

A guide to starting a 12-Step Centering Prayer Group

How to start a 12-step / Centering Prayer (CP) Group

The most important thing to be clear about is that this is not a 12-step meeting (i.e. AA, Al-anon, OA, NA, SA...). The group is made up of others in 12-step recovery and is intended to deepen our CP practice. It usually consists of a CP period, a 20 – 30 minute period of study related to CP, and sometimes a discussion about the material and the relationship to recovery. Since this is not a 12-step meeting, we are free to discuss CP openly without fear of voicing an “opinion on an outside issue.”

Contemplative Outreach (CO) has used this format of small groups for many years to form a spiritual network of support for those practicing CP. Those of us in 12-step recovery also find this to be extremely important in maintaining our 11th step practice and as a way to encourage others or introduce others to the practice.

Many times people will be curious about the group and may want to join you. Since the method is very simple, someone leading the group with experience in CP, can go over the 4 guidelines of CP with them. The brochure on CP as an 11th step practice is also helpful. As soon as possible, encourage new people to attend an ‘Intro Workshop’ (see other information sheets on how to organize a workshop or retreat).

It is very helpful to have a person with an established centering prayer practice and active in 12-Step recovery to help facilitate the group, but it is not a requirement.

The format to use is optional and should suit the needs of the group. The most important part is to have the time together to do CP. There are plenty of recommended materials such as the ‘Spiritual Journey’ tapes by Thomas Keating (or any other CD, DVD, tapes, or books by Fr. Keating). Other groups can give ideas of what they have used and how often they meet. The local Contemplative Outreach from your area can also help with recommending materials or even lending them to your group. You can find the local chapter of CO in your area online at: <http://www.conteplativeoutreach.com> and click on your State.

Once you establish your group it is important to let 12-Step Outreach know so that we can refer any inquiries from other 12-Step people who may be looking for a group in your area to your group. 12-Step Outreach are contacts Dave D. (ddierig@cox.net) Jenny A. (adamsonje@cfu.net) or Jim M (jmac150@sbcglobal.net) or just post the group on our web-site www.cp12stepoutreach.com under the group tab.

Also, contact your local CO Chapter Coordinator and let them know of your group so they can refer any 12-Step inquiries to your group and also notified you of any CO events that your group may wish to participate in.