

The Dreaded “Dead Zone”

Questions to consider asking in a SMART Recovery[®] meeting

By SMART Recovery[®] President Tom Horvath, PhD

When no one has an issue to discuss in a SMART Recovery[®] meeting, following are some questions to consider asking to get the conversation going. Each question can be answered quickly, going around the circle. Each question is based on a tool, and therefore it may be easy for the Facilitator to remember the questions without needing notes as a reminder.

Other questions based on each SMART Recovery[®] tool are also possible. With luck, as the question goes around the circle, a discussion emerges, to which the Facilitator says: "That is a great point. Let's finish going around the circle then come back to what you are saying."

ABC (Emotional upsets)

What has been a "blessing in disguise" experience for you? What happened that you initially viewed as a disaster, but later you viewed as a blessing or opportunity? *(Couldn't every "disaster" be viewed this way, even though the change in view might take a long time? This point might come out only after everyone around the circle has shared and the discussion is then led around to this conclusion.)*

CBA

What was your greatest benefit from your addiction *(pick one)*? What was your greatest cost? How are they related? *(Often the greatest benefit flip-flops and becomes the greatest cost, as when drinking to relax ends up leading to a life filled with tension and anxiety, or using meth to have energy leads to a life with no energy except when you are using.)*

Change Plan

What, if anything, will you be doing this coming week about your addiction problems?

ABC (Urges)

When you have an urge, what thought is most likely to get you to use? What do you think of this thought now? *(For instance: I'll just have a little, and NOW I think, nearly always I have A LOT!)*

DISARM

If you were going to picture your addiction as something or someone out to get you, how would you see it? (*e.g., a wild animal, a devil, a smooth talking liar, etc.*)

Brainstorming

What is the wildest or weirdest idea you have had this week about addiction or recovery? (*I've never tried this one, I'm not sure it would work!*)

- or -

What was the most helpful new idea you ever got about addiction or recovery?

Role Playing

In order to deal with your addictive behavior better, who is the person you need to deal with better? What do you need to do better with that person?

USA

In your mind, without telling us what it is, tell yourself what you think your biggest flaw is. Then tell us, out loud, what you think your life would be like if you did not have this flaw. Don't tell us the flaw itself; just tell us how your life would be different without it. (*In fact, many will likely say the flaw, leading to some ABC, Change Plan, or Role Playing opportunities, or perhaps other tools as well.*)

HOV

What is the value most important to you? We'll go around the circle once, and after we have heard everyone, we'll go around the circle again and answer the same question. We'll see if the answers are different the second time around. Then we might discuss why you changed your answer, or why you decided your first answer was still true.