

A.R.T.S. ANONYMOUS

STARTING YOUR FIRST A.R.T.S. MEETING

WELCOME

Dear Artist:

Welcome to A.R.T.S. Anonymous. We are very happy to hear from you and delighted to offer our handbook on how to start your first A.R.T.S. meeting.

A.R.T.S. stands for Artists Recovering through the Twelve Steps and uses almost the same Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions as Alcoholics Anonymous. We began on November 5, 1984, when I invited a group of my artist friends from other Twelve Step programs to my home to a meeting for artists only. Admitting "powerlessness over " something is the First Step of every Twelve Step program, and in discussing how our needs as artists might better be served, it became clear to me that all of us were "powerless over our creativity," that is, powerless over our need to express our gifts. Being an artist is to have this calling to create which never goes away. Even if we choose to not be the artist we were meant to be, the need to create and express our gifts will never go away as long as we live. We are powerless over this need to create...and we might as well surrender to our calling.

For me, giving expression to my art was a life and death issue. During all the years when I was not giving my art expression, I felt like I was living somebody else's life, and I felt desperate. In the first month after A.R.T.S. began, I managed to do only fifteen minutes of art for the whole months. Then, six weeks after the program began, an established artist asked me to be her studio assistant and six months after this, she asked if I would collaborate with her on a sculpture piece for a major show, offering me equal billing in the catalog with her. However, I could work for her but I still could not work on my own for myself. It took another year before the block to working on my own was broken.

Now when I am in enough peace, I can go to my easel and work. It is such a joy, such a miracle. I cannot begin to tell you the depth of my gratitude. Looking back to the early months of my recovery, to when I could not paint or draw more than an hour in any given day and never, ever every day, I have learned a great deal about how to balance my life to support my creative process. Today, I am a visual artist, doing mostly drawings and some paintings; and now, after regularly attending meetings since 1984, my art is finally the main focus of my life.

I am not alone in this miracle. Every A.R.T.S. member can also share their unique recovery process, and the breakthroughs and joys of being better able to express and share their creativity.

Through A.R.T.S. we overcome avoidance, harmonize our gifts with the other important areas of our lives, and change our attitudes to live a more spiritually balanced life. Most of all, we learn that we are not alone in our search for creative fulfillment and balance.

We sincerely welcome you to our fellowship, and we hope to hear from you soon.

All my warmest good wishes,

Abigail B.

Abigail B., A.R.T.S. Founder

A NEW HOME

Like creating a piece of art in any medium, the process of bringing a new A.R.T.S. meeting into being requires a little bit of inspiration and a good deal of tenacity, patience and perseverance. We encourage you to approach this process in the same way you create a piece of art – one step at a time, one day at a time. We hope this handbook will provide you with the tools you will need to take you through this process.

Based on our own experiences, we feel confident enough to say that your new A.R.T.S. meeting may be one of your most rewarding creations. Many of us have found that the A.R.T.S. members we see regularly at meetings become our new, supportive ‘artistic family’ and the A.R.T.S. meeting itself becomes a new home – a place where we can openly and honestly share the joys, fears, achievements and disappointments of the past week and a place where we are supported for being the creative, evolving and multi-dimensional spiritual and human beings we truly are.

Fortified by the understanding and respect enjoyed at A.R.T.S. meetings, we can go back into our homes, studios and offices with greater courage to create the means to bring each of our truths to the world.

Welcome to the family of A.R.T.S.
THE A.R.T.S. WORLD SERVICE BOARD

HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook is divided into two main parts. The first part gives you all the information you’ll need to set up a new A.R.T.S. meeting, including an action checklist, sample request for meeting space, sample press release, definition of the A.R.T.S. service positions you will need covered in order to run the meeting and a glossary of terms often used in A.R.T.S. meetings.

The second part of this handbook tells you how to conduct your new A.R.T.S. meeting once it has begun by taking you step-by-step through a sample schedule of an A.R.T.S. meeting. The sample meeting schedule includes the various tenets of the A.R.T.S. program: the A.R.T.S. Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, Traits, Talents, Tools, Attitudes and Meeting Etiquette, Opening Prayers, Preamble, and Closing Prayer listed in order in which you might encounter them in the course of an A.R.T.S. meeting. Reading through these materials arranged in the enclosed meeting schedule, will give you a deeper understanding of how the A.R.T.S. program works.

The format of any new meeting is, of course, up to you and the others attending your meeting. You can create it or evolve it as you see fit. We have chosen to include these five formats, one for each week of the month, because they are relatively simple, straightforward and have been proven to work. We hope that by using these formats your meeting will gain enough core members to keep the meeting going from week to week. This is especially true if you are starting the first A.R.T.S. meeting in your area.

Above all else, we ask that you observe the A.R.T.S. Meeting Attitudes and Service Etiquette, that you respect each other's artistic process and that you fulfill your service positions in the spirit of humble service. These actions, more than any others, will help to insure your new A.R.T.S. meetings' success.

GETTING A NEW MEETING STARTED

GETTING STARTED: Starting a new meeting is not difficult, but requires commitment by the founding member(s). It may be easier to start a meeting if two or three people will commit to attending every week for six months. Even before the first meeting, try to develop a group conscience or agreement about the time and location of the meeting. With more artists involved from the beginning, there is a greater chance someone will know a friendly place to host the meeting.

LOCATION: A group needs a safe place to meet. For many, this means a location free of unnecessary noise. A good place to look for space would be in churches, schools, hospitals, or public service organizations. Considering the nature of A.R.T.S., other places such as art galleries, art schools, studios, and theaters might also be looked into. Some meetings have successfully started in a member's home but in time they have usually needed to move to a more neutral space. Ultimately, the meeting's members must determine for themselves the kind of space they need.

If at all possible, find a place to host the meeting that will be satisfied with a voluntary contribution rather than fixed rent payments which can burden a small, beginning group. Once the meeting is established, has enough A.R.T.S. literature, and is regularly contributing to the A.R.T.S. World Service Organization, then the meeting members might decide to be more financially generous to your host. Both the meeting and the host will benefit.

OFFICERS: Each meeting needs a Chairperson Treasurer, Literature Coordinator, Business Meeting Leader and Secretary, as well as a World Service Conference Delegate. Group conscience decides the length of term for each officer, anywhere from three months, to six months, or to a year. After a meeting has become established, we suggest that meeting chairpeople have at least six months experience in A.R.T.S., if possible, though such requirements must be set by the group conscience. Your World Service Conference Delegate is a two year term of office. In the beginning one person might hold more than one office.

A.R.T.S. WORLD SERVICE BOARD OF TRUSTEES: Based in New York City, the A.R.T.S. World Service Board of Trustees are empowered by the fellowship to manage the business of this international organization. The Trustees maintain an office with a part time staff person whose job it is to fulfill literature orders, maintain literature inventory, pay bills and do the data entry on all A.R.T.S. financial transactions, answer the telephone hotline and emails, verify all existing meetings and keep meeting list up to date, pick up the mail from our post office box and answer all correspondence, update the website, keep track of registrants to the A.R.T.S. annual convention and conference, and store the business and archive papers of A.R.T.S.

WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE DELEGATE: By law, once a year the Board of Trustees hosts the Business Conference where the Conference Delegate from each meeting is welcomed to meet

with the Trustees to approve their management of the business of A.R.T.S. Being the Conference Delegate from your meeting to the annual World Service Conference is a two year term of office. This helps the conference insuring that there will always be someone at the conference who was there the year before and knows what happened then and what should happen in the future. The Conference Delegate is also the meeting's contact person if the A.R.T.S. business office needs to be in touch with your meeting.

MEETING REGISTRATION: Every meeting needs to register their accurate address with the office and submit the name, address, email address, and phone number of your Conference Delegate. A copy of your meeting registration form can be found on the A.R.T.S. website: www.wartsanonymous.org The A.R.T.S. office will post any changes to your meeting's information on the website. Should there be a need to contact your meeting, the office will be in touch with your Conference Delegate.

YOUR "HOW TO START A NEW MEETING" CHECKLIST

1. *Learn about the program*

- Familiarize yourself with the program by reading all the A.R.T.S. literature.
- Try to attend an A.R.T.S. or other Twelve Step meeting in another program – they are all pretty much alike in format and structure..
- Talk with a Trustee from the A.R.T.S. World Service Goad for continuing support in starting your meeting.

2. *Get Support.*

- Talk to friends from other Twelve Step programs. Show them A.R.T.S. literature.

3. *Find a meeting space*

- Ideally find a public space such as a library, church, temple or school. Such a location will help to
- Provide a neutral atmosphere.
 - Help to preserve anonymity.
 - Accommodate large groups
 - Avoid overburdening a host

Note: Many meetings begin in a member's home and then move to a public space as their membership grows.

4. *Attract Members*

- Create a flier which describes your A.R.T.S. meeting and gives accurate directions to its location.
- Display fliers in public places.
- Contact the local media to place a free service announcement about your A.R.T.S. meeting and its day, time, and location
- Keep in mind that we are a fellowship of attraction rather than promotions (see Tradition Eleven).

5. *Choose Meeting Formats*

- We suggest starting with a different simple format like the ones suggested in this handbook or a variation on it. The formats you choose can be modified by vote during a business meeting once you have tried it for a while.

6. *Elect Officers*

- Once your meeting is underway, elect a Chairperson, Treasurer, Literature Coordinator, Business Meeting Leader, Business Secretary, and World Service Conference Delegate.

SUGGESTED MEDIA SAMPLES

Sample newspaper announcement

A.R.T.S. ANONYMOUS MEETING

- Any interested artists are invited to attend a fellowship of (writers, painters, actors, dancers, etc.) who share experiences, strengths and hopes with one another to overcome our common problems. “Our primary purpose is to express our creative gifts and achieve artistic freedom.” Wed, Oct. 11 (and every Wednesday evening), 7-8:30 pm at the Durham Arts Council Bld., 120 Morris Street, Durham. For more information call 555-0000 or 555-0000. Please check out our website at www.wartsanonymous.org

Sample public service announcement for radio

“ Procrastination and avoidance are deadly for the creative soul, but now there is support for those who have the urge to create but cannot seem to begin, sustain or complete artistic projects. A.R.T.S. Anonymous (Artists Recovering through the Twelve Steps) is a support group for creative people and now meets in Frederick on Monday evenings at 7:30 at the South End Baptist Church, 506 Carrollton Drive. Members of the group help each other to express their creative gifts and to achieve artistic freedom. All are welcome, and no dues or fees are required.”

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

A.R.T.S. ANONYMOUS MEETINGS SCHEDULED FOR
WEDNESDAY EVENINGS IN GLENDALE

GLENDALE, Calif., March --, 2010. A local chapter of A.R.T.S. Anonymous meets weekly on Wednesdays at 8 p.m. in the Positive Directions Activity Center, 225-D North Maryland Avenue, Glendale.

A.R.T.S. (“Artists Recovering through the Twelve Steps”) is a fellowship that encourages people to identify and express their creativity. Based on the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions used in Alcoholics Anonymous. A.R.T.S. welcomes artists of all kinds including actors, calligraphers, composers, dancers, designers, musicians, visual artists, poets, singers, writers, multi-talented artists and those still searching to find their artistic expression.

Founded nationally in November 1984, A.R.T.S. has been active in Southern California since May 1985 with more than ten weekly meetings in an area stretching from Santa Barbara to San Diego. For a complete listing of meetings go to www.artsanonymous.org. For local information contact: _____

GIVING SERVICE

All people holding positions of responsibility within A.R.T.S. are considered trusted servants of the fellowship and the program. Service is one of the tools of A.R.T.S. recovery.

MEETING LEADER’S DUTIES: The Meeting Leader or Chairperson opens, reads through the format, and closes the meeting. The Meeting Lead usually selects the qualifier or opening speaker. During the meeting if necessary the Meeting Leader may gently remind members of the A.R.T.S. guidelines for sharing and feedback. Not allowing crosstalk between members prevents closed discussions, debates, and advice giving.

TREASURER’S DUTIES: The Treasurer keeps a record of Seventh Tradition (see Glossary) collections, expenses and disbursements, including rent, literature and refreshments – where applicable. The treasurer gives a regular report to the group on the meetings’ finances and contributes regularly to World Service. Most groups cover the expenses of sending their conference delegate to the A.R.T.S. annual Business Conference. They also maintain a prudent reserve for financial emergencies, such as having to find a new location, or compensate for a dramatic fall-off in contributions. The group’s conscience determines the amount reserved.

LITERATURE COORDINATOR: The Literature Coordinator brings the A.R.T.S. literature to the meeting every week and accepts payment for all literature sold. The Literature Coordinator may maintain these funds from the sale of literature separately from the group treasury so that s/he may order literature when necessary to replenish the group’s supply.

WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE DELEGATE DUTIES: The World Service Conference Delegate serves as the link between the meeting, the A.R.T.S. office, and the World Service Board. It is

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their responsibility to register their name and contact information with the A.R.T.S. office and all mail from the A.R.T.S. office will be sent to their address with the expectation that they will bring all correspondence to the group. Once a year the World Service Conference Delegate is invited to attend the A.R.T.S. Annual World Service Business Conference and participate as their group's representative in the business discussions and vote accordingly.

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF A.R.T.S. ANONYMOUS

(The Twelve Traditions of A.R.T.S. Anonymous provide guidance to the group in the same way the Twelve Steps provide guidance to the individual. Each meeting is autonomous except in matters that affect A.R.T.S. as a whole. It is important for the meeting chairperson, other group officers, as well as the members, to familiarize themselves with the Twelve Traditions. The Twelve Traditions state the principles of group conduct and public relations upon which A.R.T.S. groups interrelate.)

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.R.T.S. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority -- a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.R.T.S. membership is a desire to identify and express our creativity.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.R.T.S. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose -- to carry its message to the artist who still **suffers struggles**.
6. An A.R.T.S. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend its name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.R.T.S. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. A.R.T.S. should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. A.R.T.S., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. A.R.T.S. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.R.T.S. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.

12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

GLOSSARY OF A.R.T.S. TERMS

SHARING: What each member says to express their experience, strength and hope during a meeting. We share pain to lessen the burden; joy is shared to encourage everyone.

CROSS TALK: Any conversation between two or more members during a meeting. Members refrain from cross talk, thus preventing closed discussions, debates, or advice giving. There is opportunity for conversation during the break or after the meeting.

A.R.T.SHARE: When a member brings in the art and shares it with the group that is an A.R.T.Share.

FEEDBACK: When giving feedback to someone's A.R.T.Share, members mirror the person's project and process, with a minimum focus on themselves and the maximum focus on the person's creative process.

QUALIFICATION: A members speaks for a set period of time before the group. The qualification can be their story about what if was like without A.R.T.S. and what it is like now with the program in their life. The qualification can also be on a topic of the meeting's choice or the qualifier's choice. Or the qualification can be on a particular Step or Tradition.

NAME-DROPPING: In the spirit of the A.R.T.S. Attitudes and Meeting Etiquette, members do not boast or name-drop when they share. We use general phrases rather than personal names, such as: "a major museum, a theatrical producer, a downtown gallery, an alternative publisher, my agent, my dance instructor" etc.

THE SEVENTH TRADITION: This tradition states that every A.R.T.S. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions. In practice this statement means that each meeting takes a Seventh Tradition break, collecting donations to cover the cost of the room, the cost of literature, and all other necessary expenses. In addition, most meetings send regular contributions to the A.R.T.S. office to support the overall running of the organization.

VARIOUS TYPES OF A.R.T.S. MEETINGS

PERSONAL QUALIFICATION MEETING: A member shares their personal before and after recovery story in A.R.T.S. The sharing time for the qualification is determined by the group conscience. After the qualifier shares, the members of the group share. They can either relate their own experiences to what was just shared or simply say to the qualifier "thank you for sharing" and then speak about what is going on in their artistic life. It is important though for each member of the group to acknowledge their gratitude for the qualifier before speaking about their affairs.

TOPIC QUALIFICATION MEETING: A member picks a topic and qualifies on it. Their sharing time is determined by the group conscience. The other members of the group then share on that topic too. Many topics can be found in the A.R.T.S. literature.

STEP MEETING: The meeting reads one Step each week, or each month. Each Step takes 11 to 14 minutes to read except Step Eleven which takes two meetings to read through. The members of the group then share their thoughts on that Step.

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STEP QUALIFICATION MEETING: A member who had done that A.R.T.S. Step shares their experience, strength, and hope with that Step. Their sharing time is determined by the group conscience. The members of the group then share their thoughts and experiences with that Step.

LITERATURE MEETING: The group chooses to read one piece of A.R.T.S. literature and then all share their thoughts on that piece of literature.

ARTSHARE MEETING: All the members of the group bring in their art and share their creative process with the group. Their sharing time is determined by the group conscience.

Usually there are four weeks in a month. For a new meeting and only meeting in the area, it is a good idea to have a different format for each of those weeks.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE OF A ONE HOUR MEETING A.R.T.S. MEETING

Welcome to the _____ **(name) A.R.T.S. Meeting**

Meeting Opens with the entire group saying the **Serenity Prayer:**

God, grant me the Serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And Wisdom to know the difference.

Someone reads the **A.R.T.S. Preamble:**

A.R.T.S. Anonymous is a fellowship of artists who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that we may recover from our common problems and help others to surrender to their creativity. The only requirement for membership is a desire to fulfill our creative potential. There are no dues or fees for A.R.T.S. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.R.T.S. 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 express our creative gifts and help others to achieve artistic freedom.

Someone reads the **Meeting Etiquette and Attitudes:**

Guidelines for sober sharing with unity and serenity.

1. We follow the time structure of the meeting. We restrict our share to limits determined by the group conscience.
2. We do not name drop. We are not here to impress, compete, or compare. We do not judge, criticize or argue.
3. When speaking we share our experience, strength, and hope.
4. We foster an attitude of unconditional respect for each individual's creativity.

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Optional: Someone reads one Trait, one Talent, one Tool, one Step, and one Tradition. There are twelve of each of these, so read in order of the months. January is Step One etc. October is Step Ten etc. All of the Traits, Talents, Tools, Steps, and Traditions are to be found one piece of A.R.T.S. literature called The Basics.

The weekly format now begins:

- Personal Qualification Meeting
- Topic Qualification Meeting
- Step Meeting
- Step Qualification Meeting
- Literature Meeting
- ARTShare Meeting

Half way through the meeting, the treasurer reads the **Seventh Tradition** and the hat is passed twice, once to collect the rent and new literature money and twice for pocket change to send to the A.R.T.S. World Service Office to support the organization.

We have no dues or fees but we do have expenses, so please be generous. If you can't give, keep coming back. We need you more than we need your money.

At the end of the meeting, someone reads the **A.R.T.S. Closing Prayer**

In closing, I would like to say that no matter how distanced we feel from our creative sources, no matter how long it has been since we were in touch with our creative spirit, or how feeble may seem our creative impulses, they are reawakening in our Higher Power's time, through this program and through our actions, no matter how small or how simple, a day at a time.

Meeting closes with the entire group saying the **Serenity Prayer**:

God, grant me the Serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And Wisdom to know the difference.