own, a friend who knows everything.

Reasons to wait

- You are in the first few months yourself. Give it a year. The group will still need starting.
- You are doing it to prove something, or to stay busy so you do not have to feel anything.
- You want to be the person who fixes people. That motive is common, it feels like generosity, and it burns through facilitators faster than anything else.
- You have no support of your own.

What you actually do in the room

You start on time, read the opening, keep time, make sure everybody who wants to speak gets to, stop the things that hurt the room, read the closing, and end on time. That is the whole job. You are not the expert and the group does not need one.

What makes somebody good at this

Being reliable, and being willing to be ordinary in front of people. The facilitators who last are the ones who say less than they want to.

How long I have been in recovery:

Who my own support is, by name:

What day I can commit to for three months:

Why I want to do this, written honestly:

4. What You Are Not Allowed to Do

This is the most important chapter in the book. Read it twice.

Do not practice without a license

Every state regulates counseling, therapy, and the practice of medicine. You can share your own experience and you can hand somebody a book. You cannot diagnose, you cannot treat, and you cannot present yourself as a counselor. Do not use the words therapy, treatment, counseling, or client about what you are doing, and do not let other people use them about you without correcting it.

Do not give medical advice

- Never tell anybody to start, stop, or change a medication. Not methadone, not buprenorphine, not naltrexone, not an antidepressant, not anything.
- When somebody says their doctor has them on something and asks what you think, the answer is that you are not a doctor and that it is a question for the person who prescribed it.
- If somebody in the room starts telling another person that medication is a crutch, stop it in the moment. Chapter 14 has the words.

Do not take money

No dues, no basket, no suggested donation, no fee, no venmo. Chapter 6 covers this and the reasons are not only about money.

Do not sign official forms

Probation officers, drug courts, and child welfare caseworkers issue attendance sheets. You are not a program and signing one tells a court you are. If somebody needs court-recognized attendance, send them to a program that is set up for it, and tell them plainly that you cannot sign. You may, if you want, confirm in a neutral sentence that a named person attended a free peer meeting on a given date. Decide once, apply it to everybody, and keep no other records.

Do not keep records

No sign-in sheet with last names. No notes about what people said. No roster. Records you do not have cannot be subpoenaed, lost, or read by somebody who should not read them. A first name and a phone number on a scrap of paper, kept by the person who owns the phone number, is the most you need.

Get an organization behind you

Federal law limits the personal liability of a volunteer who is acting within the scope of their responsibilities for a nonprofit organization or a government entity. A person running a group entirely on their own, affiliated with nothing, is not a volunteer of anything, and that

protection does not reach them. The protection has limits in any case: it does not cover willful or criminal misconduct, gross negligence, or reckless conduct, and it does not cover driving anybody anywhere.

The practical move is to run the group under somebody: a church, a library, a recovery community organization, a community center, a hospital's community program. Ask whether you can be a volunteer of theirs rather than a renter, ask whether their liability insurance covers volunteers, and get the answer in writing. This costs nothing and it is the single most valuable thing in this chapter.

> **Ask the organization three questions, in writing:**
> Am I a volunteer of yours when I run this? Does your liability insurance cover me? Who do I call if something happens?

The organization I will ask to run under:

Who I asked, and when:

What they said, in writing:

What I will say when somebody asks me to sign a court form:

5. Finding a Room

You want a free room, the same room every week, with a door that closes.

Where to ask

Place	What to ask for	What they usually want
Public library	A free meeting room, weekly	A form, and sometimes that the meeting be open to the public
Church or other place of worship	A classroom on a weeknight	To know what it is, and that you are not preaching something else
Recovery community organization	Space and a volunteer badge	Nothing. This is what they exist for
Community center or township hall	A standing weekly booking	A certificate of insurance, which the organization above provides
Hospital community room	Space through their community outreach office	A contact person inside
Union hall, VFW, fire hall	A weeknight room	Somebody to vouch for you

What makes a room work

- Chairs that can be moved into a circle or around a table.
- A door that closes, and no through traffic.
- A bathroom nearby.
- Parking, or a bus stop within a short walk. This decides who can come.
- A way in that works for a wheelchair, and a bathroom that does too. Ask, and then go and look, because the answer and the building do not always agree.
- A way to get in that does not depend on one person's key.

What to avoid

- A room you have to beg for every month.
- A room inside a building that closes at the hour your meeting ends.
- Somebody's house. It puts the group inside a private relationship and makes it impossible to hand off.
- A room where the group can be heard through the wall.

The time

Pick one time and never move it. Evenings after six work for people with jobs. Early mornings work for people on second shift. Whatever you pick, people will organize their week around it only if it never changes.

Places I will ask, in order:

Who I spoke to, and when:

The room, the day, and the time:

How we get in, and who else has a key:

6. Money

Do not collect any.

Why

- The people this is for do not have it, and a basket going around tells them this is not for them.
- Money creates a thing to be accused about. Nobody has ever been accused of mishandling a fund that does not exist.
- Money creates bookkeeping, a bank account, and a question about taxes.
- The moment there is money there is a decision about the money, and decisions about money end groups.

What things actually cost

A room, if you have asked in the right places, is free. Coffee is five dollars a week if somebody wants to bring it. The books are the only real cost, and the next section handles them.

Books

- The free printable editions are at aldercreekeditions.com. Print them, or send people the link.
- Ask the library to carry a copy or two. Libraries say yes to this more often than people expect.
- Ask the organization you run under whether they have a small materials budget. Many do.

- Nobody is ever turned away for not having the book. Read the pages aloud in the room.

If somebody wants to give you money

Tell them the group does not take money, and that if they want to help they can buy two copies of the book and leave them on the table. People want to contribute and that gives them somewhere to put it.

If you are offered a grant

Think carefully before taking it. Money from outside brings reporting requirements, and reporting requirements bring records, and Chapter 4 explains why you do not want records. If you take it, let it go to the organization you run under, not to you.

How we will get books into the room:

What I will say when somebody offers money:

What this group actually costs to run:

7. Getting the Word Out

The first three months are quiet. Plan for that, and tell the one person who comes with you that you are planning for it.

Where people actually hear about a group

- A flyer on the wall where people already go: the library, the laundromat, the health department, the courthouse, the food pantry, the public defender's office, the methadone clinic, the emergency room waiting area.
- 211. Call them and ask to be listed. It is free and it is the single highest-value call you will make.
- The hospital's social work office and the discharge planners.
- Probation offices, which hand out lists of what is available.
- Recovery community organizations and syringe services programs.
- Other meetings in town. Go, and mention it once, briefly, if their format allows it.
- Word of mouth, which eventually does most of the work.

What the flyer says

> **Free weekly group. [Day] at [time]. [Address].**
> We read a short book together about getting into recovery

> without money or a program. No cost, no sign-up, no requirements. Come once and see.
> Questions: [first name, phone number].

Do not put your last name on it. Do not put somebody else's name on it. Do not use the words treatment, therapy, or counseling.

What not to do

- Do not promise outcomes. No recovery rates, no success stories, no testimonials.
- Do not post other people's photographs or stories, including people who said it was fine.
- Do not create a public group online where people's names and faces sit next to the word addiction forever.
- Do not get into arguments in comments.

Online, if you do it at all

A single page or post that gives the day, time, place, and a phone number is enough. Keep the member list private or do not have one.

Five places I will put a flyer this week:

The date I called 211:

Who else I will tell:

What my flyer says:

---

8. Before the First Meeting

Do these in the two weeks before you open the door.

The list

1. Confirm the room, the day, the time, and how you get in. Walk the route from the parking lot.
2. Confirm with the organization that you are a volunteer of theirs, in writing.
3. Find out whether your state requires any adult who suspects child abuse to report it. About a third do. Chapter 18 explains what to do with the answer.
4. Get naloxone and put it in the room, and learn how to use it. Chapter 17.
5. Write down the crisis numbers on a card you keep in your pocket: 911, 988, 1-800-662-4357, and your local crisis line.
6. Find out where the nearest emergency room is and how long it takes to get there.
7. Decide what you will say about court forms, and write the sentence down.
8. Ask one person to come with you so you are not sitting alone.
9. Read Chapters 9 through 12 out loud to yourself once.

What to bring

- Two copies of the book, more if you have them.
- Pens. More than you think.
- Blank paper.

- Naloxone.
- The card with the numbers on it.
- A watch or a phone you can see without picking up.

Set the room before anybody arrives

Chairs in a circle, or around a table. One more chair than you expect. Arrive twenty minutes early, every week, for as long as you run it.

If two people come

Run the meeting exactly as written. A meeting with two people that starts on time and follows the format is a real meeting, and the person who came will come back. A meeting that turns into a conversation because it felt silly to do the format is not a meeting and that person will not.

The date of the first meeting:

Who is coming with me:

What I still have to confirm:

Where the naloxone is:

9. The Opening, Word for Word

Read this off the page. Reading it is better than improvising it, and it is still better in year two.

Welcome. This is a free peer group. My name is [first name] and I am in recovery myself.
I am not a counselor, a doctor, or a therapist, and nothing here is treatment or therapy. We read a book together and we talk about it.
There is no cost, no sign-up, and nothing you have to do or say. You can pass at any point and nobody will ask you why.

Three things about how we do it.
What is said here stays here. I will say more about that in a minute.
We speak about ourselves, not about each other. No advice unless somebody asks for it.
We finish at [time], and I will keep us to that.

About confidentiality. We all agree to keep what is said here inside this room.
I want to be straight with you: this is an agreement between us, and it is not a legal protection. I am not a licensed counselor, so nothing you say here is privileged.
In some states any adult who suspects a child is being hurt has to report it, and I will tell you now that I will act if I believe a child is in danger or somebody is about to be hurt.
So use your judgment about what you say in a room with people you do not know yet.

Last thing. If anybody here is in danger tonight, tell me before you leave and I will sit with you and make a call.
Is anyone here for the first time? You do not have to say anything. We are glad you came.
Let's start.

Why the confidentiality paragraph is in there

Because every group promises confidentiality and almost none of them say what it does not cover. A person facing a criminal charge, a custody case, or a probation violation needs to know before they speak, not afterward. Saying it costs you thirty seconds and it is the most honest thing you will do all night.

My opening, with my own name filled in:

What I will change about it:

The time we finish:

10. The Shape of Ninety Minutes

Same shape every week. The shape is what makes it a meeting rather than a hangout.

Minutes	What happens	Notes
0-5	Opening, read aloud	Start on time even with two people
5-15	Check-in, one sentence each	Name and one sentence. You go first and keep yours short
15-30	Read the pages aloud, taking turns	Anybody may pass. Stop and ask if a word needs explaining
30-45	Everybody writes, in silence	The written exercise from the book. You write too
45-75	Go around, one at a time	Each person gets about three minutes. No crosstalk
75-85	Open floor	Anything not said yet
85-90	Closing, read aloud	End on time, every week

Why the silent writing is in the middle

It gives people who do not speak first something to say when their turn comes, and it gives the room a reason to be quiet for fifteen minutes. New facilitators cut it because the silence feels like failure. Do not cut it.

Why you go first on the check-in

Because it sets the length. If you take four minutes, everybody takes four minutes and you will not get through the room. Keep yours to one sentence and the room follows.

Keeping time

- Say at the start of the go-around: we have about three minutes each so everybody gets a turn.
- When somebody runs over, wait for a breath and say their name, then: I want to make sure we get all the way around. Can you land it in a sentence?
- Do not use a timer that beeps. Watch the clock yourself.
- If the room is small, say so and give everybody longer. The point is that everybody speaks, not that everybody gets exactly three minutes.

If it is a sixty-minute room

Cut the open floor and shorten the writing to ten minutes. Keep the opening, the reading, the writing, the go-around, and the closing. Those five are the meeting.

Our start and end time:

What I will cut if we only have an hour:

How I will keep time:

---

11. Using the Books in the Room

The book is there so you do not have to be the content. Use it plainly.

How to run the reading

- Pick four to six pages. One chapter is usually right.
- Go around and let people read a paragraph each. Anybody may pass, and say so before you start.
- If somebody reads slowly, let them. Do not rescue them and do not finish their sentence.
- If nobody wants to read aloud, you read it. Some rooms never read aloud and are fine.

How to run the exercise

- Every chapter in these books ends with lines to fill in. Those are the exercise.
- Say: we are going to write for fifteen minutes. Nobody reads anybody else's. You keep your own page.
- Write your own. A facilitator who sits and watches people write changes the room.
- When time is up, say: you can read what you wrote, or talk about it, or say something else entirely.

Which book to start with

- A general group: start with Book 4, Tools You Can Use on Your Own.
- A group of people in the first weeks: Book 1, then Book 5.

- A group where everybody is working or trying to: Book 8.
- A group where money is the thing that comes up every week: Book 7.
- A group in a shelter or transitional housing: Book 9.
- A group of family members: Book 10. Run it separately from a group of people in recovery, always.

Do not teach

You are not explaining the chapter. If somebody asks what a word means, answer in one sentence and move on. If somebody disagrees with the book, let them, and let the room hear it. The book is not scripture and you are not defending it.

The book we are starting with:

_____

_____

Which chapter this week:

_____

_____

Which chapter next week:

_____

_____

Who has a copy and who does not:

12. The Closing, Word for Word

Read this one too. Ending the same way every week is what makes people able to leave.

> **We are at time, so let's close.**
> Thank you for coming and thank you for what you said here.
> What was said here stays here.
> We meet again [day] at [time], same room. Next week we are reading [chapter].
> If anything has come up for you tonight and you do not want to go home with it, stay for a minute and talk to me, or call 988 any time, day or night.
> That's it. See you next week.

The five minutes after

Stay in the room. Put the chairs back slowly. The most important conversation of the night happens about four minutes after the meeting ends, when one person waits until everybody else has gone. Be the last one to leave and let them get there.

Do not follow up during the week

Unless somebody asked you to, and unless they gave you their number themselves. Checking on people between meetings turns a peer into a caseworker, and it is not sustainable past about six people.

After everyone has gone

- Write down nothing about what anybody said.

- Text your own person if the night was heavy.
- Go home.

My closing, filled in:

What I do after every meeting:

Who I call if a meeting was hard:

13. Confidentiality and Its Limits

Say the limits out loud at every meeting where somebody new is present, which for the first year is most of them.

What you can honestly promise

- That you will not repeat what you hear.
- That the group agrees not to repeat what it hears.
- That you keep no records, so there is nothing to hand over.
- That you will not confirm to anybody outside the room that a particular person attends.

What you cannot promise

- Legal privilege. A statement made to a peer in a support group is not protected the way a statement to a licensed therapist or a lawyer is. Courts have held this.
- That other members will keep their word. You have no power over that and you should not pretend to.
- That you will stay silent if you believe a child is being hurt or somebody is about to be hurt. Say this in advance.

If you are asked about a member

By an employer, a probation officer, a family member, a reporter, anybody. The answer is the same: this is an anonymous peer group and I do not confirm who attends. Say it once and do not explain. If you are served with a subpoena, do not improvise. Call legal aid at lsc.gov, or

the organization you run under, before you answer anything.

What to tell the room about their own safety

Say it plainly once a month: be careful what you say in front of people you have known for three weeks, especially if you have a case open. Nobody is going to protect you from the consequences of a detailed confession. That warning is a kindness, not a chill on the room.

What I will say about confidentiality every week:

What I will say if somebody calls asking about a member:

Who I call if I am served with anything:

---

14. Crosstalk, Advice, and the Monologue

Three things damage a room, and all three can be stopped with one sentence if you say it early.

Crosstalk
Somebody responds to what another person said, usually to correct it. Say the person's name, then:

> **Let's hold that. We go one at a time so nobody has to defend what they said.**

Unasked advice
Somebody starts telling another person what to do. This is the most common way a new group goes wrong, because it feels like helping.

> **We speak about ourselves here. If you have had the same thing happen, tell us what you did.**

Advice about medication, which is different
When somebody tells another person that their prescribed medication is a crutch, or that they are not really sober, stop it in the moment. Do not wait and address it generally next week.

> **I am going to stop you. Nobody here tells anybody else what to take or not take.**
> That is between a person and their doctor. Say what you did, not what they should do.

The monologue

Somebody talks for eleven minutes every week. The room will not come back if you let it continue, and they will not stop on their own, because nobody has ever told them.

- In the room: wait for a breath, say their name, and say you want to be sure everybody gets a turn.
- After the meeting, privately, once: I want to make sure the room hears from everybody. Can you help me by landing yours in about three minutes?
- Most people take this well. Some do not and stop coming. That is a cost worth paying.

The person who corrects the book

Let it happen. Someone saying the book is wrong about something is a person engaging with it. Say: that's fair, what would you put instead, and let the room talk.

Which of these has already happened:

What I will say next time:

The conversation I need to have after a meeting:

15. The Person Who Comes In High

This will happen. Decide now, because you will not decide well at the time.

The default

Somebody who is high and sitting quietly stays. This is a recovery meeting and the person in front of you is the reason it exists. Turning out the one person who showed up loaded teaches the room that it is only for people who are already doing well.

When they cannot stay

- They are disrupting so that nobody else can speak.
- They are frightening somebody.
- They are using in the room or in the parking lot.
- The organization whose building it is has a rule, and you agreed to it.

How to ask somebody to step out

Quietly, by name, outside the room if possible. Do not do it as a speech to the group.

> **I am glad you came tonight. I need you to sit this one out.**
> Stay here with me for a minute, and come back next week.

What to do after

- Do not let them drive. Offer to call somebody for them. Do not drive them yourself.

- Check that they have somewhere to go tonight. 211 is in your pocket.
- If they are nodding off, gray, or breathing strangely, read Chapter 17 now.
- Say out loud to them that they are welcome next week, and mean it.

Back in the room

Say one sentence and move on: that happens here, they are welcome back, let's pick up where we were. Do not discuss the person who just left.

Does the building have a rule about this:

What I will say:

Who could sit with somebody outside while I keep the meeting going:

---

16. If Someone Is in Crisis

Somebody will say, in the go-around, that they do not want to be here anymore. What you do in the next sixty seconds matters and is not complicated.

In the room

- Do not react with alarm. Thank them for saying it.
- Do not make it the group's project and do not let the room start giving advice.
- Say: I want to talk with you before you leave tonight. Then keep running the meeting.
- Keep an eye on them for the rest of it. Do not let them slip out at the break.

After the meeting

> **Thank you for telling me. I am not a counselor, and I am not going to pretend to be.**
> I am going to sit here with you and we are going to call somebody who does this all day.
> Will you call, or do you want me to put it on speaker?

- Call or text 988. It is free, 24 hours, and the person on it is trained for this conversation.
- If they will not call, ask whether you can. Stay with them while it happens.
- If they are in immediate danger, call 911.
- Do not leave them alone in a parking lot.

What not to do

- Do not ask what their plan is or run through a checklist. You are not doing an assessment and you are not equipped to.
- Do not promise to keep it secret.
- Do not take them home with you.
- Do not spend the next week as their crisis line.

The next day

Tell your own person that it happened. You will be carrying it whether you say so or not, and facilitators who do not say so are the ones who quit in month five.

The numbers I carry: 911, 988, local crisis line:

Who I tell afterward:

What I will say in the moment:

17. If Someone Overdoses

Keep naloxone in the room. Learn to use it before you need it. Book 10 has a longer version of this and the free sources for getting it.

Signs

- Will not wake up.
- Slow or shallow breathing, or choking, gurgling, or snoring sounds from somebody you cannot wake.
- Skin gone pale or gray, lips or fingernails blue or gray.
- Tiny pupils that do not change in the light.

If you are not sure whether somebody is very high or overdosing, treat it as an overdose.

What to do

1. Give naloxone if you have it, and call 911. Both.
2. Give the address first in case the call drops, and say somebody is not breathing.
3. Keep them on their side.
4. Stay with them until help arrives.
5. If there is no response in two to three minutes and you have another dose, give it.

The rest of the room

Give somebody a job. One person meets the ambulance at the door, one person stays with you. Everyone else goes to another room or outside. Do not try to continue the meeting.

The law

Every state and the District of Columbia has a law improving layperson access to naloxone, and most give civil immunity to a person who administers it in good faith. The details vary by state, including whether criminal immunity is included. Look up yours before you run the first meeting, along with the overdose Good Samaritan law covered in Book 10.

Afterward

- Tell the organization whose building it is, the same night.
- Tell your own person.
- Hold the meeting again next week at the same time. The room needs to see that the group did not disappear.
- Replace the naloxone before the next meeting.

Where the naloxone is kept in our room:

The expiration date:

Who else in the group knows how to use it:

Who I notify afterward:

18. If Someone Tells You About a Child

Settle this before the first meeting, not in the car afterward.

Find out what your state requires

In about a third of states, any adult who suspects a child is being abused or neglected has to report it, whatever their job is. In the others the duty falls on listed professions, and a peer facilitator is usually not one of them. Which kind of state you are in changes what you are legally required to do, and you can find out in one phone call. Childhelp at 1-800-422-4453 will tell you the rule where you live and will talk through a specific situation before you report anything.

What to say in the opening, regardless

Tell the room, every week, that you will act if you believe a child is in danger. Saying it in advance is what makes acting on it honest rather than a betrayal.

When it comes up in the room

- Do not interrogate. You are not an investigator and questioning can damage a case.
- Do not announce in front of the room that you are going to report.
- Do not promise to keep it quiet.
- Finish the meeting. Then talk to the person alone.

The conversation afterward

> **What you said about your daughter stayed with me, and I am worried about her.**
> I told the room I would act if I thought a child was in danger, so I am telling you what I am going to do rather than doing it behind you.
> I would rather we call together.

How to report

- Childhelp, 1-800-422-4453, will route you to your state's hotline and will talk it through first.
- 911 if a child is in immediate danger.
- You do not need proof. Reasonable suspicion is the standard everywhere.
- Most states allow an anonymous report. Giving your name usually makes the report more useful.

What happens next, so you can tell them

Most reports do not end with a child being removed. In the most recent national figures, about three million children were the subject of an investigation or alternative response in a year, and about a hundred thousand received foster care services. The common outcome is a visit, a safety plan, and services.

Does my state require any adult to report:

Our state hotline number:

What I will say in the opening about this:

Who I would call for advice first:

---

19. Minors in the Room

A seventeen-year-old will show up eventually. Decide in advance, because deciding at the door in front of them goes badly.

The simplest policy, and the one to default to

Adults only, eighteen and over. Say it on the flyer. It keeps you out of a set of problems you are not equipped for: parental consent, your state's rules about services to minors, the building's own policy, and the fact that an adult-content room is not an appropriate place for a child.

What to do when one shows up anyway

- Do not turn them away into a parking lot. Talk to them.
- Tell them this group is for adults and that you want to get them to something that is for them.
- Call 211 with them and ask what exists for young people locally.
- Alateen, through al-anon.org, is for young people living with somebody else's drinking or drug use, and most meetings are online now.
- If they are in danger, Chapters 16 and 18 apply and their age does not change that.

If you want to run a group for young people

That is a different thing and it needs different scaffolding: parental consent, background checks, two unrelated adults in the room at all times, and the policies of

whatever organization you run under. Do not start it as a variation on the adult group. Go and ask a school counselor, a juvenile services office, or a youth-serving nonprofit what they would need from you.

If the organization you run under serves minors

Many churches, libraries, and community centers require a background check and a child-protection training for any volunteer on site when young people are in the building. Ask about it early. It is free or nearly free and it protects you.

Our age policy, written on the flyer:

What I will say if a young person comes:

What exists locally for people under 18:

Whether the building requires a background check:

20. When Two People Have History

In a small town, everybody in the room will eventually know everybody. Some of what they know is bad.

Common versions

- Two people who used together, and one of them is holding something against the other.
- An ex-partner and a current partner.
- Somebody who owes somebody money.
- Somebody who testified against somebody.
- Somebody who sold to somebody who is now trying to stop.

What to do

- Do not adjudicate it. You are not the one to decide who is owed what.
- Say the format does the work: we speak about ourselves, not about each other. Apply it the same way to both.
- If one of them tells you privately that they cannot be in a room with the other, believe them and help them find another meeting rather than asking them to tolerate it.
- If somebody is afraid, that outranks everybody's right to attend. Say so to the person who is causing the fear, privately and once.

If somebody has to be asked to leave for good

It happens rarely and only for conduct: threats, violence, approaching people for money or drugs, approaching people for anything else. Say it privately, in a sentence, without a list of grievances.

> **I am not able to have you in this room. I am not going to argue it with you.**
> Here are two other meetings in town, and I will help you get to one.

Tell the organization whose building it is. Then tell the room one sentence and nothing more, and do not relitigate it the following week.

Afterward

You will second-guess it. Ask your own person, not the group.

Who in the room has history, that I know of:

What I will say if it surfaces:

The other meetings in town I can refer somebody to:

21. Week Six

Attendance drops in week six. Every new group has this and most facilitators read it as a verdict on themselves.

What actually happens

- The people who came out of curiosity have satisfied it.
- Two of the regulars have relapsed and are ashamed to come back.
- One got a job on that shift.
- One had a car break.
- Nothing is wrong with the meeting.

What to do about it

- Hold the meeting. On time, same room, full format, with one person or none.
- Keep the flyers fresh. They come down and nobody tells you.
- Call 211 again and confirm the listing is current.
- Tell the regulars in advance that a person who misses a week, or relapses, is welcome back with no explanation required. Say it from the front so that the person it applies to hears it before they need it.
- Give it six months before you judge anything.

The sentence that brings people back

> **If you miss, come back. If you use, come back.**
> Nobody here is going to ask you where you were.

When a group should actually end

When nobody has come for two months and the flyers are current and 211 has it listed. That is a real signal, and ending a group that has run its course is not a failure. Tell the organization, take the listing down, and point the last two members somewhere else.

If you are the only one there

Read the chapter. Do the exercise. Go home at the usual time. You are the group that week, and the room being open is the whole point of the thing.

Week six date:

Where my flyers are, and when I last checked them:

What I will tell the regulars in advance:

When I would decide to end it:

22. Sixteen Meetings You Can Run

Four months of material. Each one needs no preparation beyond reading the pages yourself first. Run them in order or pick what the room needs.

Meeting 1. Why You Came

- Read: Book 4, Tools You Can Use on Your Own, Start Here and Chapter 1.
- Open with: What made this the week you walked in here?
- Write: The fill-in page at the end of Chapter 1.
- Close with: One thing you will do before next week.

Meeting 2. The First Hours

- Read: Book 1, Don't Panic, Chapters 1 and 2.
- Open with: What were the first twenty-four hours like, whenever yours were?
- Write: The fill-in page at the end of Chapter 2.
- Close with: Who would you call now if it were hour one again?

Meeting 3. Cravings

- Read: Book 5, Cravings and Hard Hours Workbook, the chapter on what a craving actually is.
- Open with: When is your hardest hour of the day?
- Write: The craving log page.
- Close with: What you will do at that hour this week.

Meeting 4. The Hard Hours

- Read: Book 5, the chapter on getting through a specific hour.
- Open with: What is the thing you do instead, when you do it?
- Write: The plan page for your own hardest hour.
- Close with: One person you could text in that hour.

Meeting 5. Your Own Tools

- Read: Book 4, the chapter on building a daily practice.
- Open with: What is already working that you have not given yourself credit for?
- Write: The daily practice page.
- Close with: The one piece you will keep.

Meeting 6. The Honest Number

- Read: Book 7, Money in Early Recovery, the chapter on what comes in and what goes out.
- Open with: When did you last know your actual number?
- Write: The income and outgoings page.
- Close with: One number you will go and find out this week.

Meeting 7. What You Owe

- Read: Book 7, the chapters on debts and on who to call first.
- Open with: What is the debt you think about at night?
- Write: The debt list page.

- Close with: One call you will make.

Meeting 8. What You Are Entitled To

- Read: Book 7, the chapter on benefits.
- Open with: What have you never applied for because you assumed you would not qualify?
- Write: The benefits checklist.
- Close with: The one you will apply for.

Meeting 9. The Gap in the History

- Read: Book 8, Work and Recovery, the chapters on your work history and the gap.
- Open with: What do you say now when somebody asks what you have been doing?
- Write: Your one-sentence version of the gap.
- Close with: Say your sentence out loud to the room.

Meeting 10. What You Tell an Employer

- Read: Book 8, the chapters on what you must say and what you need not.
- Open with: What are you most afraid they will find out?
- Write: The page on what you will and will not disclose.
- Close with: One thing you now know you do not have to say.

Meeting 11. Where You Sleep

- Read: Book 9, Finding a Safe Place to Live, Chapters 1 and 2.

- Open with: Is where you sleep helping or costing you?
- Write: The housing situation page.
- Close with: One thing about your housing you will change or check.

Meeting 12. Before You Move In

- Read: Book 9, the chapter of questions to ask before you move in.
- Open with: What did nobody tell you about the last place you lived?
- Write: The questions page, filled in for a place you are considering.
- Close with: The one question you will ask next time.

Meeting 13. The People Who Were Afraid for You

- Read: Book 10, For Families, Chapters 5 and 9. Read it as the person they were worried about.
- Open with: What do you think it was like on their side of it?
- Write: A letter you are not going to send.
- Close with: One person you could tell one true thing to.

Meeting 14. Telling the Truth to Somebody

- Read: Book 4, the chapter on honesty with one person.
- Open with: Who knows the whole thing?
- Write: The page on who you tell what.

- Close with: One thing you will say to one person this week.

Meeting 15. Free Help You Have Not Used

- Read: Book 3, Free Help Directory, any two sections.
- Open with: What have you never called because you assumed it was not for you?
- Write: Pick three things from the directory and write down the numbers.
- Close with: The one you will call before next week.

Meeting 16. Ninety Days From Now

- Read: Book 4, the planning chapter.
- Open with: Where were you ninety days ago?
- Write: The ninety-day plan page.
- Close with: Read one line of your plan to the room.

After sixteen weeks

Start again at Meeting 1 with whoever is in the room. The people who were there the first time will write different answers, and they will notice that they did.

23. Building a Second Facilitator

A group that only one person can run is a group with an end date. Start on this in month two, before you need it.

Who to ask

- Somebody who has come most weeks for three months.
- Somebody who is steady enough that a hard meeting will not take them out.
- Somebody who says less than they want to.
- Not the person who most wants the job.

How to hand it over, in order

1. Ask them to read the opening one week. Nothing else.
2. The next month, ask them to read the opening and the closing.
3. Then let them keep time during the go-around while you sit in the circle.
4. Then let them run a whole meeting with you in the room as a member.
5. Then take a week off and let them run it without you. Tell the room in advance that this is happening and why.
6. Give them this book.

What to tell them

- What to do about court forms, money, and records, which is Chapters 4 and 6.

- What to say about confidentiality, which is Chapter 13.
- Where the naloxone is.
- Who the organization contact is and how to reach them.
- That they can call you, and that the group is not yours.

Handing it off for good

Say it at a meeting rather than disappearing. Tell the room the day, introduce the person, stay for two more weeks as a member, and then stop coming for a while so the room attaches to the new person. Do not keep a key.

If nobody steps up

Run it alone and keep asking. Some groups take two years to grow a second facilitator. A group that ends because its one person moved away did more good than a group that never started.

Two people I could ask:

What I will ask them to do first:

The date I will ask:

What I need to write down so somebody else could run this:

24. When You Are Not Okay

You are in recovery too. This chapter is the one facilitators skip, and it is the reason most of them stop.

What running a group does to a person

- You hear the worst week of somebody's life, weekly, and you have nowhere to put it.
- You start measuring your own recovery against the room's.
- You feel responsible for people who relapse, and the feeling does not respond to being told it is irrational.
- You stop going to the meetings you went to for yourself, because now you go to this one.
- Somebody you liked dies, and you run the meeting that week anyway.

What to have in place before any of that

- Your own meeting, that you attend as a member, that is not this one. This is not optional.
- One person you debrief with, who is not in the group.
- A rule about what you do on the drive home.
- The second facilitator from Chapter 23, so that taking a month off is possible.

If your own recovery is in trouble

Hand the meeting to somebody for a month and go deal with it. Say that you are taking a few weeks and nothing

more. You do not owe the room an explanation and the room does not need one.

If you relapse

Stop running it, that week. Not forever. Tell your second facilitator, or the organization contact, and let them hold the room. Then do what Book 1 says and come back when you are steady. Facilitators who try to run the group through a relapse lose both the group and the time.

If somebody from the room dies

- Hold the meeting at the usual time. Say their name out loud.
- Do not make the meeting a memorial unless the room asks for one.
- Say what is true: that they came here, that people here cared about them, and that nobody in this room caused it.
- Get yourself to your own meeting that week, and talk to your own person.
- GRASP, at grasphelp.org, is for people grieving somebody lost to drugs or alcohol, and that includes you.

The meeting I attend for myself, and when:

The person I debrief with:

What I do on the drive home:

Who would hold the room if I had to step out:

---

25. My Group Plan

Fill this in and keep it with the books. Update it when something changes.

The room, the day, and the time:

The organization I run under, and my contact there:

Whether I am a volunteer of theirs, confirmed in writing:

Where the naloxone is, and its expiration date:

Crisis numbers: 911, 988, SAMHSA, local crisis line:

Whether my state requires any adult to report child abuse:

What I say about court forms:

The book we are working through, and which chapter next:

Where my flyers are, and when I last checked them:

Two people I could build into a second facilitator:

My own meeting, and the person I debrief with:

The one thing I will do before the next meeting:

The Card You Keep in Your Pocket

Copy this onto a card and keep it in your pocket at every meeting. Fill in the local numbers before the first one.

Emergency: 911. Crisis, for anybody including you: call or text 988. Free treatment referrals: 1-800-662-4357. Anything else, including a bed tonight: 211. Child abuse: Childhelp, 1-800-422-4453.

Our local crisis line:

Nearest emergency room, and how long it takes:

Organization contact, and how to reach them at night:

Where the naloxone is, and its expiration date:

Two other meetings in town I can refer somebody to:

The person I call after a hard meeting:

If you think somebody is overdosing: give naloxone, call 911, keep them on their side, stay with them. Call 911 even if they wake up.

People and Resources

Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number

Crisis: call or text 988
988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, 24/7. Chat at 988lifeline.org.

Emergency: 911

Treatment referrals: 1-800-662-4357
SAMHSA National Helpline, free and confidential, 24/7, English and Spanish. Text your ZIP code to 435748 or search FindTreatment.gov.

Free Support Groups

These groups are free to attend and most meet in person and online. Keep this list where you can find it, because referring somebody on is part of the job. The first group of entries is for people in recovery, the second for their families.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) aa.org
12-step groups for people with a drinking problem.

Narcotics Anonymous (NA) na.org
12-step groups for recovery from any drug.

SMART Recovery smartrecovery.org
Skills-based groups with no religious content, for any addiction.

LifeRing Secular Recovery lifering.org
Secular peer support, in person, online, and by email.

Recovery Dharma recoverydharma.org
Peer-led groups based on Buddhist practices.

Celebrate Recovery celebraterecovery.com
Christ-centered 12-step groups, usually hosted by churches.

Women for Sobriety womenforsobriety.org
Support groups for women.

Al-Anon al-anon.org
For families and friends of people with a drinking problem. Most rooms now include families dealing with any drug.

Nar-Anon nar-anon.org
The same idea, for families of people using drugs.

Alateen al-anon.org
For young people living with somebody else's drinking or drug use. Through al-anon.org.

SMART Recovery Family & Friends smartrecovery.org
Free meetings built on the CRAFT approach. Not 12-step, and no requirement that you detach.

Learn to Cope learn2cope.org
A peer network founded by parents, with an online forum open to members anywhere.

GRASP grasphelp.org
For people who have lost somebody to drugs or alcohol.

Online Meetings

Online meetings run at every hour of the day and night. You can use a first name only and keep your camera off. Many also have a phone number you can dial in to with no internet at all.

In The Rooms intherooms.com
Free live video meetings every week for many recovery paths, 12-step and others. A free account with a username is all you need.

AA Online Intergroup aa-intergroup.org
AA meetings by video, phone, chat, and email, around the clock.

Meeting Guide app aa.org
AA's free app lists in-person, online, and phone meetings.

Virtual NA virtual-na.org
Narcotics Anonymous meetings online and by phone.

SMART Recovery Online smartrecovery.org
Online meetings, chat, and message boards.

LifeRing Online lifering.org
Video meetings, chat, forums, and email groups.

Some recovery websites show phone numbers that connect to treatment centers selling their services. For free, neutral referrals, call the SAMHSA National Helpline:

1-800-662-4357

Alder Creek Editions is not connected to any group or website listed in this book. Websites change. If one stops working, the SAMHSA helpline can point you to current options.

About the Authors

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Stephen Deason has been in Recovery for more than eleven years and still begins and ends each day with meditation and gratitude. He writes The Mile Marker Library for people getting into recovery on their own, including people who cannot attend or afford a treatment program. He writes as a peer, from his own experience. He has spent more than thirty years building teams and companies in healthcare and technology, holds graduate degrees in business and accounting, and writes about recovery, economics, business, and social enterprise. More of his work is at aldercreekeditions.com and stephendeason.com.

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Alder Creek EDITIONS

Also from Alder Creek Editions

The Mile Marker Library

Standalone books and tools for people getting into recovery on their own, and for the people around them. Free printable editions are at aldercreekeditions.com.

1. *Don't Panic: The First Hours After You Stop*
2. *Wallet Crisis Card*
3. *Free Help Directory*
4. *Medications for Addiction, Explained*
5. *Tools You Can Use on Your Own*
6. *Cravings and Hard Hours Workbook*
7. *One Day at a Time, Written Down*
8. *Daily Reader, 365 Days*
9. *Worksheet Library*
10. *Money in Early Recovery*
11. *Work and Recovery*
12. *Finding a Safe Place to Live*
13. *Court, Probation, and Recovery*
14. *For Families*
15. *Group Facilitator Guide*
16. *Employer Guide*

The Weakest Link: A Story About the Systems We Never See

Book I. A business fable about a family caring for an aging parent, and the failures that happen in the handoffs between the people and agencies involved.

The Invisible Architecture: A Story About Senior Care as a System

Book II. The same family returns as care needs grow, and the story widens to show senior care as a system whose structure decides who ends up carrying the work.

The Space Between: Institutional Architecture and Coordination Costs **Forthcoming**

Book III moves from story toward the system itself: why coordination costs fall on the person least able to refuse them, and how organizations can be designed to carry those costs.

The Family Integrator's Handbook

A workbook for the family member who coordinates a parent's care, with the calls, records, schedules, and decisions organized in one place.

The Paid Last Series

Residual Claimants **Forthcoming**

The Owner's Arithmetic **In development**

Capital and Governance **Planned**

Standalone Titles

Valued: How Purpose-Driven Businesses Can Conquer Addiction and Marginalization in America **Forthcoming**

Case studies of companies that hire people in recovery and others shut out of work. Each one earns its place in the market by serving customers first, then carries its social mission alongside.

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