

From Slip or Relapse to Recovery

This is an action plan for reclaiming and retaining our abstinence.

If we are struggling or have had a slip or relapse, we may need to take different actions than before to renew our commitment to abstinence and recovery. The food is the last to go when a compulsive eater slips, relapses, or struggles. A thorough look at food and food behaviors is necessary now because our lives as recovering compulsive overeaters depend on it.

Slips, relapses, and struggles do not have to occur in the journey of recovery. But for some of us this does happen. The goal of this process is not to shame or beat ourselves up. It is to learn from it and move forward with a renewed commitment to ourselves, our abstinence, the OA program, and our Higher Power. This inventory and the actions that we take are the most loving things we can do right now for ourselves, our abstinence, and our recovery.

There are three parts to this action plan.

Part One is an inventory of what happened. Here we will assess what we have been doing that hasn't been working.

Part Two is looking at ways to get out of relapse and back into recovery. A plan helps determine specific actions we are willing to take now. Following a plan also helps put our commitment to abstinence first—as the most important thing in our lives, without exception.

Part Three is creating an action plan to keep us out of relapse and in recovery going forward. This plan includes the use of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, Tools of recovery, and other actions that may be helpful to us.

As each section is completed it is vital to share it with someone who is abstinent and recovering.

This may be our sponsors or another OA fellow. Do not use the excuse of not having a sponsor to prevent us from doing this work. Remember, we are as sick as our secrets. Rigorous honesty is a must for getting abstinent and staying abstinent.

This plan is designed to help us put fear, denial, perfection, guilt, and procrastination behind us as we take an honest look back and develop an action plan for going forward that will allow us freedom from food obsession.

Part One: Inventory of What Happened

Write down exactly what happened by answering the following questions.

First look at the food. Write down exactly what happened as though there had been a video camera rolling.

- a) List the foods we were eating during our slip or relapse.
- b) Were we eating any of our trigger, binge, or other foods that are or may be a problem or that we haven't gotten honest about yet?
- c) If we aren't sure, try looking at the ingredients in the foods we have been eating. Look for patterns; are there common ingredients in foods we eat most often or in the foods we look forward to the most?
- d) Do we still have foods in our house that are trigger or binge foods?

It is said that we relapse in the reverse order than which we recovered: most of us first recover physically, then we clear up mentally and emotionally, and finally we find “spiritual abstinence.” When we relapse or slip, we first lose our spiritual connection (consciously or unconsciously), then our mental or emotional abstinence falters, and finally we lose our physical abstinence. We are at the end of the slip when we pick up the fork or the behavior with food, not at the beginning.

Since the food is the last thing to go, it is important to inventory our feelings, thoughts, and spiritual connection. Can we identify any specific things that may have contributed to our relapse? Answer the following questions honestly and thoroughly.

- a) Look at our eating behaviors. Do we see anything that may be causing problems, such as eating in the car, sneaking food, eating standing up, eating in front of the TV, skipping meals, allowing too much flexibility in our plan, or anything else from which we need to be abstaining?
- b) What feelings were we having before the relapse?
- c) What were we thinking before the relapse?
- d) What secrets were we keeping or still keeping that need to be shared with our sponsors or another abstinent, recovering compulsive eater?
- e) What lies did our disease tell us that we believed?
- f) How did we decide it was okay to eat?
- g) Are we hanging around slippery people and slippery places, such as family, friends, relatives, restaurants, grocery stores?
- h) Where was HP?
- i) Were we doing our daily meditation and prayers consistently?
- j) Were we keeping honest, accountable, and current with our daily Tenth Step inventory?
- k) Were we making people, places, or things our Higher Power?
- l) Were the highest priorities in our life our Higher Power, our abstinence, and the program, or was it something else?

Part Two: Moving from Slip or Relapse to Recovery

With a better understanding from our inventory in Part One of what happened, let’s take a look at what different actions will help us achieve abstinence today. In Part Two, we will be deciding exactly what actions we are willing to take now to move back into recovery.

Answer the following questions with the Part One inventory in mind and refer to it as needed. Ask a sponsor (or another recovering member) for guidance if in doubt about any questions or responses.

- a) Are there changes we need to make to our plan of eating?
- b) Are there changes we need to make in our eating behaviors?
- c) Are there other actions regarding our food and eating that we need to take?
- d) What changes in our thinking do we need to make?
- e) What changes do we need to make to our program spiritually?

By now, we are willing to go to any length for victory over food and compulsive eating. It is now time to move on to the next section.

Part Three: Action Plan for Commitment to Recovery

The following actions are necessary to achieve and maintain abstinence. Write an action plan for each item listed below. Share it with our sponsors or a fellow abstinent OA member. Ours is a program of action. Remember that “half measures availed us nothing” (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th ed., p. 59). So don’t think about it. Commit and get started now.

How do we plan to utilize each of the nine Tools with our Step work?

- a) a plan of eating
- b) sponsorship
- c) meetings
- d) telephone
- e) writing
- f) literature
- g) action plan
- h) anonymity
- i) service

Remember, we only have to do this one day at a time, one moment at a time, and one meal at a time. May our Higher Power bless us, our recovery, and our abstinence.

OA Board-approved

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