

Serenity on the Sound 2026

How to Thrive Guide: Tips and Ground Rules

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Overview

The 37th annual Puget Sound SAA and COSA Retreat will be held at a beautiful lakeside retreat center in Lacey, WA. Lodging consists of dormitory-style bunk rooms separated by

gender and a limited number of private rooms for those who need personal lodging or for pairs or couples hoping to room together. Additionally, there is outdoor space for tents, campers, and RVs. Food will be provided based on the retreat registration package you select.

Our annual retreat focuses on recovery from sex addiction and its impact on the lives of loved ones. It is for adults. Anyone aged 18 or older who has a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior or whose life has been affected by compulsive sexual behavior is welcome.

The retreat features SAA and COSA speakers, workshops, Outer Circle Show and Tell, games, recreation, and fellowship in a peaceful wooded lakefront environment. Join us for a refreshing weekend of fellowship and recovery.

One of our chief goals is to provide a safe haven for recovery.

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with suggestions, expectations and practical information so that you feel prepared for the weekend retreat. It is not comprehensive, so if you have additional questions after reading through this guide, please email info@soundretreat.org or call 425-272-5740.

Attire

Throughout the retreat, please dress the way you would for an in-person meeting. The exception to this would be when you are engaging in a water activity at the lake, during which we expect all to dress in attire appropriate for that activity.

Suggested items to bring

- Bedding, toiletries, and towels
- Sunblock
- Bugspray
- Green Book / Big Book / COSA book / other recovery literature
- Journal & pen
- Flashlight or headlamp
- Musical instrument
- Life jackets for canoeing
- Optional: An extra mattress pad for increased comfort

Health and Safety

We want all retreat participants to feel emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually safe throughout the entire weekend.

Nutritional Needs

At our retreat, providing nourishing food for all participants is paramount. Gwinwood accommodates special dietary requests for those who have pre-arranged them. To guarantee that those with specific dietary needs can enjoy their meals without issue, we kindly request that you honor the dietary preferences of your fellow attendees by refraining from consuming items labeled as special diet items. Gluten-free, vegan and vegetarian selections are there for those who have requested and paid for them during registration. Your awareness and consideration in this matter are greatly appreciated.

No One Stands Alone (NOSA)

Serenity on the Sound brings together a diverse group of people with widely varying experiences and histories. NOSA is a group of volunteers from SAA and COSA with years of sobriety and experience in peer support who have chosen to make themselves available to other retreat participants in order to answer questions, provide help, and offer support when requested. We want to provide a healthy environment for participants to learn and grow this weekend.

Our purpose is to promote a healthy and nurturing environment conducive to spiritual and emotional growth and recovery. Remember that we are people who are challenged with sexual issues. We choose today to bring boundaries and foresight into our lives as spiritual, sexual, emotional, and physical beings.

Early in our recovery we often do not see or understand how our behavior or dress affects others. Later in our recovery we sometimes forget how behavior or dress used to trigger us. To make this retreat as healthy as possible for all who attend, we ask that you act and dress appropriately and conservatively.

NOSA committee members and temporary sponsors are available this weekend. We encourage you to seek help if you feel triggered, uncomfortable or unsafe. If your concern

requires action, two NOSA team members typically meet with you to decide what needs to be done.

NOSA members will be onsite and ready to help resolve any issues causing anyone to feel unsafe, triggered, or unwelcome for any reason. They will have “NOSA” written on their name badges so that you know who to approach if you want assistance.

Meeting safety statement

Adapted from pages 11-12 of the SAA “Green Book”

Over the years, our groups have developed different formats and customs. Although no detailed description is valid for all meetings, there are some general principles followed by most groups. We listen respectfully to what others have to say and share our experience as it seems appropriate. We use the words “I” or “we” instead of “you” and share our experience, strength and hope. We do not interrupt or give advice unless asked. We address our sharing to the whole group, not to one individual. A meeting is not a place to meet sexual partners nor is it group therapy. We try not to use offensive language or explicit descriptions. We avoid specific names or places associated with our acting out behavior. Because of the nature of our addiction, we are careful about touching or giving hugs to others without permission. We strive to practice anonymity and confidentiality so meetings will be a safe place for each of us. We generally use only our first names. Who we meet or what is said in a meeting is treated as confidential and is not discussed with non-members.

A special note about safety

This note has been adapted from SAA literature.

As a newcomer to SAA, COSA or this retreat, please be aware that our 12-step programs have no governing authority except our Higher Power. This is a group of sex addicts, codependents, and co-addicts. If for any reason you feel uncomfortable, please contact a support person. Seek support from someone you know or a NOSA person. The support can come from a close friend, sponsor, or someone you trust. Together we can resolve the situation quickly and quietly. Our goal is to make sure you feel safe and comfortable at your retreat.

If any person you encounter within our fellowship tries to behave sexually with you, this is inappropriate. You may end the conversation/relationship immediately. Our 5th tradition states that our primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery to the addict/co-addict who still suffers. Exploiting a new member is not in keeping with our Traditions and is inappropriate. This behavior, commonly referred to as “13th stepping,” is rare but unfortunately does happen.

Here are some suggestions some of us have found helpful for discerning and preventing “13th stepping”

1. Have a wide range of support. Reach out to several people for support, not just one or two people. If something doesn't feel right, question it. Do not hesitate to turn to another sober member for support if necessary.
2. Some groups have found it helpful to assign two temporary sponsors to each newcomer. That way the newcomer is never alone with another member.
3. Read the literature on Safe and Sober Meetings. Do not spend one-on-one time or have phone calls with people in our fellowships to whom you are attracted or who have expressed an attraction to you.
4. Feel free to contact someone from NOSA (No One Stands Alone) to help resolve any situation that you find uncomfortable and/or unsafe.

Above all, sobriety is the goal. Honor yourself by surrounding yourself with people who support your recovery!

Suggestions on making this a safe retreat

- Always carry a flashlight at night. Avoid trails at night that are unlit. Ask for assistance if you are unsure of the trail.
- Do not swim alone or at night. Please be aware that no lifeguards will be present.
- There are many resources available to you during the retreat. No One Stands Alone (NOSA) members are available at any time to answer questions or provide assistance or support. Initial NOSA contacts are available at the check-in desk.
- Many people are willing to be temporary sponsors for the weekend. Ask! Look for a list (or volunteer) at the check-in table.
- Report injuries or safety issues immediately to the volunteer at the check-in table, NOSA member or PSRC member.

- All participation during the retreat is strictly voluntary. Take time for yourself if you need it. If you are new to the camp and want some suggestions for places to spend some quiet time, ask a PSRC member.

Rules

Gwinwood retreat center rules

- No smoking/vaping allowed anywhere on Gwinwood property including lakefront, grounds, and parking lots.
- Alcohol is not permitted
- No water balloons
- Quiet hours are 10:00 pm - 7:00 am (e.g. no music); this does not mean lights out
- Wifi is available (although not guaranteed) in most buildings on our grounds
- Speed limit is 10 mph throughout the grounds
- Fires are permitted only in designated fire pits, and may be prohibited entirely in the case of a Thurston County burn ban. No open flames, candles, oil lamps, or smoking allowed, *except for our pre-approved candle lighting ceremony*
- Do not enter a building other than the spaces indicated on our program
- You are free to use heaters, thermostats, windows and the like to manage the temperature in your sleeping quarters. If you are too hot or too cold in a meeting or event space, feel free to check with a PSRC member or the registration desk to help you find a solution.

Other rules and etiquette

- **The retreat is only for adults 18 years or older**
- In our contract with Gwinwood Retreat Center, we have agreed to pay them for each attendee based on when that person is present on the site, and the principles of recovery call for us to be honest and rigorous about that. So please attend consistent with the package you have purchased. If you want to attend on a certain day or at a certain time, or if you want to partake of a certain meal, please make sure you have registered for a package that includes that day, time or meal.
- Avoid engaging in crosstalk during workshops and meetings. SAA suggests, "During a share, we do not interrupt, give advice, or engage in crosstalk. Please restrict gestures of support during a share to two words or less" (e.g. "thank you"). COSA defines crosstalk as "giving unsolicited feedback, giving advice, responding or referring to another person's share in the meeting, making you and we statements,

minimizing another person's feeling or experiences, physical contact or touch, addressing another person present by name when you are sharing. So, to help keep our meeting a safe place, we do our best not to crosstalk or offer feedback in the meeting, instead we try to 'learn to listen and listen to learn.' We work toward taking responsibility in our own lives, rather than giving advice to others."

- Honor the anonymity and confidentiality of other participants.
- Along those lines, never take a photo of anyone on the site without their express permission. This extends to people who may be in the background of a shot.
- No pets are allowed except service animals. Exceptions must be pre-approved by the Retreat Committee and, according to our contract, by Gwinwood staff.
- Do not remove or damage any Gwinwood property, and remember to take all your personal belongings when you leave
- Feel free to bring snacks to enjoy between meals. Be sure to clean up after yourself to avoid problems with insect and animal pests.

Take care of yourself

The schedule includes breaks of varying lengths, but we can't schedule meal and rest breaks to accommodate everyone. Be present in your body and aware of what you need to be healthy and comfortable. It's common to skip a session here and there for self-care, solitude or fellowship. Eat, hydrate, stretch, meditate and rest when you need to. This is your time. Use it to refresh, connect, and learn. You're worth it. Get plenty of sleep each night so you have the mental focus and energy to fully participate in the day's activities.

Make personal connections

One of the best parts of a retreat is the opportunities for fellowship it offers. You'll see that the program includes fellowship events and breaks. The retreat does not provide phone or email lists to attendees, but you can request to exchange personal contact information with others. Be mindful that some people may choose to keep their contact information private. Please respond to those boundaries with grace and dignity.

Outer Circle Show and Tell

One of the highlights of Serenity on the Sound is the Outer Circle Show and Tell on Friday night. Everyone gets five minutes to share something they do for fun. In the past, people

have sung, played an instrument and read original poetry. One person showed us her elaborate, beautiful scrapbooks. Another shared pictures of his exotic cats. Another read us a favorite children's book, sharing the pictures as she went. Things don't always go as planned but we always have a good time and everyone gets applause.

Participation is optional, of course, but encouraged. So get ready! We're looking forward to seeing and hearing what you have to share.

Cancellation Policy

We understand that plans can change, so here's our cancellation policy:

- Full refunds will be provided to registrants needing to cancel on or before the announced cancellation deadline.
- Unfortunately, due to our contractual agreement with Gwinwood Retreat Center, we are unable to provide refunds for cancellations received on or after that date.

We appreciate your understanding of our commitment to honor our agreements with our venue partner. If you have any questions or concerns regarding cancellations, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at info@soundretreat.org.

Check In Process

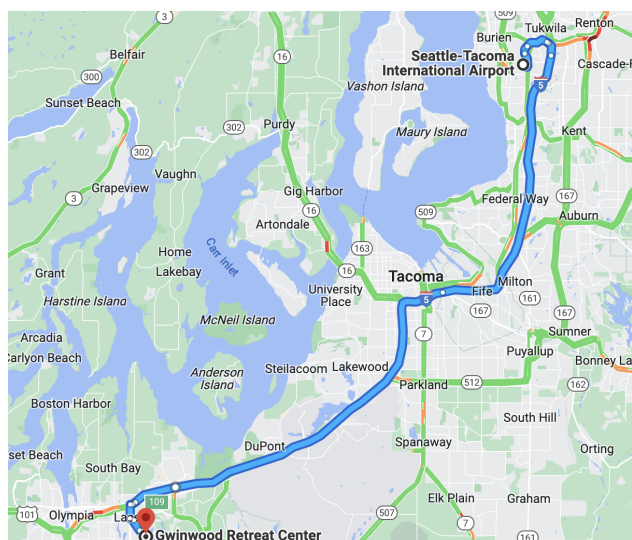
Upon arrival at Gwinwood, please follow the signs directing you to the check-in desk and complete the sign-in process. While parking is permitted in any gravel or paved area, we kindly ask that you **refrain from parking on the cabin lawns** due to underground plumbing and Gwinwood's regulations. Upon signing in, you'll receive your registration packet, including your name badge, which we request you wear throughout the weekend. Wearing your name badge helps us maintain awareness of retreat participants, ensuring a safe environment. Those who have not registered will be asked to leave for security and anonymity purposes. Once checked in, you may relocate your vehicle near your cabin, avoiding parking on the cabin lawns. In addition to gravel and paved areas, parking is available in the spacious field designated as the camping area, provided it does not disrupt traffic flow and respects the distance from tents.

Driving Directions

You are welcome to use [Google Maps](#) or another map service provider. The address to Gwinwood Retreat Center is 6015 30th Ave SE, Lacey, WA 98503. If you prefer written directions, please see those provided below.

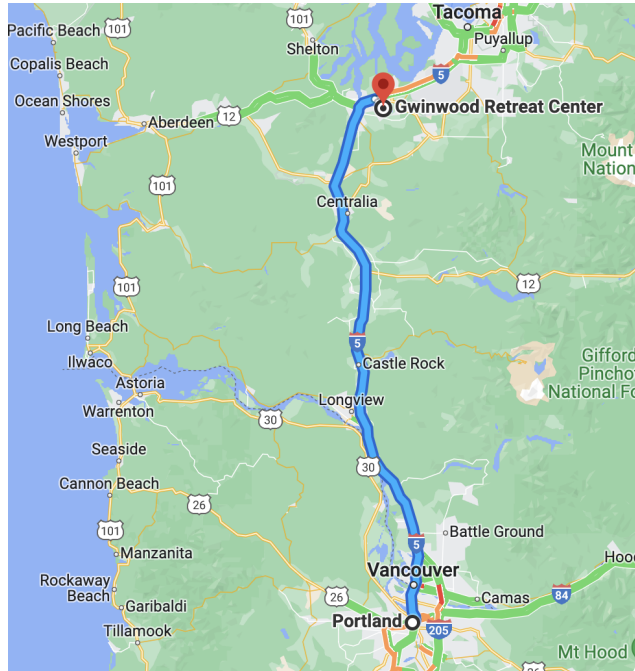
Directions from SeaTac Airport/Seattle (~1 hr with no traffic):

Follow signs to I-5 South. Take Exit 109. Turn R onto Martin Way. Turn L onto College St. Turn L onto Lacey Blvd. Turn R onto Ruddell Rd. Turn L onto 25th Ave. Turn R onto Hicks Lake Rd. Turn L onto 30th Ave. Gwinwood Retreat Center will be on your right at the end of the road.



Directions from Portland (~1 hr 50 min with no traffic):

Follow signs to I-5 North. Take Exit 108 and keep L at the fork toward College St. Turn R onto College St. Turn L onto Lacey Blvd. Turn R onto Ruddell Rd. Turn L onto 25th Ave. Turn R onto Hicks Lake Rd. Turn L onto 30th Ave. Gwinwood Retreat Center will be on your right at the end of the road.



Camp Map

