

WELCOME TO



DEBTORS ANONYMOUS

NEWCOMER'S PACKET

RECOVERY

SERENITY

PROSPERITY

For Meeting Information:
Call Toll-free 1-(888) 344-1990
www.empirestateda.org

EMPIRE STATE INTERGROUP
(New York State's Hudson Valley & Albany Capital District)
PO Box 1304, Woodstock, NY 12498

For more information contact:
DA GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE
(800) 421-2383
www.debtorsanonymous.org

DA in New York City
www.danyc.org

What is Debtors Anonymous (Preamble)

"Debtors 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 compulsive debting.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop incurring unsecured debt. There are no dues or fees for D.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

D.A. 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 debting one day at a time and to help other compulsive debtors to stop incurring unsecured debt."

- Preamble of Debtors Anonymous

Revised and approved August 2003

Notes to Newcomers

Welcome to Debtors Anonymous!

Here you can find a new way of living that offers recovery from compulsive debting and hope for a healthier, happier, more prosperous life. We suggest that you keep an open mind and attend at least six meetings as soon as possible. If you do not like one meeting, attend another. The important thing is to keep coming back.

Here are some suggestions to help you get started: first and foremost, we suggest that you stop incurring any new unsecured debt, one day at a time. Unsecured debt is any debt not backed up by some form of collateral. Although refraining from compulsive debting may be difficult and painful, it establishes a solid foundation for our recovery.

We recommend attending D.A. meetings regularly. Attending meetings gives us a sense of hope, an opportunity to identify with others, and a chance to meet people who can help us.

To gain clarity about how we use money, we record our expenses and our income. A good way to do this is to buy a small notebook or planner that is easy to carry. Throughout each day, we write down everything we spend and any income we receive, no matter how small the amount. Do not be discouraged if you cannot keep perfect records. If you lose track, begin again as soon as you can. We believe in progress, not perfection.

We recommend purchasing and reading D.A. literature, where you may find useful suggestions and new insights. We also find it helpful to read these books: *A Currency of Hope*, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, and *the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous*. When you read A.A. literature, we suggest substituting the words debt and debting for alcohol and drinking.

We suggest that you begin by working the Twelve Steps and by practicing the D.A. Tools because we did not arrive overnight at the circumstances that brought us to D.A., so solving our problems has required time and effort. While using the Tools of D.A. provides some relief from compulsive debting, working the Steps leads to recovery.

We suggest that you work the Twelve Steps in order, preferably with a sponsor or an experienced D.A. member who has worked and continues to work the Steps to the best of his or her ability. For us, true, long-lasting recovery results from a spiritual experience gained by working the Steps.

We recommend beginning with Step One. The sense of despair or "hitting bottom" we felt when we first came to D.A. was the first step in our recovery. We saw that our own attempts to scheme and manipulate our debts did not work. We admitted that we were powerless over debt. We were ready to ask for help.

To help you work the program, we suggest asking someone who lives the recovery you want to be your sponsor. Sponsors help us work the 12 Steps, use the D.A. Tools, and carry out our Action Plans.

After you have recorded your income and expenses for (preferably) 30 to 45 days, attended at least six meetings, and made a commitment to D.A., we suggest that you ask two members of D.A. (usually a man and a woman) to meet with you in a Pressure Relief Meeting. These two D.A. members should have abstained from incurring unsecured debt for at least 90 days and had two Pressure Relief Meetings, and if possible they should have recovery from issues similar to yours. As the members of your Pressure Relief Group, they will help you review your situation and formulate a Spending Plan and an Action Plan.

We suggest that you practice the principle of anonymity. Who we see and what we hear at meetings and in private conversation is kept confidential. This principle allows all members the freedom to speak openly and honestly without fear that our words or deeds may be used to harm us. Please respect the anonymity of all D.A. members.

If you decide that D.A. is not for you, keep us in mind for the future. You are always welcome. Debtors Anonymous will be here when you need it.





Signs of Compulsive Debting

1. Being unclear about your financial situation. Not knowing account balances, monthly expenses, loan interest rates, fees, fines, or contractual obligations.
2. Frequently "borrowing" items such as books, pens, or small amounts of money from friends and others, and failing to return them.
3. Poor saving habits. Not planning for taxes, retirement or other not-recurring but predictable items, and then feeling surprised when they come due; a "live for today, don't worry about tomorrow" attitude."
4. Compulsive shopping: Being unable to pass up a "good deal"; making impulsive purchases; leaving price tags on clothes so they can be returned; not using items you've purchased.
5. Difficulty in meeting basic financial or personal obligations, and/or an inordinate sense of accomplishment when such obligations are met.
6. A different feeling when buying things on credit than when paying cash, a feeling of being in the club, of being accepted, of being grown up.
7. Living in chaos and drama around money: Using one credit card to pay another; bouncing checks; always having a financial crisis to contend with.
8. A tendency to live on the edge: Living paycheck to paycheck; taking risks with health and car insurance coverage; writing checks hoping money will appear to cover them.
9. Unwarranted inhibition and embarrassment in what should be a normal discussion of money.
10. Overworking or underearning: Working extra hours to earn money to pay creditors; using time inefficiently; taking jobs below your skill and education level.
11. An unwillingness to care for and value yourself: Living in self-imposed deprivation; denying your basic needs in order to pay your creditors.
12. A feeling or hope that someone will take care of you if necessary, so that you won't really get into serious financial trouble, that there will always be someone you can turn to.



15 Questions

Most compulsive debtors will answer "yes" to at least eight of the following 15 questions.

1. Are your debts making your home life unhappy?
2. Does the pressure of your debts distract you from your daily work?
3. Are your debts affecting your reputation?
4. Do your debts cause you to think less of yourself?
5. Have you ever given false information in order to obtain credit?
6. Have you ever made unrealistic promises to your creditors?
7. Does the pressure of your debts make you careless of the welfare of your family?
8. Do you ever fear that your employer, family or friends will learn the extent of your total indebtedness?
9. When faced with a difficult financial situation, does the prospect of borrowing give you an inordinate feeling of relief?
10. Does the pressure of your debts cause you to have difficulty sleeping?
11. Has the pressure of your debts ever caused you to consider getting drunk?
12. Have you ever borrowed money without giving adequate consideration to the rate of interest you are required to pay?
13. Do you usually expect a negative response when you are subject to a credit investigation?
14. Have you ever developed a strict regimen for paying off your debts, only to break it under pressure?
15. Do you justify your debts by telling yourself that you are superior to the "other" people, and when you get your "break" you'll be out of debt overnight?

How did you score? If you answered yes to eight or more of these questions, the chances are that you have a problem with compulsive debt, or are well on your way to having one. If this is the case, today can be a turning point in your life.

We have all arrived at this crossroad. One road, a soft road, lures you on to further despair, illness, ruin, and in some cases, mental institutions, prison, or suicide. The other road, a more challenging road, leads to self-respect, solvency, healing, and personal fulfillment. We urge you to take the first difficult step onto the more solid road now.



12 Steps of Debtors Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over debt--that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to compulsive debtors, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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The Tools of Debtors Anonymous

Recovery from compulsive debting begins when we stop incurring new, unsecured debt, one day at a time. (Unsecured debt is any debt that is not backed up by some form of collateral, such as a house or other asset.) We attain a daily reprieve from compulsive debting by practicing the Twelve Steps and by using the following tools.

- 1. Meetings**
We attend meetings at which we share our experience, strength and hope with one another. Unless we give to newcomers what we have received from D.A., we cannot keep it ourselves.
- 2. Record Maintenance**
We maintain records of our daily income and expenses, of our savings, and of the retirement of any portions of our outstanding debts.
- 3. Sponsorship**
We have found it essential to our recovery to have a sponsor and to be a sponsor. A sponsor is a recovering debtor who guides us through the Twelve Steps and shares his or her own experience, strength, and recovery.
- 4. Pressure Relief Groups and Pressure Relief Meetings**
After we have gained some familiarity with the D.A. program, we organize Pressure Relief Groups consisting of ourselves and two other recovering debtors who have not incurred unsecured debt for at least 90 days and who usually have more experience in the program. The group meets in a series of Pressure Relief Meetings to review our financial situation. These meetings typically result in the formulation of a spending plan and an action plan.
- 5. Spending Plan**
The spending plan puts our needs first and gives us clarity and balance in our spending. It includes categories for income, spending, debt payment and savings (to help us build cash reserves, however humble). The income plan helps us focus on increasing our income. The debt payment category guides us in making realistic payment arrangements without depriving ourselves. Savings can include prudent reserve, retirement and special purchases.
- 6. Action Plan**
With the help of our Pressure Relief Group, we develop a list of specific actions for resolving our debts, improving our financial situation, and achieving our goals without incurring unsecured debt.
- 7. The Telephone and the Internet**
We maintain frequent contact with other D.A. members by using the telephone, e-mail, and other forms of communication. We make a point of talking to other D.A. members before and after taking difficult steps in our recovery.
- 8. D.A. and A.A. Literature**
We study the literature of Debtors Anonymous and of Alcoholics Anonymous to strengthen our understanding of compulsive disease and of recovery from compulsive debting. In A.A. literature we can identify with many of the situations described by substituting the words "compulsive debt" for "alcohol."
- 9. Awareness**
We maintain awareness of the danger of compulsive debt by taking note of bank, loan company and credit card advertising and their effects on us. We also remain aware of our personal finances in order to avoid vagueness, which can lead to compulsive debting or spending.
- 10. Business Meetings**
We attend business meetings that are held monthly. Many of us have long harbored feelings that "business" was not a part of our lives but for others more qualified. Yet participation in running our own program teaches us how our organization operates, and also helps us to become responsible for our own recovery.
- 11. Service**
We perform service at every level: personal, meeting, Intergroup, and World Service. Service is vital to our recovery. Only through service can we give to others what so generously has been given to us.
- 12. Anonymity**
We practice anonymity, which allows us freedom of expression by assuring us that what we say at meetings or to other DA members at any time will not be repeated.



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The Promises of Debtors Anonymous

In the program of Debtors Anonymous, we come together to share our experience, strength and hope so that we may recover from the disease of compulsive debting. When we work DA's Twelve Steps and use the DA Tools, we begin to receive these gifts of the program:

1. Where once we felt despair, we will experience a newfound hope.
2. Clarity will replace vagueness; we will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.
3. We will live within our means, yet our means will not define us.
4. We will begin to live a prosperous life, unencumbered by fear, worry, resentment, or debt.
5. We will realize that we are enough; we will value ourselves and our contributions
6. Isolation will give way to fellowship; faith will displace fear.
7. We will recognize that there is enough; our resources will be generous and we will share them with others and with DA
8. We will cease to compare ourselves to others; jealousy and envy will fade.
9. Acceptance and gratitude will replace regret, self-pity and longing.
10. We will no longer fear the truth; we will move from hiding in denial to living in reality.
11. Honesty will guide our actions toward a rich life filled with meaning and purpose.
12. We will recognize a Power Greater than ourselves as the source of our abundance; we realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.