

SMART RECOVERY SAN DIEGO FACILITATOR DOS & DON'TS

Please remember that, as a facilitator, you are acting as a representative of SMART Recovery San Diego at your meetings.

While every facilitator has their own style and every meeting will be different, there are best practices and standard guidelines to follow when facilitating your own meeting to ensure you are creating a safe, non-judgmental, supportive discussion space for participants while remaining within the parameters of San Diego SMART Recovery's principles and policies.

Successful Facilitators DO Connect with Each Other & Our Community:

Share meeting reports with the Google group, take initiative to get questions answered, find (and provide) solutions to meeting management issues, attend the monthly Community Development meeting, and engage with the SMART Recovery San Diego community to continue growing and improving their skillset, regardless of how long they have been facilitating.

Actively practice the common factors of motivational interviewing as appropriate in the discussion: 1) paraphrase, reflect, summarize; 2) express empathy, warmth, unconditional positive regard; and 3) be genuine in interactions with participants.

DO encourage discussion supporting participants identifying, exploring, and revising their interpretations of experiences, particularly in collaboration with others.

DON'T diagnose or label a participant's experience as trauma, depression, PTSD, boundary issues, or anything else as SMART does not believe in telling others what they are experiencing - and it can be dangerous to do so.

DO feel welcome to attend other meetings as a participant, while following the same meeting rules as any other participant of not speaking too long or too often, giving advice, or telling others how to contribute.

DON'T criticize or critique how the meeting facilitator is handling the meeting during the meeting. We are all here to support each other. If you have concerns, please speak with the facilitator offline or express your concerns to the Facilitator Training Committee.

DO support the meeting facilitator when you attend other meetings as a participant by modeling what productive participation looks like and focusing on making positive progress with addictive behaviors.

DON'T use any meeting as a platform to vent or make it awkward or difficult for the meeting facilitator to enforce rules when you are a participant.

DO: Honor your commitments as a SMART Recovery San Diego facilitator by being prepared and by showing up to your meeting each week, consistently and on time. Prepare for an absence or an emergency in advance by ensuring you have permissions within Zoom assigned (and tested) for substitutes, and by following the [Finding a Substitute Facilitator](#) guidelines.

DON'T: Leave your meeting without a facilitator present or your participants to fend for themselves.

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DO: Remember that participants may come to SMART meetings for a variety of maladaptive behaviors, not limited to alcohol. Discussions may consist of any addictive behavior the participant wants to address, and any related maladaptive behaviors (which could lead to the addictive behavior, or arise when they try to resolve the addictive behavior). The participant may be in any stage of change, including not wanting to make any changes at all. The participant could even be in different stages of change for different maladaptive behaviors they may wish to change.

DON'T: Make any judgments or determinations about a participant's reasons for attending SMART meetings or whether SMART meetings are appropriate for them. If they follow the meeting guidelines and are not disruptive, they are welcome to attend meetings.

DO: Create a space for participants to share experiences, and discuss topics related to recovery. If facilitators share aspects of their personal story, please ensure this is inclusive, brief, and for the purpose of opening up the discussion for the groups participants.

DON'T: Utilize the meeting or allow participants to utilize the meeting to extensively share their own story, get stuck in the past, or dominate the meeting.

DO: Maintain a focus on making progress, and/or defining stopping addictive or unhelpful behavior, where progress is defined by each individual for themselves. Moderation should support the entire group and discussion can focus on the most important part of any plan - when and how to stop.

DON'T: Dwell upon failures and ruminate upon the past.

DO: Encourage participants to make their own decisions about what progress and goals would be most helpful for them and their situation.

DON'T: Tell or allow other participants to tell others what path to follow or decisions to make.

DO: Encourage participants to offer their experiences of both successful and unsuccessful behaviors/thought patterns/etc. and to share suggestions of what has worked for them in their own lives utilizing "I" statements.

DON'T: Give advice or encourage/allow participants to give advice. Avoid telling other participants they "should" follow any course of action.

DO: Support social diversity by striving to actively understand and respect issues of social diversity including race, ethnicity, national origin, color, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, marital/partner status, political belief, religion, and mental or physical ability.

DON'T: Encourage or allow discussions to move out of the realm of mutual support and into expounding upon/discussing/debating politics, religion, etc.

DO: Protect and encourage participants to be respectful of identities and privacy inside, outside, and between meetings, including all verbal, written, and electronic communications.

DON'T: Solicit, disclose, or share private information about a participant.

DO: Provide accurate representation of SMART Recovery's tools, exercises, and strategies as a facilitator and not as a mental health or medical professional.

DON'T: Present themselves as an expert or authority.

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DO: Provide their email for verifications and sign or send meeting verification emails in a timely manner. Facilitators may wish to include their email within your meeting listing.

DON'T: Delay or forget to send attendance verifications to participants.

DO: Ask for donations to help support the SMART Recovery San Diego community.

DON'T: Tell participants that any form of payment is required to participate.

DO: Welcome participants, regardless of perceived sobriety during the meeting. Please address this on a case-by-case basis, keeping in mind that this could be why the individual is attending a meeting. Non-sober participants are welcome, so long as they can follow the meeting rules and are not disruptive. If they are disruptive, ask them to please respect and follow whatever meeting rule they are breaking. If they continue to break the meeting rules, then ask them to listen only for the rest of the meeting. If they still continue to be disruptive, you can remove them from the meeting to ensure a safe and welcoming space for the other participants.

This can be an opportunity to practice CRAFT (Community Reinforcement Approach & Family Training) to help direct the conversation toward the behavior that is not working (i.e. being disruptive) rather than toward the fact that the participant may be under the influence.

DON'T: Tell participants they cannot attend a meeting simply because they may not appear to be sober. Conversely, do not allow anyone (sober or not) to disrupt a meeting, or impact the experience for other participants.

DO: Encourage progress-based discussions where participants feel comfortable expressing themselves and sharing their stories, which may include their experiences with other programs. Focus the discussion on what works for each **individual**. ("I" statements)

DON'T: Encourage/allow "AA bashing" or focusing on what is "wrong" with other programs.

For further exploration and expansion of skills, facilitators may wish to learn more about and encourage the implementation of the thirteen active components of successful mutual-help groups in their meetings:

1. Bonding and support
2. Goal direction
3. Structure to follow
4. Observing and imitating norms and role models
5. Expectations of positive and negative consequences
6. Involvement in protective activities
7. Effective rewards
8. Identifying high-risk situations
9. Building self-efficacy and self-confidence
10. Developing coping skills
11. Presence of like-minded Individuals
12. Giving back
13. Developing self-awareness and reflection skills