
PEER SUPPORT FACILITATOR GUIDE

END
WORKPLACE
ABUSE

introduction

It has been said that the 12 steps protect us from ourselves, and the 12 traditions protect group members from each other.

People abuse other people in the workplace—a deeply significant, complex, and oftentimes enduring traumatic experience. Instilled fear festers along with the normal economic stressors family providers face every day—sacrifices for love and a demand to put food on the table. All while hoping to be present, join in, and sit. It is a horrendous interplay that creates vulnerabilities all too easy for predators to spot and exploit.

Forming self-sustaining, scalable peer-support groups is wisely based on AA's structure. Not because AA is “supreme” or that humans are awful creatures. Rather, it is because I struggle to find any other structure that has performed as AA has while also sharing our explicit goal of healing through connectivity.

End Workplace Abuse seeks to exemplify excellent standards of facilitation while releasing its format for all to make use of and grow together. Groups can take on a life of their own, serving all walks of life amply because they are built and sustained by the people they serve. Groups span cultures and bridge human needs.

It's what AA did from a humble little town in Ohio. At the time, it was a phenomenon. Today, it is regarded as a still-unfolding worldwide miracle that has outlived the minds that formed it.

— Delia Scotch, creator

welcome

Our mission is simple: **help survivors recover dignity and direction, post-trauma—together.** There is no wrong way to heal.

We're here to support people recovering from workplace abuse through truth-telling, mutual respect, and peer connection. You don't have to prove what happened to deserve support.

These meetings are **peer-led and confidential.** They are not therapy, not medical care, and not legal advice. We don't diagnose, treat, or direct anyone's decisions.

This is community support, not crisis services.

Because this is peer-led, our meeting model is repeatable: peer facilitators can host meetings in adherence to this guide for greater access to supportive services in a way that is sustained by the very community it serves.

agreements

Confidentiality: what's shared here stays here. We do not repeat it elsewhere. NO screenshots, photographs, off-screen listeners, or any other types of documenting of group activity.

Privacy practices: avoid last names, naming workplaces, locations, or other identifying details. Use first names only or a pseudonym.

No cross-talk: we don't interrupt, debate, or respond to someone's share.

No fixing: no unsolicited advice, coaching, or "you should." Speak from experience only. Practicing first-person shares is a simple way to remain aligned and maintain a healthy dynamic within group shares.

No hierarchy of suffering: No hierarchy of suffering: no minimizing, comparing, or "at least..." language. Here we regain our voices.

Choice: Choice: you may share or pass at any time—no pressure.

Respect: Respect: Harassment, threats, targeting, and all other bullying behaviors are not tolerated.

We create these healing rooms and we access them.

We keep at the forefront our shared vow:

together we will protect ourselves and others.

the 12 steps

POST-TRAUMATIC FREEDOM THE 12 STEPS ADAPTED FOR SURVIVORS OF WORKPLACE ABUSE

Adapted from the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, accompanied by adaptation of the virtues, listed per step.

1. Perspective

We admitted though our abuser and/or employer tried to rob us of our humanity, we still have our personal power. We came to accept that we did not cause the abuse, we cannot control the past, and we are not at fault for how the trauma has affected us to this point. We began shifting our focus from “Why did this happen?” to “What do I need right now in order to heal?”

2. Hope

We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves—whether feeling seen and heard in this group, our inner resilience, freedom evidenced in the lives of others, or a Higher Power of our understanding—could restore us to wholeness. When we recognized trauma as disconnection, we came to see a solution for healing: connection. And since healing cannot happen in isolation, we allowed ourselves to reach out and ask for help from others.

3. Commitment

We made a decision to follow a supportive recovery path, entrusting our healing to a power greater than ourselves. Instead of trying to control every outcome or white-knuckle through the pain, we surrendered to the idea that with guidance, faith, and community, we may be cared for. We committed to meeting ourselves with the same compassion we would grant another. We allowed others to lead us through to the other side of our traumas.

4. Action

We made a searching and fearless inventory of ourselves, compassionately examining the impact of the abuse on our lives. With courage and tenderness, we looked at how the abuse shaped our thoughts, feelings, and actions. We named the harms done to us and the ways we learned to survive, taking stock of our fears, grief, anger, patterns, and blockages—honoring our goodness and strength in us. We separated shame and guilt, brought truths to the forefront, and loosened the grip of things not ours, laying an honest and stable foundation for healing.

the 12 steps

5. Validation

We admitted to ourselves and to others the full truth of what happened and how it has affected us. We broke the silence and secrecy. In a safe setting, we shared the exact nature of our experiences: the abuse we endured and any ways we have blamed ourselves, with courage and transparency. By telling our story to a trusted person, in fullness and honesty, we receive help letting down the burden of carrying it to this point alone. We revealed, reversed, and reclaimed the narrative invented throughout our isolation. We walked through our story with honesty, curiosity, and compassion. Walking through is how we walked out.

6. Willingness

We became entirely ready to release the lingering effects of trauma and the survival behaviors that no longer serve us. We acknowledged the maladaptive coping mechanisms and the limited beliefs about ourselves that we had developed are not flaws of character but injuries from trauma. We prepared our hearts for change, believing ourselves worthy of it. Blame was never ours to carry. It rightfully lies with the abuser, and we returned it to its rightful place as many times as we needed, giving ourselves grace and room to grow, however it unfolded.

7. Community

We humbly asked for help to remove these burdens and heal our wounds. With humility, we sought strength from the group along with our inner resources and outside help for thoroughness as we let go of unhealthy patterns. We could not will ourselves out of anything; we backed up our faith with action. We asked for grace, patience, and courage to transform. This request took the form of openness in meetings (“I’m struggling with trusting people and I’m asking for support to change”), journaling, or a simple prayer. There is no right or wrong way to practice living again. We knew to be true that connection is healing. We clung to truth in love. We claimed our progress—never perfection—and we were proud of it. We practiced life and celebrated every kind of win because wins are freedom in action.

8. Connection

We found trust again and became willing to rebuild what trauma damaged. In practicing connection, we learned how to better protect ourselves while meaningfully engaging with others. Before repairing relationships with those who shared our post-trauma sufferings, we re-learned trust within ourselves and our rooms of healing, gaining clarity over our intrinsic values. We established healthy communication skills and personal boundaries that serve us well: protecting, never attacking, defensive yet neutral. Our assertiveness is graceful, despite what we have endured.

the 12 steps

9. Purpose

We fight for our healing, creating meaning and purpose in our lives. We transformed our pain into purpose. We recognized fighting for justice is not revenge. Our fight is restorative, empowering, resilient, and brilliant. We refuse to let abuse define the future.

10. Maintenance

We practice ongoing self-care, wellness, and joyful living as an act of recovery. We continue to take personal inventory, and when we fall into old, unhelpful patterns, we promptly recognize it and make decisions that align with our values. We commit to nurturing our mind, body, and spirit through intentional wellness practices — not as a luxury but as a requirement for healing from trauma. We explore dimensions of wellness, identify areas needing attention, and create gentle, achievable goals. We engage in activities that cultivate joy, presence, and nervous-system regulation: nature walks, meditation, movement, art, dance, photography, rest, and meaningful connection. Self-care becomes both prevention and restoration — a way to rebuild ourselves piece by piece and a declaration that we deserve to feel joy again.

11. Transformation

We seek to improve our conscious contact with our inner truth, focusing on the next right step in our recovery and the power to carry it out daily. We cultivate a daily centering or spiritual routine and seek guidance anchored in values, clarity, and compassion through mindfulness, meditation, journaling, prayer, or any practice of connecting with something greater. Rather than trying to control outcomes, we seek direction, strength, and inner alignment. This conscious contact helps replace the trauma-driven chaos with calm and purpose. It also reminds us we are not alone; we draw strength from whatever spiritual source we trust. It helps us stay grounded in the new identity we build, one rooted in worthiness instead of wounds.

12. Generosity

Having had personal transformation as a result of these steps, we carry this message to others who have suffered workplace abuse, continuing to practice our personal freedom. By Step 12, the cumulative work has fundamentally changed us — we experience a new freedom, peace, and understanding (a “spiritual awakening,” which means a change in our personality). We begin to carry the message, offer support and hope to others, and live our values out loud. Service is healing for us, too. We strive to practice honesty, hope, courage, boundaries, compassion, advocacy, and integrity in all areas of life.

We recognize our healing contributes to a larger movement — reshaping workplaces, supporting survivors, and creating a world where abuse is no longer normalized.

facilitator meeting outline

Suggested Meeting Length: 60–75 minutes

Group Size: 6–12 people

1. Opening (5 minutes)

Facilitator reads:

Welcome to the Workplace Abuse Peer Support Group. This group is a space for people who have experienced workplace bullying, mobbing, retaliation, or psychological abuse.

Our goal is not to fix each other or provide legal advice but to offer connection, validation, and support from people who understand what workplace abuse can do to our confidence, identity, and well-being.

Guidelines

Speak from your own experience

Avoid interrupting or cross-talk

Respect confidentiality

Advice should only be given if someone asks for it

Everyone is free to pass

Confidentiality statement

What is shared here stays here. We protect each other's privacy and dignity.

2. Brief Grounding (Optional – 2 minutes)

Because workplace abuse often creates hypervigilance and nervous system activation, a short grounding helps.

Example:

Let's take three slow breaths together.

Notice your feet on the ground and remind yourself that you are safe in this moment.

facilitator meeting outline

3. Introductions / Check-In Round (10–15 minutes)

Each person briefly shares:

Name

One word for how they are feeling today

Optional: one update since the last meeting

Example prompt:

Please introduce yourself and share one word that describes how you're arriving today.

Participants may say:

"Hi, I'm Maria. I'm feeling exhausted but hopeful."

4. Reading: The Purpose of the Group (2 minutes)

Facilitator or volunteer reads:

Workplace abuse often isolates people and makes them question their reality.

In this group, we reconnect with others who understand the experience.

Healing begins when shame is replaced with truth—and isolation is replaced with connection.

5. Step Discussion (25–30 minutes)

The facilitator introduces one step per meeting.

Example:

Step 1

We admitted though our abuser and/or employer tried to rob us of our humanity, we still have our personal power.

Prompt questions:

What helped you recognize that what happened to you was abuse?

What made it hard to admit the impact it had on you?

How did isolation affect your experience?

Participants share voluntarily.

facilitator meeting outline

Facilitator role

Ensure equal speaking opportunity

Redirect cross-talk

Validate without diagnosing

Example response:

Thank you for sharing that. Many people here have experienced similar doubts after workplace abuse.

6. Open Sharing (10–15 minutes)

After the step discussion:

We now have time for open sharing. Anyone who would like to speak about their experience or how today's topic relates to them is welcome.

Participants can share anything relevant to healing.

7. Resources / Announcements (3 minutes)

Examples:

Upcoming peer groups

Advocacy events

Educational resources

Crisis resources if needed

8. Closing Reflection (3 minutes)

Facilitator reads:

Workplace abuse can make people feel powerless, but healing happens when we reconnect with our voice, our dignity, and each other.

Thank you for showing up and supporting one another today.

facilitator meeting outline

9. Optional Closing Round

Each participant shares:

One word they are leaving with

Example:

“Relieved.”

“Less alone.”

“Still angry, but hopeful.”

10. Closing Statement

Keep what was helpful today and leave the rest.

Take care of yourselves this week and remember you are not alone.

the 12 traditions

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY THE 12 STEPS ADAPTED FOR SURVIVORS OF WORKPLACE ABUSE

Adapted from AA's group traditions, which successfully provide the guidelines for the explosion of an international movement of healing. It endures to this day, nearly a century later.

Our Traditions protect these Connection Sessions over time and through future growth. Growing pains and conflicts surely may arise, and so we will regularly return to these traditions.

1. Common welfare comes first. Personal healing depends on group unity and safety.

In practice: we address breaches of trust, disrespect, and conflict with immediacy to best protect the whole group.

2. Group conscience is our authority. Facilitators are trusted servants; they do not govern.

In practice: decisions are made transparently through group discussion, consensus, or a simple vote.

3. The only requirement to attend is a desire to heal the challenges of life post-trauma.

In practice: no labels, credentials, or perfect language is required. You don't need to prove anything or have all the answers. If you seek recovery, you belong.

4. Each group is autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or the fellowship as a whole.

In practice: groups may adapt meeting format but never violate core safeguards like anonymity, confidentiality, and respect. Core readings are available for every meeting and are ideally read aloud at the start to maintain coherence across groups.

5. Our primary purpose is recovery from workplace abuse and carrying hope and healing to those who know its suffering.

In practice: we keep meeting shares grounded in workplace abuse impacts and healing, not unrelated debates or agendas.

6. We do not endorse or affiliate with outside causes, institutions, professionals, or enterprises.

In practice: Connection Sessions are a fellowship of support—not a marketplace, campaign, or referral pipeline. We do not promote or recommend specific law firms, clinicians, unions, political causes, or paid services in meetings. Members may pursue any resources privately, but the group remains a neutral, anonymous space for recovery.

the 12 traditions

7. We are fully **self-supporting**, declining outside contributions.

In practice: voluntary member contributions cover basic meeting costs. No one is turned away for not contributing. There is no cost of attendance.

8. We remain non-professional and **peer-led**; meetings are not therapy sessions.

In practice: professional care is strongly encouraged outside meetings. While credentialed members may attend, meetings are not the place to seek or give professional advice.

9. We stay **minimally organized**; service roles exist to support the group, not control it.

In practice: simple service roles within groups and light coordination prevent hierarchy, bureaucracy, and power struggles. Any role is one of service, not governance.

10. We have **no opinion on outside issues**; we avoid public controversy.

In practice: we protect neutrality so all can attend knowing the meeting will remain focused, respectful, and safe.

11. Our outreach is **attraction**, not promotion; we protect personal anonymity in public.

In practice: we share the availability of our supportive communities without hype or pressure—and we never expose member identities.

12. **Anonymity** is our foundation—principles before personalities. We protect equality inside the room and privacy outside it.

In practice: no VIPs or gurus. We consciously avoid forming cliques. Groups are not exclusive clubs. We keep names and identifying details out of the room and protect each other beyond it.

promises of the recovery process

1. We will know a **new freedom** and a **new happiness**.
2. Being renewed and free, we will **not regret the past** nor try to hide it away.
3. We will not live performatively. We understand 100% as only the ideal measure of embodied **authenticity**.
4. We will comprehend the word **serenity** and know peace. We will comprehend the word **autonomy** because we know connectivity.
5. No matter the magnitude of our sufferings, we no longer compare. Instead we find we can allow its **purpose**.
6. The role of the victim is seen in the past tense as we live in the light of the **survivor's way**.
7. Isolation and chaotic coping will give way to **connection and conscious growth**.
8. We will find the privacy of our minds to be **kind**. The future looks friendly to the free.
9. Our whole **attitude and outlook** changes. "Who am I?" means something new and good.
10. The discipline of healing becomes a **delightful practice** the more we discover its rewards.
11. We will not blame ourselves for what happened; we **honor ourselves** for enduring the best we were able. We thank ourselves. We shape what is to come.
12. We will **intuitively know how to handle situations** that used to baffle us. We trust our brains like never before.
13. We remember it is our responsibility to **reach out and watch over**; no longer angry for the times our needs went unnoticed, we are better fit to lend a hand.